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**Review of publication**  
***Zabawa. O uczeniu się, zaufaniu***  
***i życiu pełnym entuzjazmu***  
**[*Play. About Learning, Trust***  
***and Life Full of Enthusiasm*]**

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**Reviewed publication:** André Stern, *Zabawa. O uczeniu się, zaufaniu i życiu pełnym entuzjazmu* [*Play. About Learning, Trust and Life Full of Enthusiasm*], Wydawnictwo Element, Gliwice 2017, ISBN 978-83-65532-19-0, pp. 136.

A. Stern's work, *Play. About Learning, Trust and Life Full of Enthusiasm* is widely recognized as a masterpiece on playing, having fun and also learning through play. The author is a teacher, pedagogue and researcher. His achievements are based on respecting the spontaneous tendencies of human beings and he created the studio known as the "*Académie du jeu*" in Paris. Despite the fact that he never went to school, he teaches music, conducts lectures, is engaged in the field of computer science and has successfully performed various roles in the world of dance and theater. As an expert in the field of alternative education methods, he works with teachers, schools, universities, associations as well as parents and companies around the world. He is the chairman of the Arno Stern Institute (*Institut Arno Stern*), and also of the initiative *Men of the Future* (*Männer für morgen*).

The author's own story is a compelling one. André Stern began playing the guitar at the age of 4 and independently explored the history of classical music. Seeking the true sound of Flamenco music, he developed his own technique for playing and creating it. His musical career began in 1988 and intensified in 1990, when he founded the "*Fusion*" music and

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choreography studio (*Atelier de Création Chorégraphique et Musicale*) in Paris together with the choreographer and dancer, Delphine Joubert. This in turn led to a very significant a meeting in 1993 with the Swiss master luthier, Werner Schär, opening up new possibilities in the development of his musical personality. In 1993, he also began working with the Madness Theater run by Giancarlo Ciarapica. He wrote also two books during this period: *And I Have Never Gone to School* and *My Father, My Friend*.

This book, *Play. About Learning, Trust and Life Full of Enthusiasm*, consists of ten chapters, all about the role of play. The author depicts how useful and important it is, not only for children but for everybody – for teenagers and adults alike. In the first chapter he shows the difference between play and learning/work. He explains his ideas on the basis of real examples drawn from life – those of his friends, family, relatives and his observations of the people around him, so it is very easy to understand what the author means and lends a conviction to his statements. The author postulates the importance of children's ability to learn from playing, something he recognized as a natural need and source of joy and happiness. Children exist in a state of endless curiosity, and he/she will use it to learn about the world if adults do not inhibit it. In his book, readers can find some elements of his biography and also some information about his father.

The author shows the power of play in the quote: "The desire for fun is stronger in children than needs or moods. Stronger even than illness. Even very sick children play. They sometimes have limited possibilities but still – do not know when and with deeply moving consequence – grab an arise occasion, before it can move away. The desire for fun is stronger in children than pain"(Stern, 2017, p. 31). It is a very moving quote that shows the significant and natural role of play in the life of each child.

André Stern also cites some research about the human brain and how it functions, basing his work on scientific facts: "some research of the brain reveals that admiration plays a key role in human life. A child experiences it between twenty and fifty times a day. And each time the centres of emotions are moved"(Stern, 2017, p. 95). This is why neuronal combinations are developed and people become more and more able to solve

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some new and unique problems, becoming willing to take on even demanding challenges. Moreover, the passion in doing something might be the solution for the lack of motivation among learners.

At the end of the book, the reader can find also some pictures that show children playing and getting some knowledge about their environment, which some may find inspirational. The utilization of dialogues make the book even more realistic and approachable and the idea of learning via playing more understandable.

André Stern demonstrates his considerable capacity to act as an observer of the world, particularly of the relationships between playing, having fun and learning and working. The language used in the book is easy to understand but the content is far from simplistic and has a deeper meaning. The book may be of interest for a broad circle of people – some specialists (educationalists, psychologists) and also for parents and grandparents. It helps to remind adults of how significant and even profitable play is and teachers can use that truth to organize the process of learning along the lines of play, having fun and arousing learner's passions.

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