

Exploring need for Enhancing Play Activity Time in School Settings for Holistic Development of Learners.

Ms. Neha Madan¹

Abstract

“Play is the work of the child.” – Maria Montessori.

There is no end to significant quotations embarked by Child Psychologists and experts related to play if we explore. And in depth understanding of these lines indicates that without Play life is meaningless for child. But in present time access to free time has been reduced due to impact of one or other factors such as current life style, changes in family pattern, increased academic pressure and unsafe spaces for children until and unless they are under close supervision of adults or care givers and place of physical aspects of play taken by digital world. In the present study researcher has probed to explore significance of play for holistic development of learners through observation schedule and focused group discussion as a tool in real school settings. Sample comprised of students from class VI-VIII and teachers of elementary classes from selected schools which comprised of approximately of 10 schools and locale for the study was Private Schools from North East Delhi which were part of Internship programme of B.Ed trainees of one of the GGSIP University affiliated B.Ed College in East Delhi. Observation schedule included items covering all aspects of development to analyse role of play activities Similarly FGD was conducted with school teacher to know their perspective about relevance of play activities and need for the same in school settings. From analysis and interpretations of findings it was revealed that in more than 50% schools playground was missing and hardly one games period in a week was given. Mostly students were indulged in their self created games as provision for outdoor games was less. Further findings through observation lead to conclusion that play activities contribute to holistic development of learners. On FGD with teachers it was interpreted that play activities helped them in dealing with socio psychological problems of learners but there is lack of human and non human resources for support of play activities for students in school environment both in term of physical and social resources. On the basis of findings of study researcher has also given few strategies so that play activities can be given due importance for holistic development of learners in school settings.

Keywords: Play, Aspects of learner Development and Holistic Development

Introduction

“Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity.”

–Kay Redfield Jamison.

¹Ms. Neha Madan, Assistant Professor, Guru Ram Dass College of Education, affiliated to GGSIPU, Delhi

“The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct.”

–Carl Jung

“Play is the work of the child.”

–Maria Montessori

Necessity may be the mother of invention, but play is certainly the father.”

–Roger Von Oech

There is no end to significant quotations embarked by Child Psychologists and experts related to play if we explore. And in depth understanding of these lines indicates that without play life is meaningless for child. Play has always been a part of human culture and it is important from many different aspects for both children and adults, according to many researchers. For the optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child.

But in present time access to free time has been reduced due to impact of one or other factors such as current life style, changes in family pattern, increased academic pressure and unsafe spaces for children until and unless they are under close supervision of adults or care givers and place of physical aspects of play taken by digital world. In one of the school survey report 1989 survey taken by the National Association of Elementary School Principals found that 96% of surveyed school systems had at least 1 recess period. Another survey a decade later found that only 70% of even kindergarten classrooms had a recess period and almost same reported in many schoolchildren are given less free time and fewer physical outlets at school; many school districts responded to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 by reducing time committed to recess, the creative arts, and even physical education in an effort to focus on reading and mathematics.

Hence in the present study researcher would highlight on significance of Play for holistic development of learner on the basis of observations made in real school environments and would identify barriers which hinder opportunity of children to play and stress on the strategies to enhance space for play activities in school

Thus the title of the paper **“Exploring the Impact of Enhanced Play Activity Time on Holistic Development in School Settings”**

The paper has been divided into following sections:

- **Introduction:** Play and its Significance in Holistic Development of Learners
- **Review of literature**
- **Significance of the study**
- **Methodology**
- **Research findings and Interpretation**
- **Suggestions**

Understanding about Play

As described in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological framework for Human Development.

