The Impact of Child Behavior and Perceptions on Children Playgrounds Design within Schools

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ABSTRACT

Children are the foundation of society and its future. In order to make them productive citizens, we must take a very good care of their physical and mental health. This paper reviewed the relationship between child behavior and Perceptions and playground characteristics, Equipments and scenes at schools by using Interviews with the students and teachers of the schools and field survey to investigate place characteristics and children behavior, interaction and Preferences according to their age and how to use that on design and planning process of children's playgrounds at schools to satisfy every Age group needs and demands. This will enhance Childs relationship with both natural and social environment instead of spending his time with computer games and indoor isolation.

INTRODUCTION

The Convention on the Rights of the Child stated that the child’s circumstances are such as to allow the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential [1].

According to the famous child psychologist Piaget, the children acquire experience while playing, find the cause and effect relations among interactions and improve their mental abilities. Under this condition development will be happened in both of cognitive and intellectual scope [2].

Playgrounds help children in better learning of social rules and regulations and in acquire control over their feelings as well as being creative when they form their own games. They are also important from two other points of view: Such areas provide atmospheres for the children to get in direct contacts with the children of their own age and enable them to interact with the place natural elements, equipments and scenes. It is an important element in children’s lives and continues to mirror their overall pattern of social, physical and cognitive developments [6].

The other aspect of a school playground is that to build a strong relationship between the student and his school through Pleasant memories and impressions that he had from playing, seeing, feeling, interacting and all kinds of physical and mental Satisfaction he Experiences through the day and how will all that support children Concentration on their lessons with happiness and passion as well as supporting their health and physical conditions, on the contrary of the computer games that decrease the physical activities of the children and lead to such aftermaths as obesity, isolation and loosing attention and interaction. Finally, training the child at school influences on his or her skills growth which in the future is very effectively.

Methodology:

In the conducted study we have chosen ten Primary and intermediate schools of two adjacent residential sectors at Baghdad which share the same Demographic characteristics. These schools cover the age groups that we are going to classify. We used Interviews with the students and teachers of the schools to find out what are their Perceptions, Preferences and problems that related to school playgrounds they might have. We have also investigated place characteristics and child behavior, interaction and preferences through field survey and observations.

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In order to analyze all these various data information’s, we Classified them into three groups according to children ages: (group1) from 6 to 8, (group2) from 8 to 11 and group 3 from 11 to 14. To come out with the best design principles that Satisfy every children age group needs and demands at school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on child behavior at school playgrounds of the whole three age groups in order to come out with the best design and planning process of children’s playgrounds at schools which might be useful for future plans. In this paper, we are going to take four child’s behavior aspects:

- **Perceptions:**
  Children have certain perceptions towards place such as place elements, scenes, characteristics and equipments’. These Perceptions might be different from one age group to another.

- **Preferences:**
  This would include game Preferences and place Preferences. Every age group has different Interests and preferences of their favourite games and places. Play takes many forms, but the heart of play is pleasure – an important component in learning’ [3]. for games, some children prefer to play alone while others want to play as a group of two or three children or more. On the other hand, some children prefer watching without participating. Even watching might be alone or as a group. And finally, we have children who like to play games they form by themselves while others prefer to use playing equipments.
  For place preferences, there are various spots, walking paths, sport fields, watersides, open yards, green areas, seating’s and playing equipments. Such spaces that could be Suitable for each group.

- **Problems:**
  Many kinds of problems we can observe at school playgrounds which can be arising from the playing activities in this setting such as lack of safety, nuisance and competition between children, crowded playgrounds, dirty corners, adequacy and dissatisfaction.

- **Interactions:**
  We have two types of children interactions, social and environmental.
  The social dimension of play focuses on collaborative and cooperative skills fostered by children as they play with each other. At the same time there is a strong relationship between the playground features and the functions of play through exploratory play.
  The natural environment side by side with playing elements can form a valuable source for diverse learning, friendship and diverse play habitats for children [4]. The suitable and right play environment can promote social interaction, self confidence, individuality and a sense of responsibility [5].
  Now we have every age group according to their four behaviour aspects:
  There is a relationship between environmental factors and physical activities that affects every age preference, for group 3, natural elements such as watersides, trees, bushes and green fields are more preferable. While designed playground equipments with bright shining and contrasting colors are the favorite features for group 1 and 2.
  The presence of younger children may hinder the play of older children and cause their injury. Therefore, there should be designated places for every age group in a way that Ensures their safety and satisfaction. However, there should be Comprehensive certain spaces that allow the different children ages to play at the same time and area but with different landscape elements and colors that show every group identity without any Collision between groups to enhance social children interaction visually and acoustically and support community spirit, cooperation and sympathy.
  The design should be in a way to ensure the child’s freedom of movement and to give him or her, the feeling of success. For group 1 and 2, the instrument would engage the child’s entire body, like in pushing, pulling, running, jumping and escaping activities. While sports like football, basketball and swimming are more beneficial for group 3.

**Conclusion:**

Designer should recognize his target group as a first step for designing a playground. It is important for him to deal with users and understand about their needs. All that could help him to improve a good product in direction of developing mental activity and creativity. The scale and proportion should be compatible with the physical and emotional abilities of children of all age groups. All equipments should be designed and constructed with safety features, free from sharp surfaces, tough and highly durable for all age groups. Comfortable, secure, attractive and creative spaces which lay the foundation for the child’s physical and mental...
growth, are from the points which should be taken into consideration by designers. The playgrounds should be
designed in a way to facilitate the child's planning for getting involved in an activity. And should facilitate
cooperation among a group of children without creating nuisance for the others. The playgrounds should have
both instruments for the children in higher age groups and those for group games of younger children.

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