

Literature review: play work in education



Weisberg, D. S., Kittredge, A. K., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., & Klahr, D. (2015). Making play work for education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 96 (8), 8-13. doi: 10.1177/0031721715583955

The article encapsulates that in comparison to other forms of play, guided play is the most effective in enhancing the learning skills of children from a range of ages. Guided play incorporates play into education without compromising learning goals or suppressing children's exploration, as its blend of child-directed play within an adult-initiated environment enables them to become in control of their own learning. This allows them to develop autonomy by forming their own decisions in regards to their upcoming actions and gaining skills to attain information. The balance between freedom and structure in guided-play is more effective than direct teaching or free play, as adults harness a child's appeal to play in the service of learning through scaffolding their actions. This in turn promotes the acceleration of long-term development and encourages better learning outcomes.

Weisberg et al have utilised evidence to strengthen their claims and formulate a convincing argument to readers. The citations displayed enable readers to access the resources cited to confirm if the evidence is accurate and to investigate and delve deeper into the topic. This provides the opportunity for readers to gain a deeper understanding of the authors claim, which makes their argument more convincing. The multiple citations also suggest that the authors engaged in an in-depth research, depicting that they share a thorough understanding of play, creating a convincing argument. The citations further suggest that other academic scholars share

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the same perspective about guided-play as Weisberg et al, making the article more potent. Additionally, multiple examples of studies strengthen the claim of the authors as they provide evidence of how ideas translate into practice. For example, one of the studies provided portrayed that children engaging in guided-play outperformed those who engaged in free-play, whilst learning vocabulary (Dickinson et al., 2013), thus validating the argument of the authors. Moreover, the use of direct quotations emphasise the point of the authors in a concise manner whilst providing strong supporting evidence, making a stronger claim. Majority of the arguments presented are highly convincing as the findings used to support them do not have alternative explanations. However, few cases within the article can be interpreted in another manner, weakening the authors claim. For example Weisberg (2015) claims that the relationship between learning and play is intrinsically linked through guided play. Although factual, this finding could also support a different argument such as the link between learning and free-play, as all play acts as a catalyst of learning.

A comparison of the article to alternative readings enables the audience to articulate the strength of the claims made by Weisberg et al.

Both Barblett (2010) and Weisberg et al (2015) propose the significance of adults preparing different environments in which child-initiated play can take place. Barblett (2010) explores how creating an intellectual environment prompts children to question activities they are partaking in, which extends their knowledge. This relates to Weisberg's notion of scaffolding, which like an intellectual environment, enables children to assimilate information at their own pace. Weisberg also suggests the importance of preparing a

physical environment as it assists children in self-directed exploration and learning. Likewise, Barblett conveys that physical environments provoke and encourage children to engage in exploration and learning during play. Additionally, Brock (2013) exhibits the importance of adults creating rich learning environments as they “ enable children to fulfil their learning potential.”

Weisberg and others (2015) explore the significance of children becoming the driving force of their upcoming actions as well as what they desire to explore and how. This is similar to Goldschmeid (1987) theory of heuristic play as it involves self-exploration, which like Weisberg’s concept, enables children to become in control of their upcoming actions and decide how they want to utilise the object.

Furthermore, Weisberg et al (2015) suggest that elements of guided-play accompanied by direct teaching was the most productive strategy for children to learn. Including direct-teaching in guided-play diminishes the sense of ‘ child-directed play’, thus becoming unenjoyable. This is supported by (Fisher, 2002) who claims that “ when adults continually drive learning experiences, golden opportunities for learning are missed.” Moreover, Weisberg’s perspective differs to Follari’s (2013) concept of project work as children are in control of their learning process as they investigate areas of their own choosing. As a result, children are able to formulate concepts and engage in creative thinking which is essential for learning. Like Follari, Touhill (2012) presents the importance of project work as it “ enables children to exercise their growing sense of agency and autonomy and promote inquiry, curiosity and exploration.”