



Playful learning? An extreme comparison of the Children's University in Malaysia and in Australia

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Abstract

Playful learning is frequently conceived in binaries: fun/hard, child/adult, and formal/non-formal learning. The term 'playful learning' lacks a coherent definition. This is understandable given it is a multidisciplinary field of research. The article develops an extreme-comparative method to analyse a non-formal learning program, the Children's University, in Malaysia and in Australia. It reveals structural differences in implementation, attitudes to playful learning, and cultural attitudes to non-formal learning. The cases draw on in-depth interviews with service providers. Finally, the article describes a 'virtual circle' which can be used to understand playful learning in different contexts.

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Introduction

Educational and moral theorists assert that play is an ally of education and public improvement (Piaget, 1999; Henricks, 2008; Mooney, 2013). The benefits of play for learning are well understood, particularly in the early years of life (Papert, 1980; Piaget, 1999; Mooney, 2013; Hallet, 2017). Unsurprisingly, adults also learn through play. Yet understandings of playful learning vary widely. Play is a term used to cover a multitude of activities (Sutton-Smith, 2001). Playful learning is situated in the literature within a binary or conversely viewed as containing tensions as well as continuities (Sefton-Green et al., 2015). Play and learning are both influenced by context. Analysing the Children's University, which operates in Australia and in Malaysia, enables exploration of playful learning, particularly during non-formal learning experiences. Fundamental to the analysis is the 'extreme-comparative' method. It draws out prominent features between Children's University in Australia and Children's University in Malaysia. Our extreme comparative approach regards the two field sites as significantly different. The comparison illuminates internal biases in conceptions of playful learning, structural differences in implementation, and the influence of cultural attitudes.

Non-formal learning is defined here as learning embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) (CEDEFOP, 2014). This kind of learning is intentional from the learner's point of view and encompasses more traditional structured extracurricular activities such as sport, music or dance as well as activities such as visiting a museum or gallery or attending a concert (Birdwell, Scott, & Koninckx, 2015). Thus, non-formal learning is possible anywhere with the participant taking a central role in the learning process. The Children's University takes this aspect of learner-centredness even further through encouraging children's agency (Macbeath, 2013). Green et al. (2015) observe that playful learning can mediate the shifting boundaries between home and school, and formal and non-formal learning. The authors have developed a framework, the virtual circle, to situate features of playful learning. The virtual circle spins. Through spinning, boundaries are blurred. The virtual circle is characterised by polyphony, in which different types of playful learning co-exist.

In the first part of the article we review the literature. We then give a brief history of Children's University and describes its features and mode of encouraging of extracurricular learning, before expanding on the research method that is used in the analysis and discussion. The discussion reveals differences across the two sites, particularly in terms of the attitudes towards non-formal learning, and the roles played by parents. In the concluding section of the paper the virtual circle is presented as a device to contribute to understandings of playful learning across contexts.

Literature Review

It has been observed that playful learning is difficult to define (Sefton-Green et al., 2015). Play is often divided into object play, in which children explore objects and their properties and use them in creative ways; pretend play, in which children experiment with fantasy and ideas, including social roles; and physical play, in which children use their bodies to run and jump, wrestle, and interact with the physical world. The ways in which these behaviours interact with and enrich learning are well-represented by Brian Sutton-Smith whose ideas about the multiple layers or rhetoric of play have been compared to the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "carnavalesque" (Cohen, 2009, p. 176). In his multilayered description of seven rhetorics of play, Sutton-Smith classifies Bakhtin's theories as a rhetoric of imagination. Sutton-Smith (2001) views play as imaginative, spontaneous, unpredictable, flexible, and powerful. These same features are also evident in Bakhtin's notion of carnival. The developmental view of play, according to Sutton-Smith, "is an ideology for the conquest of children's behaviour through organizing their play" (2001, p. 205). Open-ended play, outdoor environments and knowledge gained at home as well as school are regarded as important to learning outcomes. In contrast, a Bakhtinian carnivalesque perspective of play and language examines self in relation to the language and actions of others (Bell, 1998; Gardiner, Bell, & Gardiner, 1998; Cohen, 2009). For Bakhtin (1984, p. 8), "the unofficial carnival is people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter". Carnival is a way of breaking down barriers, of overcoming power inequalities and hierarchies (Cohen, 2009). Similarly, "pretend play can be heavy and light, ritualistic and playful, earnest and frivolous" with an ever-changing cacophony of voices (Sutton-Smith 2001, p. 128).

