

Significance of Play in Early Childhood Education Curriculum

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Abstract

Play is integral to children's optimal development. This is because play enhances the holistic development in the four major domains of child development: Physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. This is a concept paper that presents a discussion of play and its significance in early childhood education curriculum. The paper explores definitions and characteristics of play, objectives of early childhood education, theories of play, types of play, the role of the teacher in children's play and the contribution of play in children's holistic development. The paper further highlights a number of challenges affecting children's play in the contemporary society, the effects of play deprivation in children and effective actions in support of children play. This paper recommends that the school environment and curriculum should support children's play in many ways: Provision of adequate time for play; provision of a variety of appropriate materials and activities; enhancement of teachers' support for children's play; and provision of open, safe and adequate space for play. The discussion in this paper enlightens teachers, parents, teacher educators and curriculum planners on the importance of supporting play activities for children's holistic development.

Key words: Play, Early childhood education, Child development, Curriculum

Full-text: <http://www.kaeam.or.ke/articles/v10/Paper5.pdf>