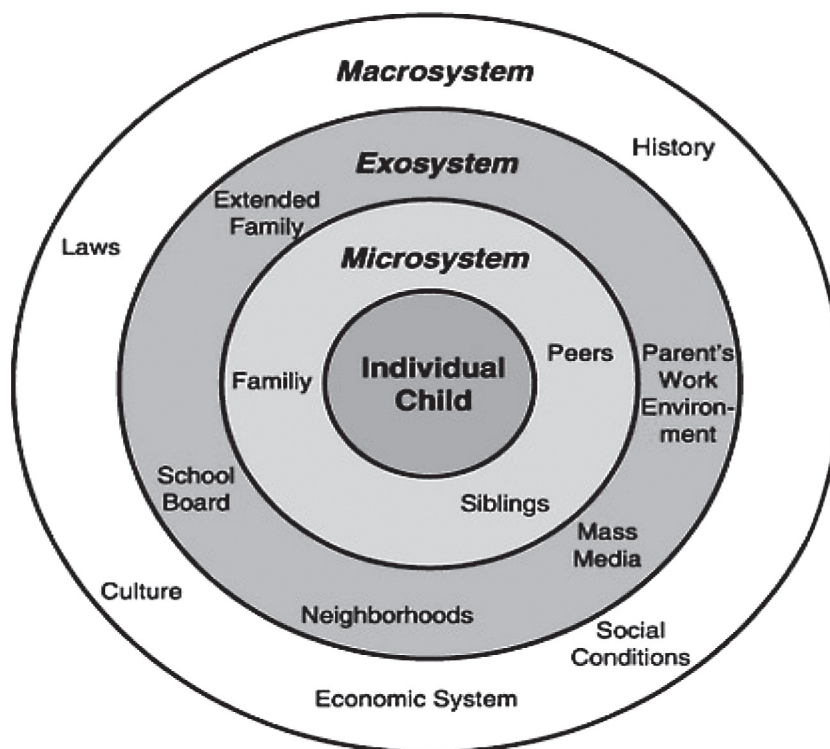


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological framework for Human Development.

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=bronfenbrenner%27s+ecological+model+of+human+development>.

And among all the one and only one kind of interaction which influences development of child is interaction during the **Play** be it isolated or in groups. Developing through play and finding one's own identity through it is one of several important components in the development and socialization of us as individuals according to George Herbert Mead (1995). It's not just waste of time. Nor is it just way to keep children busy or out of mischief while parents take care of their own responsibilities. Play has many values for children; one single activity of play is related not only to one aspect of development but has interlinked with *A to Z Components of Development*.

Review of Literature

Lunga, P., Esterhuizen, S. & Koen, M., 2022:

Children's holistic development includes physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, moral and affective development and lies in early childhood development education (ECDE). According to research, children learn through different age-appropriate teaching and learning pedagogies. With this objective study was underpinned by the theory of play as a spiral of learning to demonstrate how a play-based pedagogy could be utilised to enhance holistic development in young children and in the study qualitative approach within the participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) was adopted to interrogate the extent to which

a play-based pedagogy could be useful in enhancing the holistic development of young children in zones of South Africa and the results of this study proposed that to support holistic development in young children, practitioners and parents should maximise the use of a play-based methodology in both social and learning environments.

Ginsburg, 2007:

A survey conducted by the National Association of Elementary Principals found that 96% of surveyed school systems had at least one recess period, but nearly a decade later around **70% of students had one recess period**. Currently, many school age children are given less free time and fewer physical outlets throughout the school day. Because students have experienced a decrease in free time, implications on the **child's ability to store new information has also decrease**. **Reduced time for daily physical activity is a major contributing factor to the disconnect occurring in academic abilities especially between boys and girls.**

Significance of the Study

From the review and through analysis of the content related importance of play for holistic development of children and the overview of different type of play activities in which children's are involved in this digital world the key focus of the study is on to conceal information related to importance given to play in educational environment and variety of play activities in which children and indulge, the findings of the study would be helpful in making curriculum planners and educationists to provide space and time for play activities which could be helpful in development of holistic learners in society. Hence the title of the present study is **Exploring the Impact of Enhanced Play Activity Time on Holistic Development in School Settings**

Objectives of the Study

1. To probe about the concept and nature of Play in relevance to child Development.
2. To review research studies on impact of Play activities for Holistic Development of learners in School Environment.
3. To examine role of Play activities in holistic development of learners in school settings.
4. To explore strategies for enhancing span for Play Activities in School Environment for Holistic Development

Methodology:

- **Type of Study:** Descriptive
- **Locale of the study:** Private Schools from North East Delhi locale which were part of Internship programme of B.Ed trainees of one of the GGSIP University affiliated B.Ed College in East Delhi.
- **Sampling:** Purposive Sampling Technique was adopted and sample comprised of students from class VI-VIII and teachers of elementary classes from selected schools which comprised of approximately of 10 schools.