Bakhtin's (1986) ideas of heteroglossia and cacophony point to the dialogical relation between play and learning in understanding playful learning. Cacophony refers to multiple voices. During play, like in doing comedy, voices of seriousness and diversion are articulated simultaneously. Play often straddles the formal and accepted, together with the informal and unexpected (Sefton-Green et al., 2015). When people play, they know the multiple contexts they are bringing together, as characterised by heteroglossia. Heteroglossia points to multiple contexts, and the playful context embeds "serious" rules that guide behaviour and also can be broken allowing for irreverence, pretence and acting (Ooi, 2013). Play is serious and not serious. The playful context is also set in a formal context that allows players to strategically switch between roles and to seriously learn.

Non-formal learning may take different forms, including self-directed learning, in which individuals set out to learn something; incidental learning, in which people learn as an unintended consequence of doing something; and socialisation, also known as tacit learning, in which cultural, social and behavioural values are unconsciously incorporated into a personal framework (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014; Erstad, Gilje, Sefton-Green, & Arnseth, 2016, p. 201). Playful learning has a role in all of these forms, from the playful creativity and serendipity inherent to self-directed

and incidental learning to the laughter-based transmission of social norms. However, perceptions of play differ, influencing what is learned, and are intimately related to one's culture: in the West, an understanding of play has been most significantly influenced by what play is not – play is not work, play is not serious. In contrast, Bakhtin regards play as dialogical (Vice, 1997). The character of the imaginary in play encompasses the internal dialogue of voices – it can be serious or silly, dark or light – there is a heteroglossia of voices characterised by fluidity and plurality (Bakhtin, 1981). Play is then a complex process with the world itself – its culture, institutions and values intersect whereby people play 'at', 'with' or 'in' their physical environment, minds, bodies, ideas, norms and language (Henricks, 2008).

The model of Children's University implemented in Malaysia and Australia started in Birmingham in the United Kingdom during the 1990s (Macbeath, 2013). It has expanded its reach globally, with the model now operating in China, New Zealand, Malaysia and Australia through 'social franchise' licence agreements with Children's University Trust in the United Kingdom. Research has not yet been conducted comparing the program across countries. Malaysia and Australia were the first countries to implement the program outside the United Kingdom and for this reason were selected to study.

Children who join the Children's University are given a 'Passport to Learning' in which they record participation in extracurricular activities at validated Learning Destinations. After the children accumulate 30+ hours of activity their achievement is celebrated with their parents at a formal graduation ceremony. The domains of learning and play overlap and are blurred within the Children's University model. This occurs intentionally through the validation process. Children's University staff validate extracurricular learning activities that are not incorporated into a formal curriculum in order that they can be counted towards the 30+ hours needed to graduate. By emphasising self-directed learning, Children's University provides a mechanism through which the transmission of values, habits and attributes of learner-centred education outcomes can be fostered.

Globally, the features of Children's Universities have evolved since the 1990s to reflect the socio-political contexts in which they exist. In each locality, the mode of delivery is attenuated for place, however, they frequently share the following characteristics:

- voluntary participation;
- part of a non-formal learning ecology;
- engage children aged 7-14 years;
- aim to foster curiosity.

Legislative and normative dimensions of extracurricular learning differ between Malaysia and Australia in several important respects. In Malaysia, education policy and legislation is regarded as a key policy lever to achieve the socio-cultural and economic goals of the state. The Education Act 1996 is founded on the National Philosophy of Education and aspirations of Vision 2020. Co-curricular activities are compulsory and essential to the education

system in Malaysia (Maimunah, 1999). In Australia, whilst there is no legislative requirement to participate in co-curricular activities, education is regarded as fundamental to building a competitive workforce and competing in a global knowledge economy (MCEETYA, 2008).

