

How Do Preschool Children and Teachers Recognize Their Playgrounds?



Kiyomi AKITA (The University of Tokyo) kakita@p.u-tokyo.ac.jp
Yuta MIYAMOTO (The University of Tokyo / JSPS research fellow)
Machiko TSUJITANI (The University of Tokyo / JSPS research fellow)
Takayo SUGIMOTO (Aichi University / The University of Tokyo)
Mariko MIYATA (Shiraume Gakuen University)



Outline

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- ② Research Aim
- ③ Methods / Analysis
- ④ Results
- ⑤ Discussion and Future Issues



①Background

- In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in creating an appropriate environment through playground settings, which are very important in the development of young children (Fjortoft, 2001, Tortella et al., 2016).
- Many research studies point to the *importance of physical environments* for children.
- The environment is like “the third teacher” (Malagucchi, 1992).
- The environment is related with children’s socio-emotional and cognitive development (Giudici, 2013).

The Context in Japan

- Japanese national curriculum guidelines have emphasized

‘Education through the Physical Environment’.

(Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2016)

Physical environment in everyday-life settings afford the children’s involvement in the activity and is one of the important factors of process quality.

- We regard play as the child’s voluntary activities and actions that promote individual growth, both physically and mentally. The playground is a very important place for their development.

② Research Aim

This research aims...

- 1) to compare two concepts: preschool children's recognition of playground activities and teachers' recognition of what children think about these activities. To examine the voice of child and the voice of teachers to probe what playgrounds mean to them.
- 2) to identify potential differences between the pedagogical considerations of adults who design outdoor spaces for young children and children's recognition of the playground environment

Previous Research Works

Importance of the place

The places in which children play could determine their definition of play (Howard et al., 2013).

From children's, teachers', and parents' perspective

Practitioners and researchers must pay close attention to children's, teachers' and practitioners' actions and voices. **Mosaic approach**
(Clark and Moss, 2001)

Difference in recognition

There is an apparent difference in recognizing playgrounds as children's or adults'
(Lester and Maudsley, 2006).

Previous research of our projects

Japanese research has come to recognize children's playgrounds as tools for listening to children's voices (Miyamoto et al., 2016.). There are big variances among play grounds all over Japan (Tsujitani et al., 2017)

③ Method /Analysis

Methods

- **Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2001)**
 - Listening to children's, teachers and parents' voices
- **Photo Projective Method (Smith and Barker, 1999; Morrow, 2001)**
 - Take three pictures using a camera
- **Individual Interview (Einarsdottir, 2009)**
 - What? How? Why?

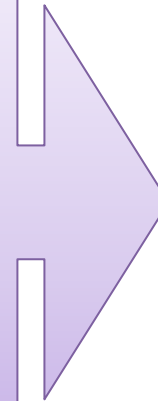
Participants

- 4 preschools • 4 to 6 year-olds (85 children)
13 of their teachers



Children took three photos of their favourite places to play in with a digital camera.

Teachers were asked to take photos that they think were children's favorite places in playgrounds.



They were asked the name of the place and the reason why they like it (Teacher: why they think children like there). The places were analyzed based on their reasons.

Children's favorite places of playgrounds (Miyamoto et al., 2016,2017)

Two types of children's reasoning

**(1)Psychological
characteristics**

A state...

- 1) in which something is always present at a location.
- 2) in which something makes someone feel dizzy.
- 3) in which something makes someone feel the difference in height.

**(2)Spatial
characteristic**

The place...

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) like a secret hideaway | 2) related to past experience |
| 3) diversity and electability | 4) affected by other children |
| 5) expressed in children's own norms | 6) to be able to challenge |
| 7) to wait and meet | 8) with a wish in mind |

④ Results 1: Children's recognition

- **Children's favorite place:** Psychological factors, 'playing at any time children want to play', 'feeling dizzy, swinging' differences of height' are important for children.
- Children point to places that teachers do not assume to be 'playground' (e.g. school ground, net in the building)
- **Differences of centers:** Children's favorite places are influenced by centers' visions, physical structures, activities and events.
- **Children's perspectives and recognition:** Photos reflect children's view and their values of features.

Example of photo taken by a child : A swing
“I can push and pull it with friends” (Tsujitani et als.,2016)



Example of photo : A pipe

“This is a perfect for parking area in playing car. ”

“We think together here when we make movie theater.”



Example of photo : A slide

“We can slide together and go out. “



Children's voice

- ❑ Children's favorite place: Psychological factors, 'playing at any time children want to play', 'feel dizzy, swinging' differences of height' are important for children



I get a feeling of comfort in swinging (swing)



I can see the town from the top (climbing bars)

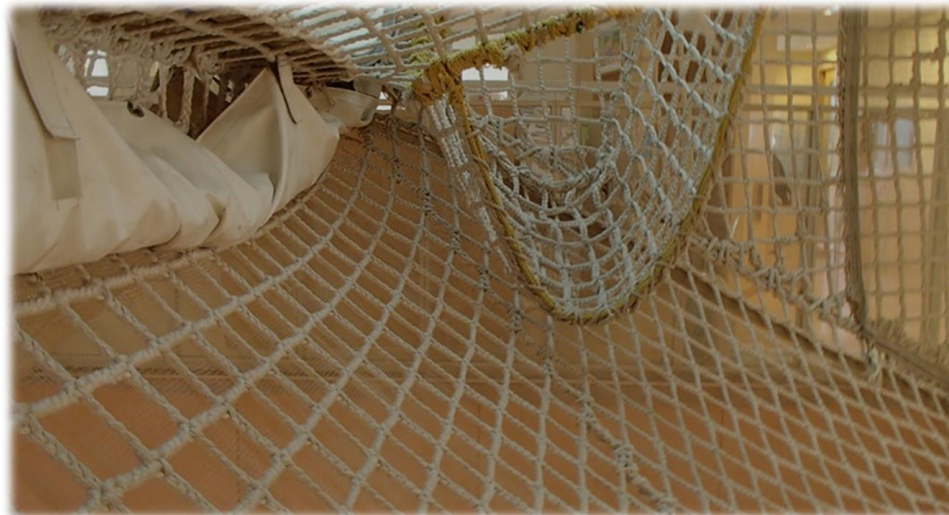


I can always play and use it everyday

Children's favorite places are influenced by centers' pedagogical principle, physical structures, activities and events

