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Exploring kindergarten teachers' views and roles regarding children's outdoor play environments in Oman

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The purpose of this study was to explore kindergarten teachers' views and roles regarding outdoor play environments in Omani kindergartens. Thirty kindergarten teachers from 15 private kindergartens were observed and interviewed. The results indicated that teachers recognize the importance of outdoor play in children's development and learning. Although teachers are satisfied with the safety conditions of the outdoor play environments, they feel they need to know more about how to maintain safety criteria in this environment. Teachers most frequently took on the role of supervising and guiding children's behaviour or setting up materials for play, whereas providing verbal comments and participating in play were less common. Omani outdoor play environments were found to face specific difficulties, such as the hot climate, a shortage of materials and equipment, a lack of natural surroundings and the short length of time spent outdoors. The article concludes with policy implications and pedagogical recommendations.

Keywords: outdoor play environments; kindergarten teachers; Oman

Full text is available at:

<http://0-www.tandfonline.com.mylibrary.qu.edu.qa/doi/full/10.1080/09575146.2015.1077783>

Outdoor play is considered a natural way for children to be healthier and physically active (Fjortoft 2004; Lovasi et al. 2011). However, educators have stressed that outdoor play environments need to be well designed, safe, attractive and supportive in order to scaffold children's learning and development (Dodge, Colker, and Heroman 2010; Milteer and Ginsburg 2012). The study reported here took place in Omani kindergartens (for children aged 3–6 years old) and it set out to explore children's outdoor play environments by observing and interviewing kindergarten teachers to find out how children's outdoor play experiences are implemented, and to explore teachers' views and roles in supporting and extending children's play.

Background

Traditionally, outdoor play environments in early years settings have often been covered with asphalt and equipped with climbing bars, swings, sandpits, seesaws

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