Researchers in Malaysia found that low household income families are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities because those activities involve fee-based lessons or classes (Jelani, Tan, & Mohd-Zaharim, 2015). Our interviews with the Children's University providers in Malaysia supported this. Capacity to pay for non-formal learning activities is similarly a relevant consideration in the Australian context (Ooi & Shelley, 2019). For example, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found that children aged 10 to 11 years in low socio-economic position families spend less free time in organised activities (including organised sport on school days and less time in leisure/cultural activities outside the home on non-school days), than children in medium/high socio-economic position families (Mullan, 2014). Skattebol and Redmond (2019) reveal a tendency for young Australians living in disadvantaged locations to resist or opt-out of out-of-school hours opportunities that were costly or located in areas of perceived higher-advantage. The Children's University program design aims to offer quality extracurricular experiences for children irrespective of parental means (The Children's University Ethics Policy, 2016). In Australia, efforts are made to secure low cost, and no cost non-formal learning experiences for program participants. By contrast the cost of participating in Children's University Malaysia-Asia is intentionally higher than other extracurricular activities "because it is high level teaching" (KL2).

Methodology

The comparative method is positioned here as a small-number and case-oriented technique (Rihoux et al., 2012). We have devised an extreme-comparative methodology for this research. That is, the two sites are perceived as markedly different, and by comparing them, the study can identify deep assumptions and structural differences in the two places. Such an approach is particularly appropriate when aiming to draw out broad circumstantial lessons, and to accentuate societal issues that need to be discussed. In this case, we are looking at non-formal learning within the educational systems of Australia and Malaysia.

Pearce (1993) points out that comparative research faces three general interrelated issues. First, a comparison is only sensible if it is based on clearly understood problems. Second, there must be conceptual equivalence. Third, the studies must pay attention to contextual factors. Pearce offers a framework to conceptually structure comparative research, which this study uses as a guide.

Common Research Problem: It is thus exploratory but departs from existing research on the Children's University in terms of its scope and objectives. Existing research is concerned with the impact of the program on children's attendance, attainment (literacy and numeracy), and

aspirations (Macbeath, 2013; Hamshaw, 2015; Harrison, Adam, & Skujins, 2017; Gorard, Siddiqui, See, Smith, & White, 2017). This study examines one aspect of the comparative study focusing on playful learning in the context Children’s University in Australia and Malaysia.

Conceptual Equivalence: Besides focusing on Children’s University in both countries, we employ the concepts of playful learning in framing our understanding of the two sites.

Contextual Factors: This study emphasises contextual factors to highlight and contrast differences between the two cases. The common starting points for comparison are their many similar ideals, goals and purposes. The choice of implementation strategies adopted in each country reveals the functions these programs serve in society, together with the assumptions embedded in their respective education systems.

In applying our extreme-comparative methodology, we seek to identify and address deep assumptions and structures in society, forcing a holistic view. In this case, we look at the relationships between the education system, social stratification, and non-formal learning. Against this backdrop, we pinpoint what activities are considered playful learning in both societies, and the need to understand what makes learning ‘fun’ in both places.

In 2017, 13 participants were invited to participate in the research based on their professional involvement in the implementation of Children’s University either directly or at Learning Destinations in Malaysia and Australia. These Learning Destinations are sites that offer validated learning experiences for Children’s University participants. They were selected based on their type, for example, a free public service such as a library or public gallery, and private providers. In total, we conducted four interviews in Malaysia, and nine in Australia. Becky Shelley and Can-Seng Ooi have conducted in-depth interviews in Malaysia during field studies in October 2017 and in Tasmania, an island state of Australia, between September and November 2017. Because of research ethics considerations and the small groups of people working in the context of the Children’s Universities, we will not be providing more specific details on the individual participants, except to identify them as Learning Destination or Children’s University staff. The participant quotations in this paper come from semi-structured in-depth interviews over an hour or more conducted by the researchers and included second interviews in two instances. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and provided for member checking. In addition to the interviews, the researchers collected other types of data, including attending Learning Destinations.

In terms of research merit and integrity, unstructured in-depth interviews is a style of interviewing that emphasises the expertise of the interviewee, in contrast to structured interviewing, where the power lies with the interviewer (Fisher & Marcus, 1986). In-depth interviews reflect interest

in understanding other people’s experiences (King & Horrocks, 2010). To build trust, the researchers shared information about their personal connections with the topic under study. The interviews were conducted in English. Malay is the official language in Malaysia.

