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Title of Thesis: ‘A Study of Children at Play in Different Socio-Cultural Settings’.

ABSTRACT

Educationists around the world (Fatai,2014; Kangas,2010) agree that play is the best way to channelise learning to provoke brain. Children, who are frequently busy with play activities are found to reveal superior ability in applying problem solving skills as play gives opportunities to practice, assimilate and consolidate what they know. Play interventions which include scaffolding based on socio- dramatic play help to improve language, and accelerate cognitive, social and emotional development in children.

Review of Researches focused on association of play with social competency of children, importance of including play in early childhood curriculum, role of healthy play environment in the active play of small children, how pretend play is enhancing social skills, importance of play in cognitive development of children, influence of teacher-child interactions to enhance early mathematics learning, how manipulative play regulates children’s emotions, role of socio-dramatic play to develop oral thinking in children, benefits of different play materials and effect of free play on problem solving skills, how play is related to the cultural context, effect of gender on pretend and non-pretend play, formation of play mates during dramatic and socio-dramatic play, gender difference in choice of play, and play preferences helped the researcher to focus the study in the area of importance of dramatic and socio-dramatic play of children. Researcher also examined play themes from the cultural contexts to enhance the learning of preschool children.

Naturalistic observation and video recording were done to identify the play patterns of preschoolers including dramatic play and socio-dramatic play. The influence of gender and socio-cultural environment on different play patterns was also observed. Forty children from four anganwadis belonging to different cultural settings were selected for the study. The data collected through video recordings and running records have been analysed qualitatively.

Very relevant and needed educational implications have been evolved from the study/

Allow children to play and also all the play facilities need to be provided to them. Safe, child friendly and open ended play materials may be provided to the children for developing creativity and imagination among them. Teachers' should provide congenial environment and opportunities to children to engage them in such kinds of play that leads to creativity, imagination, language development and social intelligence among the children. Care should be given to provide the play materials like Swing, Slide, Sea Saw, Ladder, Sand Pit, small garden, etc. for them. Water play area is also necessary for children. Parents may provide all the facilities and congenial environment to the children during home indoor play. Children should be allowed to mingle and play with peer groups that in turn help in the development of language, social skills, early mathematics skills, etc.

Pre-school curriculum should accommodate socio-dramatic play themes from all parts of the country and also from foreign countries that leads to early understanding of different cultures. Care may be given to provide all the facilities to the students for their proper physical development. Play materials and equipment must be provided to children irrespective of considering their gender. Barrier free environment should be created in every aspects of pre-school set up for early interventions and detection of disabled children. Parents should be aware about the importance of the play.