



O.M.E.P.

Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire
World Organization for Early Childhood Education
Organización Mundial para la Educación Preescolar

OMEP World Project

Play and Resilience

Concept Note

1. Background

Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of significant sources of stress and recover from setbacks. In other words, it is the quality of “bouncing back” (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2015)¹. Ginsburg and Jablow (2015) identify “7 Crucial Cs” that resilience constitutes, including *competence* (ability to handle situations effectively), *confidence* (belief in one’s own abilities), *connection* (close ties to family, friends, school, and community), *character* (sense of right and wrong), *contribution* (understanding of the importance of personal contribution), *coping* (ability to cope effectively with stress), and *control* (ability to control the outcomes of their decision). Being resilient does not mean that a person does not experience difficulty or distress. However, rather than engaging in self-doubt, catastrophic thinking or victimization, s/he seeks solutions and is able to rise above the difficult circumstances. A person might be resilient in one aspect but need much higher levels of support in another. Although resilience is uneven, it can be developed and enhanced, and early childhood is an important window of time for promoting resilience, especially through play (Masten & Gewirtz, 2006)².

Ginsburg and Jablow (2015) call play as “childhood’s inborn tool to build resilience” (p.47). Like crying or eating or making sounds, children do not have to be taught how to play. It is instinctive, voluntary, often spontaneous and can be in any forms. It is children’s means of learning to live. It helps children “know” through experience rather than by direct instruction (Else, 2009)³. They may test their hypotheses, discover new things, and learn from their mistakes in their own ways and to the best of their knowledge and ability. As playing often involves thoughts and feelings, fantasy and creativity, friendships and communities, as well as physical interactions and activities, it contributes to children’s cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being. Therefore, the more children play, the more competent they become in controlling over themselves and their environment. Playing

¹ Ginsburg, K. R., & Jablow, M. M. (2015). *Building resilience in children and teens: Giving kids roots and wings* (3rd edition). Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.

² Masten, A. S., & Gewirtz, A. H. (2006). Resilience in development: The importance of early childhood. In R. E. Tremblay, R. G. Barr, & R. DeV. Peters, eds. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development* [online]. Montreal, Quebec: Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development. Retrieved from: <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/documents/Masten-GewirtzANGxp.pdf>.

³ Else, P. (2009). *The value of play*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.



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helps children gain a sense of control with an accompanying sense of achievement and confidence. These are especially important in the face of adversity, when children need to navigate their way to stimuli in their environments that may help overcome the obstacles or provide opportunities to experience feelings of well-being (Ungar, 2008)⁴. In other words, playing leads to the development of a resilient profile (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2015; Lester & Russell, 2010⁵).

As play can be in any forms, the exact classification of different types of play is still under debate. Sutton-Smith (1997)⁶ once identified over 300 types. Hughes (2006)⁷ points out 16 major types, including communication play, creative play, deep play, dramatic play, fantasy play, social-dramatic play, etc. A problem with the above classifications is that the different play categories are often not mutually-exclusive, and the many categories are not easy for people to understand and memorize the differences. For the purpose of this world project, we simplified the classification and distinguish play into three categories according to the level of adult intervention and rules set: self-directed play, exploratory play, and structured play (Figure 1).

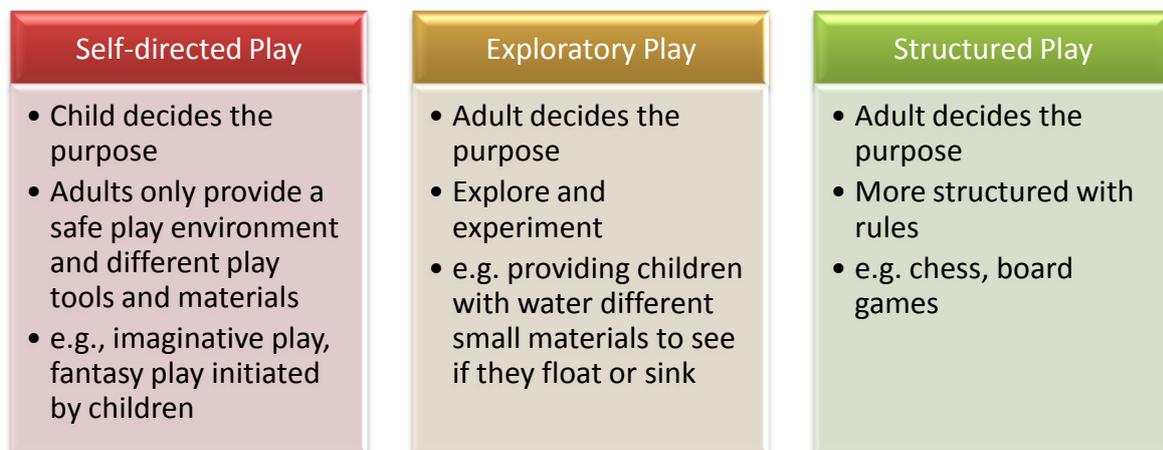


Figure 1 Types of play in terms of level of adult intervention and rules set.