	Australia	Malaysia
Time at Learning Destinations recorded	Yes	Yes
Learning assessed	No or informally	Formal
Emphasis on playful learning and fun	Yes	Serious learning considered as fun
Learning Destinations validated	Yes	Yes
Wide variety of experiences available to participants	Yes, as deliberately planned	Limited, and deliberately planned

Table 1: Play, fun and assessment: Two contrasting approaches.

Findings and Discussion

Examination of Children’s University in Malaysia and Australia revealed important differences in structure, notably the approach to assessment of activities, the role of playfulness, and the variety of activities. Table 1. Play, fun and assessment summarises these differences. In Table 1, differences in assessment, focus and seriousness reflect contrasting views on the goals of participation, and what constitutes success in learning. In Malaysia, equipping children to succeed in a competitive environment was a strong motivation. In Tasmania, a variety of motivations were apparent, including families doing fun things and gaining experiences together, and students discovering their ability to achieve their own goals under their own steam. In Malaysia, attention is focused on children’s performance rather than parent-child interaction. For example, it was highlighted that “If we see a child not improving we tell the parents, we call them up and chat and say he is not attending properly. You want to play chess, take it seriously, you want to play hockey, you take it seriously, if you want to be a scout, be a top scout, a career scout, become a Queen’s scout, not just you walk around then I am a scout” (KL1). In Malaysia, Children’s University is a mechanism to support high achievement learning. In Australia, emphasis was placed on a learner-centred approach. An interview subject from a large publicly-funded institution noted that “when children bring their adults with them that can often make a successful visit. Rather than the parents bringing the children along” (LD4). Table 2 presents a selection of representative views.

Children’s University participants in Malaysia frequently have their performance assessed in order to progress towards graduation. One interview participant reported that the learning process in Malaysia within the Children’s University involved a similar model or approach that they would adopt with adults in corporate training (KL1). The interviewee indicated that assessments are focused on “quality control, total control. Otherwise it is just a certificate of no value. In my whole career, 50 years in education...I will never sign a letter or passport or a certificate until I know it has value there” (KL1). In Australia, the Learning Destinations and Children’s University employees do not formally ‘assess’ the quality or standard of learning at an individual level. This was reflected in an interview, “I don’t believe in worksheets, I don’t think you need to have a little diploma handed out that you have taken part in it, the fact is you have been there” (LD3). Learning Destination activities are validated

by Children’s University program staff, but individual performances are not a consideration in terms of progress towards graduation. In Australia, the children simply need to participate. Time on task is rewarded at the graduation ceremonies. Children can only count ten hours in any one activity so are incentivised to try new things. A perspective is that Children’s University “actually allows them to take on learning that’s fun and involves play that’s not connected to schoolwork” (CU3).

	Tasmania	Malaysia
Fun comes first/ fun will hold you back	CU3: The holiday programs are really valuable because they bring the children and families onto Campus for example doing fun things and opening the doors of the University to families that may have never been anywhere near a University. I think that is really valuable.	KL1: In Asia, it’s competition. Very competitive. The parents will tell me in the face, “If my child doesn’t get anything out of it, she [the child] is not interested. She must use your certificate to increase her chance for an overseas job or go to university.
Self-drive/ discipline	CU1: If it was compulsory it wouldn’t work, we are celebrating the fact that these kids are choosing to invest their own time and energies into things that they want to learn about.	KL1: We have a lot of students but most of them drop out because they have to work. This is not just about fun. It’s real serious business. You come late to class, or you come late for the seminar, I don’t sign the passport.
Moments of pride Personal/ competitive	LD4: We had a boy from [disadvantaged suburb] that came that was very disengaged, and he designed a 3D design and printed it out. What a joy that he could show that he could take back to his family to say that he could actually do something.	KL2: We can see that our students are beaming with pride because they have acquired general knowledge that their other classmates do not have. They can tell you the capital of Australia.
Interacting/ observing	LD5: The adults absolutely loved the activities. It crossed all the boundaries.	KL3: The moment school finishes they are at swimming, piano, and this and that...It’s a competitive world, very competitive.

Table 2: Two contrasting views on success in learning.

