

LESSON 28

PLAY CENTRE: STRUCTURAL DETAILS

SUMMARY

The play centre is a space for 2–5-year-olds to come and play, explore and interact. In order that they may do so in safety and may develop to their optimal best, one needs to focus on the details of setting up a play centre.

Location and Space requirements

A play centre provides a play and activity-based programme so it needs adequate amount of space. The other requisites are - a site which is easily accessible to children, safe from hazards/dangers like heavy traffic, ponds, ditches, pollution, etc., proper sanitation and ventilation should be provided.

Organization of space for various activities-

(A) Play areas - Outdoors and Indoors

Outdoors – The minimum area required for a child to play outside is three to five square meters per child. It is better if this area has hard surface for playing with different kind of toys such cycles, balls. If there is more area then this, there should be provision for grassy lawn where children can play, run, do gardening, have sand box and pets.

Major precautions for an outside play area are - regular in outline for easy supervision, securely fenced for safety, free from sharp/pointy objects such as nails, etc., away from huge pits, water tanks etc., and should have clear pathway.

Indoors – the play space inside a play centre should have the following characteristics -

Indoor Play space

- minimum area of 2 square meters per child
- be adaptable, flexible and viable
- be facilitative of supervision
- be well ventilated and have adequate light
- walls should be clean and well plastered
- walls should have ample space for display of children's work and other pictorial material
- have mat and a set of low and light tables (about 30 cm high) for a group of 6–8 children for art work etc.
- have provision of blackboard at low level for scribbling etc.
- have low racks for putting children's belongings, toys, etc.,
- have place for self-expression e.g. dancing, dramatic play, music appreciation, etc.

(B) Space for Interaction with the Environment - This includes garden space for flowers, vegetables and fruits, small space for rabbit and bird cages, bird nest, indoor science corner offering opportunities to the child to explore, experiment and understand nature.

(C) Facility for Drinking Water - A play centre should have arrangement for - clear and pure

drinking water and provision for washing utensils.

(D) Sanitary Facilities - The sanitary facilities in a play school should have - clean Indian type toilet that should be provided with adequate water facilities and provision of dustbin, soap and towel.

(E) Sleeping Facility - This is required when the play centre functions for full day or longer than 3 hours. Children must definitely sleep for some time. For this purpose, besides space, clean mat or mattresses, sheets and pillows are also required.

(F) Storage Facility - Storage space is needed for keeping children's play items and also kitchen utensils used for the snacks provided to children.

(G) Kitchen Area - A well ventilated, spacious, kitchen area that is easy to clean is required. It should have space for cooking, washing and storage of utensils, etc.

Equipment in the play centre

Some basic points of the developmental level of children, durability, safety, complexity etc. need to be kept in mind while purchasing or using any equipment.

Characteristics of good play equipment –

Educational Characteristics

- No discrimination between boys and girls' toys
- Strong and long lasting
- Provide for choice and graduated changes
- Involve the child's imagination
- Encourage co-operation among children

Design characteristics

- Multi-use, flexible and Child-safe
- Made of different materials (wood, rubber, metal, rope, sand, etc.)
- Proportionate and quantitative

Constructional characteristics

- Splinter free wood, sturdy hardware
- Dependable (always works)
- Cost effective and economic, Repairable

Outdoor and Indoor Play equipment

The type of play equipment and the number will depend on the number and age of children, outdoor and indoor play space and the funds available for the purchase and maintenance of the play equipment in a play centre.

Play equipments

Outdoor play equipments - swings, tricycles, jungle gym, slide, balls, rocking toys, push carts, ladders, sand pit toys, easel board, plastic tubs

Indoor - building blocks, constructive toys such as house building sets, picture puzzles, doll house equipments, science equipment, musical instruments, carpentry tools, beads, peg board plastic or wooden material shapes, puppets, transport, display boards, picture books, story books, animal toys, blackboard and chalk, stationary supply, clay, waste bins etc.

First Aid Kit – it should have bandages, thermometer, sticking plaster, scissors, sterilized surgical cotton wood, antiseptic ointment, gauze etc.

Play Centre Staff



Care giver - A care giver has a key influence on the quality of service provided. S/he is a person responsible for the activities and programmes conducted in the play centre to achieve the established goals and objectives. Necessary training in the area is an important qualification.



Assistant - The house keeping services needed at any play centre such as cleaning of the play centre premises, laying out equipment and minding equipment and other items in a play centre require an assistant. The assistant should love children and be ready to care for them at all times. The assistant needs to be on duty helping the children and the teacher to handle the situation effectively.



Cook - Meal preparation requires a cook on the staff list. The cook must have clean habits and observe them in the cooking area. S/he should be ready to take directions from the teacher to prepare nutritious and tasteful food on time. The cook should know reading and writing. He/she should have passed at least eighth standard.

Though the number of staff is influenced by the programme, finance, building, provision of equipment, number of children, age of children, training of teacher etc. there should be one adult for every 10—15 children.

Responsibilities of a Play centre Caregiver/Teacher -

To Herself

- remain in good physical and emotional health at all times
- be progressive and enthusiastic
- grow professionally

To the children

- meet their needs, enjoy working and being with them
- respect them as individuals
- build desirable relationship with them, and help to build a good self-image

To the parents

- provide good counselling and value them and their ideas
- plan with them for the well-being of the child,
- bridge the gap between the home and the school.

To other staff members

- support their ideas and knowledge
- involve them in the programme

To the Community

- be aware of the problems of the community and try to solve them,
- participate in local professional organization pertaining to the welfare of children.

Evaluate Yourself

1. Suggest responsibilities to a teacher herself in the play centre.
2. What are the characteristics of good play equipment?
3. Discuss the location requirements for a play centre.