

Title: Freedom with Guidance: a Froebelian approach to play

Professor Tina Bruce CBE

ABSTRACT

Theories of play abound, and some become fashionable for a time in the world of education, but fade as the zeitgeist changes. However, there is a common feature which threads through the variety of approaches investigating whether or not it is important for children to engage in play in educational contexts. In some form, but with different emphases, attention is paid to 'freedom with guidance'. This simple phrase is perhaps one of Friedrich Froebel's greatest contributions and legacy to the practical implementation of Froebelian education. 'Freedom with guidance' is packed, stacked with the challenges of moment by moment equilibrations, interactions and nuances. These shift and change as the play forms, flows and fades. 'Freedom with guidance' helps those working daily with children and their families to make constant adjustments, by tuning into and supporting worthwhile educational play. It helps practitioners to guide researchers into what is most urgent to explore, investigate and find evidence through which to take things forward resulting in valuable play experiences. Play, if it is to hold status in the education of young children will contribute, connect and link with Froebel's central concept of Unity through developing relationships with self, others, culture and nature in the wider world and universe. For these are interdependent.