

Analysis of Preschool Teachers' and Six Years Old Children's Views On Play

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to reveal the opinions and the expectations of preschool teacher and six years old children about play. For this purpose, in teachers aspect; it was investigated the views of the teachers about play, definition of play, preferences of using play as a method of learning and with in this practice, opportunities of play provided for children and the barriers to children's play needs. Also in children aspect, it was examine to the views of child about play, play behavior and satisfaction and expectations regarding opportunities of play. A semi-structured interview questions was used as data collection tool. As a result, it is found that children and teachers focus on similar properties concerning the description of play, the perception of children about play was affected by teachers attitudes and behaviors. In addition, most of teachers do not realize the importance of play in the curriculum and that they do not benefit play as an active teaching method. Some of teacher are aware of deficiency on this situation and it is determined that teacher are needed to be supported.

Key Words: *Early Childhood Education, Play, Teachers Perception on Play, Children Perception on Play*

SUMMARY

The purpose of the study is to examine the views and expectations of the children attending pre-schools and pre-school teachers, regarding play. The sample of the study consisted of 59 pre-school teachers with 0 to 10 years of work experience, from various pre-schools, and 89 children within the 6 years-old age group.

METHOD

The study data were collected via two separate semi-structured interview forms designed for pre-school teachers and 6 year-olds. The forms were submitted to an examination by three experts in the field and three pre-school teachers. The form used with the children was prepared so as to determine the definitions and attributes 6 year-olds associate with play, their play-partner choices, how they spend their non-play time and their views concerning the play opportunities they are provided with. The other form consisted of questions regarding how pre-school teachers define play and how well equipped they consider themselves to be in the applications involving play.

FINDINGS

The children who participated in the study were observed to use emotion and action oriented expressions such as “playing with someone or something”, “having fun” and “rejoicing”, when defining what a play is. Whereas 27 children mentioned several play including basketball, football, hide-and-seek, kutu kutu pense¹, dön ebe², tag, playing house, Lego, puzzles and riddle play, some children explained the concept of a play with motion oriented expressions. One of the questions addressed at the children in the study was “Which one is easier? Playing or working?” The large majority of the children (58) judged playing games to be easier, whereas a small minority (7) thought that working is easier. A significant portion of the participating children (26) were found to consider playing games as less important in comparison to the activities they consider to be work. Another question addressed to the children was “Who do play games?” Whereas a large majority of the children (63) answered “children”, the number of children who stated that parents or teachers play games was considerably low (10). When the last question was complemented with “Do grown-ups play games?”, a minority (13) replied “yes”, the majority (52) replied “no” and 12 children replied “sometimes”. To determine the play-partner choices of the participating children, they were asked “Playing with whom is more fun?”. 51 children stated that it is more fun to play with their friends. To the question “What do your parents do while you are playing?”, the great majority of the children (37) replied “household chores.” Only 1 child stated that her mother or father play with her. In order to determine what teachers do during free-play time, the participating children were asked “What does your teacher do while you are playing?” A significant portion of the participating children (26) stated that more often than not, teachers prepared for activities and lessons, worked on their files and computers while they are playing. The number of children who stated that the teachers play with them was considerably low (9) and only 11 children said that they are observed by their teachers while playing.

1 A children's game which involves singing and dancing.

2 A children's game which involves gentle slaps on the back of a designated target child. If the person who delivers the slap is caught in the act, he or she becomes the target.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we tried to determine the thoughts of pre-school children and pre-school teachers about play. When the views of the participating children and teachers were analyzed, it was clear that both children and teachers emphasize the fun and entertaining nature of play most in their definitions. The fact that a small number of teachers define play as a method for learning can be associated with the underutilization of play as a learning opportunity. In a study in order to determine teachers' views concerning play, it was observed that in contrast with children, teachers focus on the effects of play on social, physical, cognitive development. According to the results of their study, whether children will identify an activity as "play" or "not play" and prefer a particular activity as play are chiefly contingent on whether it is fun or not. The degree of freedom of movement an activity allows and its character are significant in its being perceived as play. Some children who participated in our study used the expression "If you have to sit down and do something, then it's work." The level of difficulty of an activity, whether it requires active or passive participation of the children are also important in determining whether it will be perceived as play. It is also observed that inter-personal relations, the presence, cooperation and joint preference of partners from the same age group, siblings or adults also influence the perceptions regarding play. The results of our study indicate that the majority of children find it to be more fun to play with their friends. Similar findings were obtained in a study where all participating children stated that they prefer to play with other children rather than adults, when asked their preference. As justification for their preference, the children argued that it is more fun to play with their friends because they can run and have fun, whereas adults are too serious to play games, and if adults wanted to play games they had to act like children.

CONCLUSION

Whereas the results of our study indicate similarities between the way the children and the teachers define play, they also show that the perceptions of the children concerning play are influenced by the attitudes and behavior of their teachers. This leads children to perceive adults to be outside the domain of play. It was also among the findings of our study that teachers do not notice the importance of play within an education program and they do not use it as an active teaching method. Finally, it was found that some teachers are aware of their inadequacies in this area and require support.

