An investigation of Early Childhood Educators’ Perspectives Towards Outdoor Play

Hatice Sebnem Cetken, M.Sc.
Dept. of Elementary & Early Childhood Education
College of Education
Usak, TURKEY

Serap Sevimli-Celik, PhD
Dept. of Elementary & Early Childhood Education,
College of Education
Ankara, TURKEY
Play

- Positive Effect
- Self-replicated
- Instinctive
- Enjoyable
- Process Oriented

(Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010; Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005)
Play and Developmental Domains

Physical
(Gross & fine motor skills, healthy body)

Social
(Self-confidence, fairness, working cooperatively)

Cognitive
(Problem solving skills, new rules and concepts, creative thinking)

Play

Play: Then and Now

Natural

Manufactured

Group

Solitary

Outdoor

Indoor

Outdoor Play Environments

19th Century
- Simple Climbing Structures
- Sandbox

Industrialization and World War II
- Traditional Playgrounds

World War II
- Adventure Playgrounds

Last Child in the Woods
- Natural Playgrounds

(Clandaniel, 2009; Frost, 2012; Moore, 2006)
Traditional (standardized) playgrounds are common which have large, open areas equipped with monkey bars and swings so children’s play preferences are limited.

(Frost, 2012; Olgan & Kahrıman-Öztürk, 2011)
Parental Attitudes Toward Outdoor Play:

Parents believe:

- chance to make children physically active. They can observe and determine children’s abilities.
- Not satisfied with outdoor playgrounds safety, design of play areas, the lack of green spaces, traffic, dangerous strangers and possibility of children getting dirty

(Clements, 2004; Cevher-Kalburan, 2014; Erbay & Durmuṣoğlu-Saltalı, 2012)
Parental and Teacher’s Attitudes Toward Outdoor Play

Teacher’s Attitudes Toward Outdoor Play:

Teachers believe:

- Supervision and guidance have key role
- Design important: climbing equipment, shade, open space and fewer obstruction
- Limited outdoor play: weather conditions, parental concerns, environmental features, lack of knowledge and equipment

(Alat, Akgümüş & Cavalı, 2012; Davies, 1997; McClintic and Petty, 2015)
Purpose

- To investigate early childhood educator’s attitudes,
- practices,
- experiences towards outdoor play.
Method

Participants:

- 30 early childhood educators (between 23 & 50 years of age)
- 6 preschools
Data Collection

- Semi-structured questionnaire (13 questions)
  - Outdoor place
  - Teacher roles
  - Outdoor play and materials
  - School equipment
  - Children’s preferences

- Analysis:
  - Content and Descriptive

- Spring Semester
Results

What are the features that distinguish outdoor play from indoor play?

• Large area (n=30)
• Recognition of nature (n=27)
• Material diversity (n=23)
• Health (n=15)
• Physical development (n=15)
• Creating play and love of nature (n=1)
Results

What are the developmental benefits of outdoor play?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Social-Emotional</th>
<th>Physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity (n=6)</td>
<td>Friendship (n=8)</td>
<td>Spending energy (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving skills (n=6)</td>
<td>Liaising (n=7)</td>
<td>Gross and fine motor development (n=19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration (n=5)</td>
<td>Self expression (n=6)</td>
<td>Recognition of body (n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity (n=6)</td>
<td>Sharing (n=5), self-confidence (n=5), learning to win and lose (n=5)</td>
<td>Sensory development (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause effect relationship, brain storming and making reasoning (n=2)</td>
<td>Reduce stress (n=3), learning empathy (n=3)</td>
<td>Space awareness (n=3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

What are the teacher roles and participation status in outdoor play?

Table 3. Teacher roles during outdoor play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security Guard</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Leader</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Manager</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coplayer</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onlooker</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Teacher participation status in outdoor play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Participate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Participate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally Participate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Time Devoted for Outdoor Play in Teachers Daily Program?

Table 6. Time Devoted for Outdoor Play in Teachers Daily Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Schools (n=6)</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>60 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>35-40 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10-15 min.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Seasonal differences (n=21), cold weather (n=19)
Results

- **Teacher Preparations for Outdoors (n=17)**
  Related with educational program, environmental education, traditional games

- **No Preparations for Outdoors (n=13)**
  mostly have specific time for outdoor play

- **Materials Taken to Outdoor (n=25)**
  ball, ropes, balloon, puzzles, magnifying glass, playdough, no loose materials
Results

Which Types of Outdoor Play, Materials and Equipment Children Prefer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play Types</th>
<th>Structured Play</th>
<th>Semi-structured Play</th>
<th>Unstructured Play</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Football,</td>
<td>Playing tag</td>
<td></td>
<td>Play house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball,</td>
<td>Tumbling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Digging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>Climbing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Snowman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopscotch</td>
<td>Bike</td>
<td></td>
<td>Snowball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hide and seek</td>
<td>Hula hoop</td>
<td></td>
<td>Playing with mud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind man’s bluff</td>
<td>Swinging</td>
<td></td>
<td>Playing at sand pit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodgeball</td>
<td>Playing with rope</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Playground equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circle games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open-ended Materials:</th>
<th>Closed-ended Materials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blocks</td>
<td>playground equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural materials</td>
<td>scooter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>latches</td>
<td>Bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cups</td>
<td>roller skate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>magnifying glass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

What Are The Outdoor Play Materials and Equipment in Schools?

*Materials schools (n=6) have:*

- Swing
- Climbing equipment
- Balls
- Slides
- Trees
- Seesaw
- Hula hoop

- Sand pit (n=2)
- Cardboard box (n=1)
- Plastic box (n=1)
- Shovel / rake (n=1)
- Shed (n=1)
- Water (n=1)
- Playing house materials (n=1)
Conclusion

- Positive attitudes lack of information for practices.

- Cold weather

- (Norway, Finland, Waldorf schools, forest schools)

‘There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.’

Alfred Wainwright
Conclusion

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention-CDCP – at least an hour physical activity

- Ministry of Education – educational programs

- Equipment and materials

- Teacher roles:
  - stage manager
  - play leader
  - security guard
THANK YOU

Hatice Sebnem Cetken
sebnem.cetken@usak.edu.tr

Serap Sevimli-Celik
ssevimli@metu.edu.tr