In Australia, Children’s University is marketed as fun and playful learning. The Children’s University Australia web landing page features a map of Australia and invites people to “Enter the University of Fun” (Children’s University Australia). In Malaysia, Children’s University is regarded and situated as serious rather than fun. The authors characterise Children’s University Malaysia-Asia implementation model as purposeful learning. It is purposeful learning because it incorporates independent assessments of skill/knowledge acquisition and it seeks to develop a discrete suite of attributes and knowledge that enhance public speaking and leadership skills and confidence within the formal education system (see Picture 1). This does not mean that it is not fun or enjoyable for the students. Rather, enjoyment is expected to derive from achievement and improvement rather than from the ‘fun-ness’ of the activity. Noting the distinguishing features between the purposeful learning associated with Children’s University Malaysia and the emphasis on fun in Children’s University Australia we can draw a distinction between Malaysia’s emphasis on private tuition for academic subjects in contrast to Australia’s emphasis on fun in learning. Our interviews in Malaysia suggest that parents may regard extracurricular activity as important for children’s success and as preparation for adult life – stressing competition and accomplishment. In contrast, Australian parents are more likely to place value on enjoyment of learning.



Picture 1: Place where students learn public speaking in a Malaysian learning destination

The Children’s University is also about parents and carers. It is evident in both cases that parents and carers seek to do the best they can for their children. As mentioned above, children’s participation in extracurricular activities in Australia involves an economic impost and as such is influenced by capacity to pay. It also requires parents to invest time, transport children and sometimes they also need to stay and supervise or engage in activities themselves. Children’s University in Australia is well supported by the parents of the children who are involved. Parents and caregivers often take children to activities and participate themselves as a family group and attend graduation ceremonies. This was reflected in an interview with a Learning Destination in a socially and economically disadvantaged region of Tasmania, “It is either a mother or a father and quite often a grandparent who will bring the children and it is very important for us to have contact with the older generation. We are very open to have a wide range of ages participating... I really encourage adult and child participation here. It is a family thing if they can” (LD3). In another interview, a staff member from Children’s University in Australia noted they “had feedback from one student who said we didn’t do anything on the weekends but now we go to the website and we go well what’s happening this weekend and what can we do that’s Children’s University activity for this weekend. Therefore, it helps inform parents about some great activities that they can get involved in and it gives them a structure which is important as parents struggle sometimes with knowing what to do” (CU1).

In Australia, the Children’s University Learning Destinations offer the opportunity for children and adults to learn together in a playful manner. This is often characterised by the child leading the activity and the parent co-creating and interacting with the child. An employee at a small regional art gallery in Tasmania noted “[parents] know that art and creativity is good for you (a bit like broccoli), but they haven’t had the opportunities themselves, but they sense that it should be encouraged and rewarded and applauded and helped. [During activities] they also have a go and are as happy as their kids” (LD3).

In Malaysia, parents and caregivers are also trying to encourage and reward children in ways that will support their children’s opportunities. They are equally engaged in supporting their children’s education; however, other than

the graduation event they are not required to participate in activities with their children. In Malaysia the parents “drop them off. The [children] spend three hours and then they go” (KL2). This stands in contrast to a comment from a Learning Destination staff member in an outer-city suburb in Tasmania, highlighting: “intergenerational learning opportunities like ‘Maker Space’ family afternoons parents get, particularly with teenage children.... if [the activity] is not teenagers the parents are more likely to drop and go. But I think if it is teenagers, they are using it for bonding” (LD2).

Discussion and conclusion

We acknowledge that the Malaysian and Australian contexts are very different. The extreme comparison approach employed has allowed us to not only identify stark differences in contexts but also to draw lessons that have broad implications. These lessons can be divided into two areas: how to achieve success through non-formal learning; and parental and carer engagement in learning. Children’s University in both countries can be regarded as mediating and supporting broader learning outcomes by shifting boundaries between formal and non-formal learning.

We have created a framework, the Virtual Circle (diagram A), to explore the dialogical dimensions of playful learning within the Children’s University (Shelley & Brown, 2018). In Australia, the non-formal learning that occurs through participation in the Children’s University foregrounds the following aspects of playful learning, with an emphasis on the *process*: interact; (co)create; and (re)connect. In Malaysia, the emphasis is the *outcome*: observe; engage; and change. In each context, distinct varieties of playful learning co-exist.

