

PLAY AND LEARN: INTRODUCING PLAYFUL LEARNING LANDSCAPES

by:

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Addressing education inequality is at the core of any institutional and educational agenda. When the world committed to Sustainable Development Goals or SDG and other relevant education agenda, nations agreed not only to address a common set of problems but to forward a shared agenda of “leaving no one behind.” Yet education inequality is now more relevant than ever due to closures of schools and from the coronavirus disease or COVID-19. Resource-restrained families fall behind than their other counterparts in finding ways to help continue learning.

One of the solutions that the Philippines and our education sector can come up with is the creation and application of Playful Learning Landscapes (PLL). Playful learning is an umbrella term that is based in science. It broadly incorporates how children learn through both free play (voluntary, controlled by the child and non-goal directed) and guided play. According to Zosh, J.M., et al., in 2018, discussed free play is directed and initiated by the child. Here, children choose their own activities; thus, leading to open-ended interactions with their environment and enabling unrestrained freedom of expression.

As stated by Rice, in 2009, We must explore the use of playful learning as an approach to teaching and learning. It noted that learning through play is well documented for children and although less researched for adults, there are clear pedagogic aims – play is seen as a vital process that can aid learning in variety of ways. In PLL, play is being integrated with children’s knowledge, experiences, and representations so that they can create meaning and understand their environment.

In creating spaces for play, communities and stakeholders can positively use public spaces for entertainment and learning. Moreover, Schlesinger & Hirsh-Pasek, in 2019 revealed in their study that through evidence-based engagement and communication strategies, PLL also leads to the development of healthy communities by encouraging positive and intergenerational social interaction in public and community spaces. PLL also engages the community in design and implementation; hence, fostering a sense of pride and responsiveness to community. PLL can also harness the camaraderie and innovation among communities, families, and private stakeholders. School leaders and policy makers in the Department of Education, Department of Social Work and Development, and Department of Interior and Local Government can include PLL in their multi-year and resource development plans.

Although PLL is a Western idea, according to Hadani, et. al., in 2021 stressed that the country can adopt this approach to our education agenda given the Filipino children's love to play. Public spaces in the country is very much limited given the poor urban planning and growing technological hubs and infrastructures, but communities can advance an education agenda like PLL to address education inequality. Communities and education sector can tap the talent and knowledge of architectural sector in creating PLL in public spaces to ensure that the learning landscapes are free, sustainable, and efficient. PLL can also be created in our barangays to ensure a more inclusive quality of education and to further address the inequality our Filipino learners are facing today. Also, PLL is rooted in Filipinos love to traditional play. It can reintroduce Filipino traditional games such as piko, luksong baka, and luksong tinik to the young learners all the while letting them learn.

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