【Example】

- net : Physical structure of institutions
- school yard : collaboration between preschool and elementary school



Results 2: Teachers' recognition

- **Teachers' recognition about children's favorite play grounds:** Teachers think that children should like the place's sense of security and places of involvement and ingenuity.
- There are differences between teachers' recognition between centers.



Table 1: Differences between centers.

Center Characteristics		Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
Spatial	Diversity • Choice	14(14.9%)	8(18.6%)	1(5.3%)	1(7.7%)
	Secret place • Hideaway	7(7.4%)	4(9.3%)	0(0%)	2(15.4%)
	Imagination • Creativity	9(9.6%)	2(4.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
	Openness • Clarity	10(10.6%)	2(4.7%)	1(5.3%)	0(0%)
Psychological	Transmission • Stimulus	4(4.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
	Acceptance	3(3.2%)	1(2.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
	Involvement • Elaboration	9(9.5%)	7(16.3%)	5(26.3%)	2(15.4%)
	Reflection	1(1.1%)	0(0%)	2(10.5%)	0(0%)
	Transformation	2(2.1%)	0(0%)	1(5.3%)	0(0%)
	Observation • Taking a rest	3(3.2%)	5(11.6%)	4(21.1%)	1(7.7%)
	Meeting place at different class, grade	17(17.9%)	12(27.9%)	4(21.1%)	4(30.8%)
	Junction	9(9.5%)	1(2.3%)	0(0%)	3(23.1%)
	Collaboration	1(1.1%)	1(2.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
other	Anticipate	5(5.3%)	0(0%)	1(5.3%)	0(0%)
Total		94(100%)	43(100%)	19(100%)	13(100%)

Table 2: Numbers and proportion of answers

Features	Teachers	Children
Spatial factors	69(40.6%)	37(14.1%)
Psychological factors	95(55.9%)	226(85.9%)
Other	6(3.5%)	0(0%)
Total	170(100%)	263(100%)

- They considered the spatial and psychological factors of the children. However, children tended to prefer the psychological factor to the spatial factor.



Teachers' voices



Making mud
dumping absorb
(below athletic
instruments)



Children play in hiding
place (background
space of hall)



Children keep
away from
teachers and
peers (corner for
reading picture
books)

Result 3: The differences between children and teachers' recognition on places

- Teachers considered the meaning behind children's playground selections from various perspectives. They were aware of the differences in perceptions between children and adults.
- Teachers tended to perceive children's favorite playgrounds as their secure base. They considered the spatial and psychological factors of the children. However, children tended to prefer the psychological factors to the spatial factors.

- The items prohibited in the playgrounds make the gaps between teachers' recognition and children's recognition visible, and they give teachers' notices and reflection on the environment and promote re-design of the settings.
- Listening to multiple perspectives enabled us to better understand children's conflicting feelings about their favorite playgrounds.



Running through the passage is prohibited. But children want to run through it.

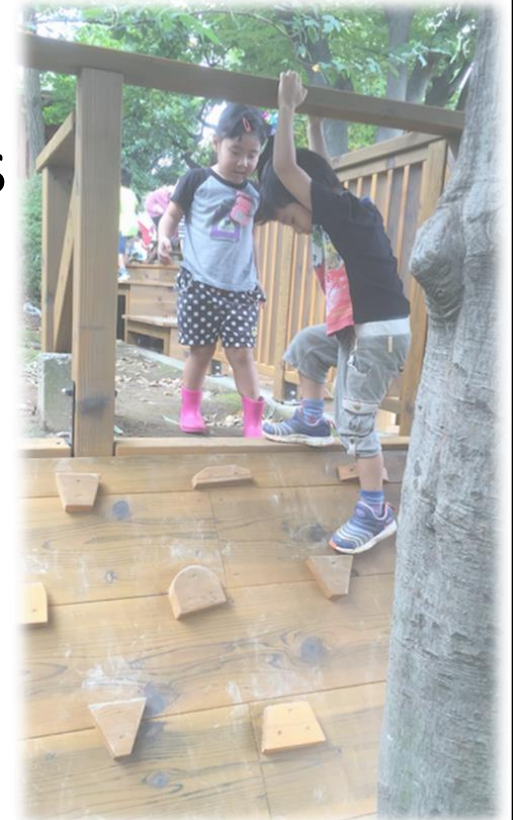


To tie a rope with play instruments is restricted because of safety. But children enjoy playing with it.



⑤ Conclusion

- Listening to multiple perspectives enabled us to better understand children's conflicting feelings about their favorite playgrounds.
- The method of the Mosaic approach using photos is very useful for teachers to reflect on the space's redesign from children's perspective.



Future Issues

- What kinds of gaps there are between teachers and children should be addressed in detail further. Many factors would be related to the gaps: the centers' pedagogical principles, children's age, teachers' beliefs on play and playground etc.
- The numbers of centers in this research are limited. So we are discussing more the possibilities of diversity for improve quality of playgrounds.
- We need to listen to parents' voices.