- **Tools:**
 - i. **Observation Schedule** for obtaining information related to different types of Play in which children are involved in school time and to analyze various aspects of development attained.
 - ii. **Focused Group Discussion** with school teachers of class VI-VIII to know their views about relevance of play time for holistic development of learners.

Research findings and Interpretation

The present study was descriptive in which **Observation schedule** was used one of the main tool in which observers (involved in collection of data i.e. B.Ed trainees) were expected to observe children during play in school time at different places and time period. The observation schedule included components focused on analyzing following:

- **Description About**
 - i. Types of Play in which children were involved
 - ii. Place and duration for Play time.
- **Contribution of Play at various aspects of Development mainly**
 - a) **Motor skills**
 - b) **Language used during play**
 - c) **Group structure**
 - d) **Individual and group behavior**
 - e) **Formation of rules and regulation**
 - f) **Negotiations and resolving conflict**
 - g) **Friendships and social relationships**

Another analysis **focused on Focused Group Discussion** with school teachers of class VI-VIII to know their views about relevance of play time for holistic development of learners. It included different statements on which data was collected through FGD with teachers.

Research Analysis about description of types of Play in which children were involved and Place and duration for Play time

- Through Observation of Play activities in different schools selected it was found that in majority of schools playground is not the part of the infrastructure most of the time students play within classrooms, in corridors or cemented floor of terrace within school campus.
- From the 10 schools as a part of study only in 4 schools separate games period was given in time table under guidance of sports teacher and in remaining students used to get play time during recess, free period or arrangement periods and at time day get over in cabs or busses etc. the maximum duration for which students get chance to play is 25- 30 minutes.
- Type of plays which were played included both outdoor and indoor games, mostly self created by students.

Outdoor Games	Indoor Games
Kho-Kho Chain-Chain Badminton Leg Raise Pakdam Pakddai Green light and Red light Touch and Run Touch and Pass Platform and Engine Football YoYO	Find words ATLAS Sit-Stand Dumb Charddas Gesture game Pen fighter

Research Analysis about description of Contribution of Play at various aspects of Development

Play observation was done with rational of analyzing how various types of play activities contributing on various aspects like cognitive, physical gross and fine motor, emotional, social, language development among learners resulting into holistic development. As in the process of observations done Major findings indicated –

S. No.	Developmental Skills	Description from Play Observation
1.	Motor skills	During observation of play activities in which students were indulged it was analysed that majority of them leads to inculcation of gross and fine motor skills like sitting, running, jumping, throwing ball, catching, eye hand coordination etc. for example games like Kho-Kho, Chain-Chain, Badminton, Leg Raise, Pakdam Pakddai etc few of them which were played outside classroom and others like Find words, ATLAS, Sit-Stand etc which were played inside classrooms. Play contributes to Physical Development among children which is most essential part of proper development of human being.
2.	Language used during play	It was analysed during observations that students used to remain formal in way of interaction when they were under guidance of sports or physical instructor like during sports period they used to speak in limits as per requirement of games. An observation made in most of the school leads to interpretation that social constructivism as revealed in Vygotsky's theory was actually taking place during play time. Though games can be consider as simple recreational medium for learners but actually with help of language either verbal or non verbal mode of expression used it leads to enhancement of vocabulary, exchange of words and most importantly positive impact on thought process. For example in games like find words, Atlas, Dumms Charddas etc thought process along with language was used along with emotional expression. Major role played by these activities is in inculcation of metalingustic awareness.

