

A STUDY ON THE QUALITY OF PLAY TOWARDS STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS OF THAILAND

Divia Rishi
Graduate School of Education
Assumption University of Thailand

Abstract. Play is believed to provide benefits for cognitive, social, emotional, physical and moral development for children from all socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As children spent most of their time these days at school, schools should provide quality play especially to the early year's programs. Play would facilitate the development of the whole child if it is of quality. Schools can provide quality play for children if they consider the ten dimensions of play in order to evaluate the quality of play at schools. Aims and objectives, curriculum, learning and teaching strategies, planning, assessment and record keeping, staffing, physical environment, relationships and interactions, equal opportunities, parental partnerships and liaison, monitoring and evaluation are the factors that affect the quality of play at schools. The other essential element to produce quality play is teacher facilitation and understanding towards play. Many theorists like Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Erikson and others have supported the importance of play for children to develop. Thus, the question is not about the presence of play at schools but the quality of play that has been provided by the school is essential. Since, play is common for children, especially in early years, schools already have an essential tool for the development of children but schools need to evaluate and be aware of the quality of play in the schools. Piaget stated the pre – operational stage related to the child's development. At this stage students can apply the theory of assimilation and accommodation. While the child is at classroom experiencing an academic experience, the child is experiencing assimilation but when children are at play they get a chance to accommodate what they have learnt through play.

Play has been regarded as an important element to children's lives. In the olden days when children spent more time in the fields and homes rather than schools like now, they had the opportunity to interact with their family member, friends, relatives and neighbors. We would often see them playing different kinds of group games together. But these days children are sent to the schools at an early age assuming that they would be better off with an early foundation on the academic areas of life in order to be successful individuals in the future.

We could see wonderful playgrounds around the schools with no children playing in it. It is essential for schools to provide the opportunity of play since the school is the greatest area where children could learn and meet friends, in other words school is a social arena where they should be learning and growing. There is a well-established consensus among early childhood professionals that play is an essential element of developmentally appropriate high quality early education programs (Alliance for Childhood, 2006; NAEYC&NAECSSDE,2003).

When Children Play:

- They have many opportunities to apply mental representations of the world to new objects, people, and situations – the key ability for future academic learning.
- They integrate all types of learning – physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and language development.
- They are engaged in things they're interested in – so they have a natural motivation to learn (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000)

A lot of research has been done in the favor of play for young children. It is regarded as chances for the children to apply their skills, learning and ideas in a situation where they don't have to think about the consequences of it in reality. There is a well-established consensus among early childhood professionals that play is an essential element of developmentally appropriate high quality early education programs (Alliance for Childhood, 2006; NAEYC&NAECSSDE, 2003). Play provides benefits for cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and moral development (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2006; Elkind, 2007) for children from all socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Zigler, E. & Bishop-Josef, S., 2006).