



In the Nation's Good: Acceptance of Right to Play



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Recommended Citation of this Article: - Shirotriya, A.K. (2013). *In the Nation's Good: Acceptance of Right to Play*. Journal of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, 1 (1), 23-27.

Abstract

Play is so important to optimal child development. Play is an inevitable reality of life as well as a medium of education. The right to play is a matter of great concern around the globe. It is being observed that a majority of the children become adult without playing thus negatively effecting physical, mental and social aspects of their personality. Constitutional provision of Right to Play will ensure Play i.e. physical activity opportunities which is inherent need of all the citizens of India to ensure health, fitness and well being irrespective of age, cast, color, creed & social status. We must raise awareness about the importance of playing for building a wholesome personality of a child.

Key Words: Right to Play; U.N.; Physical Education; Article 31; Play India Play

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Full Length Paper

"The right to play is a child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens."

(David Lloyd George, 1925)

Play is so important to optimal child development. Play is an inevitable reality of life as well as a medium of education. The right to play is a matter of great concern around the globe. But it is very unfortunate to note that "Play" is being denied to the children of developing countries because of the factors like wrongly conceived education policies, poverty, social customs, less importance to play in academics, attitude of teachers, parents and school administrators, urbanization, mechanization etc. and India is no exception to it.

It is being observed that a majority of the children become adult without playing thus negatively effecting physical, mental and social aspects of their personality. Games & Sports teaches fair play, cooperation, respect for opponent, team work and breaks down social barriers helping children to acquire positives from others. Even the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) advocates children's right to play.

Given the benefits of play and the consequences of playlessness, it is clear that play is fundamentally linked to children's rights as a whole. Play is not a luxury to be considered after other rights, it is an essential and integral component underpinning the four principles of the CRC (non-discrimination, survival and development, the best interests of the child, and participation). Adults should be aware of the importance of play, and promote and protect the conditions that support it. Any intervention to promote play must acknowledge its characteristics and allow sufficient flexibility, unpredictability and security for children to play freely. However, children's play belongs to children, adults should not destroy children's own places for play through insensitive planning or the pursuit of other adult agendas, or by creating places and programmes that segregate children and control their play.



Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that:

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

The Right to Play

The two elements of article 31 highlight three separate but interrelated roles for States Parties: recognizing, respecting and promoting children’s right to play.

- ✓ **Recognizing** the importance of play in children’s lives is the building block for respecting and promoting it as a right. This requires a sound understanding of the nature and benefits of play.
- ✓ **Respecting** the right to play requires States Parties ‘not to deny or limit access to the enjoyment of rights’ (CESCR, cited in Carvalho 2008: 555). This definition sits well with the approach that sees play as something belonging to children, rather than requiring direct organization by adults, it highlights the need for adults to be sensitive to children’s propensity to play wherever they find themselves (Eisen 1990, Ward 1990). This requires adults to respect this understanding of play when planning environments specifically aimed at children (such as schools, hospital wards, childcare settings and play provision). It also requires adults to respect children’s play when organizing the general economy and environment, for example town and traffic planning in urban areas, industry and agriculture, conflict zones, and responses to natural disasters, as recognized by Camfield et al. (2009).
- ✓ **Promoting** children’s right to play is necessary because it’s fundamental importance is often overlooked, being understood by adults as ‘a luxury rather than a necessity of life’ (Hodgkin and Newell 2007: 469). And although children find ways and means of playing, the prioritization of adult agendas in political and economic processes can often ride roughshod over children’s ability



to exercise their right to play, both in everyday life and in extreme circumstances. Promotion may involve ensuring that the conditions are right for children to play.

In this sense, it is not solely the responsibility of States Parties to respect children's right to play, there is a need to promote it to other adults, since the tendency to ignore, obstruct or colonize children's play is common across all adults, from policy-makers to professionals, caregivers and the general public.

Impact of Right to Play

Constitutional provision of Right to Play will ensure Play i.e. physical activity opportunities which is inherent need of all the citizens of India to ensure health, fitness and well being irrespective of age, cast, color, creed & social status.

- ✓ Healthy & Fit nation.
- ✓ National Integration, Peace & Harmony
- ✓ Positive channelization of physical & mental energy.
- ✓ Economic growth through sports industries
- ✓ Creation of jobs in Physical Education & Sports
- ✓ Improved International image particularly in sports context.

Conclusion

“A child has a right to play. Parents have a responsibility to make sure that children are given freedom to play. Parents are supposed to encourage children to play because it helps their growth. Children are not supposed to be overworked with homework or work at home. Children should be left to play.”

The policies makers of India need to better understand and promote the benefits of unstructured play in children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. Play in a child's life is critical for development of a healthy, confident and well-adjusted individual. Governments, parents and child advocates need to work together to ensure that the child's right to play is protected and not eroded by other agendas or misinformed views about the needs of children.



Play India Play (Trust) urges every Indian to raise awareness about the importance of playing for building a wholesome personality of a child.

Acknowledgement

Author would like to record his sincere thanks to **Dr. M.I. Quraishi**, Director, Physical Education, DAVV, Indore (MP) for his encouragement, motivation and suggestions for this article.

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