S. No.	Developmental Skills	Description from Play Observation
3	Group structure	Like in majority of observations it was found that group structure was formed on the basis of likeness, compatibility, understanding with each other. Groups formed were mainly small and closed except for outdoor games in which teams were formed as per requirement of games like in Kho-Kho, throw ball, football etc. Mixed group of boys and girls were very few in number to be observed mostly boys-boys, girls-girls used to form group. Group structure was also close mainly hardly any new member was given entry in group, they used statements like “<i>yeh hmara group hai hum kisi ko entry nahi dete</i>”, “<i>tum dusri team ke ho</i>” etc. Overall it was analyzed that social skills like of cooperation, coordination, we feeling, togetherness, caring for other team members, how to greet each other were developed as a result of play activities.
4	Individual and group behavior	In few of games like kho kho, table tennis, football etc development of leadership, self confidence, decision making power was also developed as they were leading, taking decisions which automatically involved integration of various aspects of development. Out of 10 schools observed as a part of study in 80% of the school observed it was found that gender biasness was part of play groups
5	Formation of rules and regulation	In most of the games rules formed were stated before beginning so that no confusions or clashes arise in between. Games like football, chess, and table tennis were used to have formal set of rules which used to remain fixed most of tie as instructed by sports instructor. While in games which were self created as peer influence rules were formed as per individual or group decision. Like <i>in game pakkadam pakdai certain code was formed for out and entry of another member similarly in pen fighter game rule was formed related to number of turns etc.</i> Through observation was analysed that these games were imparting various skill among learners which was much more than just playing game. In tenure of playing they were interlinking cognitive-socio-emotional aspects and most importantly inculcating values of adjustment from each other.
6	Negotiations and resolving conflict	Skill of compromising, adjustment, understanding each other emotions all were observed and concealed under umbrella of different play activities in which students were indulged. Varieties of emotions like aggression, failure, victory were expressed by learners’ during different games. The way conflicts were being resolved as putting them forward on learning skill of leadership, decision making and most importantly Moral Development.

S. No.	Developmental Skills	Description from Play Observation
7	Friendships and social relationships	During observation it was found that the most important mediator of developing social relationships and enabling learners to understand value of friendship and socialization with others is PLAY . As it was observed from group structures and way the conflicts were resolved and rules were formed that how important GROUP MEMBERS become for each other. For example KHO-KHO was game in which social relationships were strongly formed and observed among team members.

From the observations made it was analyzed and interperated that all play activities either in physical mode of action, cognitive in nature or expressive in nature leads to holistic development of learners’.

Analysis from FGD with Teachers: Relevance of Play Activities for Holistic Development of Learner

In the present study to know the perspective of teachers about relevance of Play time and activities in school for holistic development of learner’s focus group discussion was held primarily on the following key points:

1. From your perspective, how important do you think play activities are for the overall development of students?
2. In what ways do you believe play contributes to the academic and social growth of students?
3. Are there any challenges or obstacles you face in integrating play activities into daily time table of school?
4. Do you face challenges in from parents or administrators who may question you the educational value of play in school time?
5. Can you share any specific instances where you’ve noticed a positive impact of Play activities on student learning?
6. Your view about institutional changes or support systems which would further enhance the integration of play in school environment.

Data analysed was interpreted on the basis of **FGD** into following sections:

• Positive Impact of Play on overall Development of Learners

On the basis of FGD with teachers in most of the schools it was revealed that majority of the respondents considered that during play time children feel stress free, relax from overburden of academics activities, develop social bonding with each other, enhance creativity in designing and framing strategies to solve quizzes, puzzles etc.. As one of the respondent said some students keep on waiting entire week for games period, yoga period or free time so that they can relax and play. Especially after post pandemic student stamina to retain or pay attention in class and to attend one period after another has been reduced. During FGD one instance came in which one of the respondent said that through play activities it become for us to deal with behavioural problem of learners like bullying, aggression, lack of cooperation and patience to acceptance of others view points etc. few point during discussion also highlighted play activities also impact

students learning as after spending time in play activities students were able to connect themselves better in theory classes. It was concealed that play activities lead to holistic development of learners personality which would be in future better able to become productive citizen of society.

- **Challenges or obstacles faced in Integrating Play Activities into daily time table of school**

Though it was accepted urge by all respondents play is an vital element for learners holistic development but lot of challenge aroused in providing time for it to all classes and students. With lot of trial and errors trick only one period was possible in entire week that too in few schools. And even lunch breaks are short, students get very less time to interact with each other and physically move out. According to few of them there are so many academic and non academic activities to be conducted and time span is less and in near about 40% of schools respondent said that in era of digital technology students want to spend more time in ICT labs or in virtual world that there body has become more lethargic.

