

## **Play Based Practices in Early Childhood Curriculum: The Contribution of High Scope, Modern School Movement and Pedagogy of Participation**

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**Abstract :** The power of play for learning and development in early childhood education is beyond question. The main goal of this study is to analyse how three contemporary early childhood pedagogical approaches, the High Scope, the Modern School Movement (MEM) and the Pedagogy of Participation integrate play in their curriculum development. From this main goal the following objectives emerged: (i) to characterize how play is integrated in the daily routine of the pedagogical approaches under study; (ii) to analyse the teachers' role during children's playing situations; (iii) to identify the types of play that children are more often involved. The methodology used is the qualitative approach and is situated under the interpretative paradigm. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews to 30 preschool teachers and through observations of typical daily routines. The participants are 30 Portuguese preschool classrooms attending children from 3 to 6 years and working with the High Scope curriculum (10 classrooms), the MEM (10 classrooms) and the Pedagogy of Participation (10 classrooms). The qualitative method of content analysis was used to analyse the data. To ensure confidentiality, no information is disclosed without participants' consent, and the interviews were transcribed and sent to the participants for a final revision. The results show that there are differences how play is integrated and promoted in the three pedagogical approaches. The teachers' role when children are at play varies according the pedagogical approach adopted, and also according to the teachers' understanding about the meaning of play. The study highlights the key role that early childhood curriculum models have to promote opportunities for children to play, and therefore to be involved in meaningful learning.

**Keywords :** curriculum models, early childhood education, pedagogy, play

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