Although the importance of play is acknowledged in international key documents and

⁴ Ungar, M. (2008). Resilience across cultures. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38, 218-235.

⁵ Lester, S., & Russel, W. (2010). Children's right to play: An examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide. Working Paper No. 57. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

⁶ Sutton-Smith, B. (1997). *The ambiguity of play*. Harvard University Press.

⁷ Hughes, B. (2006). *Play types — Speculations and possibilities*. London: London Centre for Playwork Education and Training.



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statements such as the United Nations' (1989) Convention on the Right of the Child⁸, children's right to play is poorly recognized across the world (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013)⁹. In many countries there is disagreement about the importance of play. Play is often discouraged with inadequate play facilities and environmental planning, while "more important" activities such as theoretical and academic studies in schools are largely emphasized in order to prepare for adult life and work. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, further, face socioeconomic obstacles that impede their rights to play, and their parents are not empowered or do not have time to play with them as they focus on family day to day survival. Without adequate opportunities to play and sufficient sensory stimulation, children's brain development will be hindered, affecting their emotional and cognitive abilities as well as diminishing their capacity to build resilience to cope with stress (Burghardt, 2005¹⁰; International Play Association, 2014¹¹).

2. Purpose and Objectives

In view of the above, the purpose of this world project is to support the development and resilience of young children through play, conducted in a safe, child friendly, and stimulating environment.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- ▶ Develop culturally-appropriate activity guidelines and play materials for parents/care-givers and teachers to use with young children;
- ▶ Provide opportunities for children to play, acquire contextually relevant skills, and enhance their resilience; and
- ▶ Create online multimedia resources of activities, innovations and best practices that can be shared throughout the OMEP community.

3. Project Criteria

Participants will be expected to develop a "play and resilience project", which should:

- ▶ Be an original work of the participants, with permission for the use of reports,

⁸ United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC]. Article 31 of the CRC sets out children's right to "rest, leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities... and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts".

⁹ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2013). General Comment No.17 on the Right to Play.

¹⁰ Burghardt, G. M. (2005). *The genesis of animal play: Testing the limits*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

¹¹ International Play Association. (2014). Declaration on the Importance of Play. Retrieved from: http://ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/IPA_Declaration-FINAL.pdf



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images and audio/video recordings;

- ▶ Be able to be used with children between 0 and 8;
- ▶ Emphasize on enhancing their development and resilience;
- ▶ Focus on one or any combinations of the three types of play, i.e., self-directed play, exploratory play, and/or structured play;
- ▶ Contain play materials that can easily be made by teachers/caretakers and children, or materials that can readily be found in daily life; and
- ▶ Include instructions on how to use the play materials.

4. Eligibility

All members of OMEP are eligible to apply. We especially seek applicants with a strong commitment to play and resilience for young children, whose work has not been widely known in the past, in order to showcase new and innovative approaches.

5. Submission

Interested parties should complete the application form and submit it together with supporting documents/materials.

A complete application consists:

- ▶ Completed application form;
- ▶ A brief report documenting the ideas and instructions, implementation, and how the project helps improve resilience and development of children;
- ▶ Photos showing details of the project and play materials;
- ▶ Videos showing the play process; and
- ▶ Other supporting documents.

Applications should be emailed to the OMEP World Secretariat at secretariat@worldomep.org by **8 April 2016**. No late application will be considered.

Applications will be assessed by a panel of experts, composed of representatives from different regions, according to the criteria above. Participants will need to be prepared to provide additional information upon requests.



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6. Awards and Dissemination

Best projects will be selected and notified by **30 May 2016**. Each of the project teams that created these projects will receive an award and travel subsidy, which shall be used to cover the costs of flight and/or accommodation for one team member to attend the 68th OMEP World Assembly and Conference in Seoul, Korea in July 2016. The member shall prepare to bring the play materials to Seoul to demonstrate the project ideas and present the play and resilience project at the conference.

All participants will be encouraged to take part in the disseminations of their projects, which may include, but not limited to, presenting at OMEP World or Regional Conference. They will retain the copyright of their play and resilience projects. They should, however, **duly acknowledge the work is a part of the OMEP Play and Resilience World Project**.

By submitting their application, participants agree to give OMEP the publishing rights. Information on all the play and resilience projects will be uploaded to OMEP website at <http://www.worldomep.org/>. They may also be featured in future publications of OMEP. In any case, the participants will be properly acknowledged.

If you have any questions, please email us at secretariat@worldomep.org.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS VERY IMPORTANT!!

PLEASE JOIN US!