- **Institutional changes or support systems which would further enhance the integration of play in school environment.**

From the review of research studies it was indicated that most of time of child life is spend in school and in that environment of school plays crucial role in development of personality of learners. The positive and supporting environment in school results into welcoming culture for all stakeholders.

In the present study from the observation and with FGD with teachers as a respondent it was revealed that to maximize potential of Play activities for learners holistic development institutional need to support in form of both human and non human resources. It was mentioned during discussion that one need more space and time for play activities. As few of schools were constructed in residential areas in building form with no space for outdoor activities the need for creating and managing this is required. It was also reflected from discussion that need for sports professional is also there so that proper guidance can be provided to learners.

Strategies for Enhancement of Span for Play Activities in School Environment for Holistic Development of Learners.

From the findings of the present study conducted and data analysed on the basis of Observation and FGD following strategies can be considered for optimum utilization of potential of play activities:

- Orientating Parents, Teachers and other Stakeholders about the importance of play in child development by organizing conference, talk by experts, workshops and informational sessions.
- Ensuring Involvement of teachers in planning and implementing play-based activities.
- Emphasizing School management authorities to provide space for outdoor play and nature exploration to enhance physical well-being and appreciation for the environment by inculcating activities like gardening, nature walks, and outdoor games.
- Utilizing age-appropriate technology into play activities to enhance digital literacy and creativity and by usage of educational apps and interactive tools that align with learning goals.
- Integrate play into the curriculum to make learning more enjoyable and using educational games and activities that align with academic objectives.

Conclusion

Play is not only one of the important source of development but its provides a joyful experience for children, and it opens up the world to a child. From the findings of the study as a researcher in the present study there is utmost need to provide purposeful play opportunities for children that will enhance development and lead to learning and we as educators or caretakers never forget that one of the greatest gifts of childhood is the ability to pursue seemingly insignificant interests and to explore tiny details to one's heart's content.

Hence the present study **Exploring the Impact of Enhanced Play Activity Time on Holistic Development in School Settings** need to enhance space and time for play activities has been emphasized especially in this digital era where numerous health and psychosocial behavioural issues are on high peak stage. Through play children get opportunity for holistic development and to be on the path of self development. As play based pedagogy has been stressed in NEP 2020 also, so that learning becomes joyful an meaningful.

To conclude let's remember Quote

“Children learn as they play; most importantly, in play, children learn how to learn”.

---Fred Donaldson

References

- Lunga, P., Esterhuizen, S. & Koen, M., 2022, 'Play-based pedagogy: An approach to advance young children's holistic development', *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 12(1), a1133. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v12i1.1133>
- Markova, G. (2018). The Games Infants Play: Social Games During Early Mother–Infant Interactions and their Relationship with Oxytocin. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1041. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01041>
- Mead, G.H. 1995. Medvetandet jaget och samhället från socialbehavioristisk standpunkt [Mind, self and society. From the standpoint of a social behaviorist]. Lund: Argos
- Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, Government of India, 2013 <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/National%20Early%20Childhood%20Care%20and%20Education-Resolution.pdf>
- National Education Policy 2020, GoI, New Delhi. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English.pdf
- Pellegrini, A., & Bohn, C. (2005). The Role of Recess in Children's Cognitive Performance and Children and Recess School Adjustment. *Educational Researcher*. 34(1), 13-19.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I., and M. Asplund Carlsson. 2003. Det lekande lärande barnet i en utvecklingspedagogisk teori [The playing learning child in a developmental pedagogical theory]. Stockholm: Liber.
- Smith, S. (2015). Playing to engage: Fostering engagement for children and teachers in low socioeconomic regions through science and mathematics play-based learning (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/116/> School Play Activities: Assessment of Educators' Knowledgeability of Physical, Creative and Cognitive Development of Basic Education Children May 2019 DOI:10.7176/JEP/10-15-19 www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2006-2697 doi:10.1542/peds.2006-2697