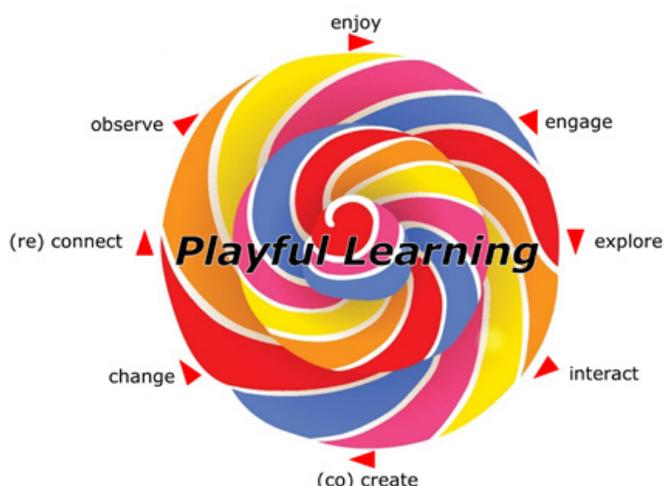


Diagram A: Virtual Circle (Shelley & Brown, 2018).

Different societies have different perspectives on childhood and the kind of experiences children should have (Ryan, 2008; Tisdall & Punch, 2012; James & Prout, 2015; Ember & Cunnam, 2015). In Australia and Malaysia, Children’s Universities have adapted to, and reflect, the local views of childhood and education: views and values on childhood and education which are embedded in the social system of the community. But Children’s University is not only reflecting. It is also transmitting values, behaviours and attitudes towards learning in both Malaysia and in Australia. Our interviews

revealed a tendency within each site to underemphasise the dialogical and carnivalesque dimensions of the children’s learning behaviours and describe the processes in more binary ways. This is particularly evident in the learner-centred emphasis in Australia which tends to enjoyment, and exploration. For example, an employee of Children’s University in Australia commented:

Do we want to put a test around Children’s University learning? I don’t think so. Wouldn’t that defeat the purpose of what we are trying to say with this program, that learning is fun, it’s about exploration, adventure, participation... and that you have to find what you are passionate about? (CU2)

The structures of locally-embedded Children’s University programs transmit values. The graduation ceremony which is a core component of the Children’s University model is a moment of pride for parents and caregivers. It caps off an achievement. However, the paths to graduation in Tasmania and Malaysia are different. The Tasmanian approach tries to be an alternative to formal learning, while the Malaysian approach affirms diligence and achievement. The Malaysian approach to non-formal learning within the Children’s University places limited value on engagement unless it is tested and subjected to a quality assessment. The emphasis on fun in learning at Children’s University Australia is learner-centred and aims to expose students to new experiences, such as a visit to a university or attendance at their own graduation ceremonies. However, a Bakhtinian reading will highlight that the more serious learning in Malaysia has become a game for children to achieve. It is possible to be tested and have fun. Playful learning is necessarily dialogical.

Attitudes to playful learning are already, and always linked to culture. While it is not meaningful to just transplant social practices across cultures, it is healthy to reflect on our cultural imagining of how our children should be brought up in relation to learning. For example, the dichotomous positioning of fun/play and testing/assessments in Australia may be false and not helpful. The question must be asked: is there an underlying cultural attitude that if it is not fun, then it is too hard? The Malaysian case shows that more demanding learning can also be fun, particularly if the students find the learning meaningful and even purposeful. Therefore, in Australia, a more nuanced approach could be developed informed by insights from the Malaysian experience.

For Children’s University in Malaysia, perpetuation of elements associated with the “Tiger Mother” image might be considered. The “Tiger Mother” – coined by Yale psychology professor Amy Chua in her autobiography (Chua, 2011) – depicts parents who prioritise school work above all else, with other activities geared towards winning awards and improving the child’s future. Such parents seek to give their children the best start in life by managing the child’s self-esteem and pushing them to achieve more, frequently with undesirable psychological consequences (Cheah, Leung, & Zhou, 2013; Chua, 2011). Children’s University in Malaysia is arguably perpetuating the Tiger parenting phenomenon. Leisure activities are considered opportunities to support

formal learning outcomes. Here, the Australian goals of broadening student experience or encouraging family involvement may augment the existing approach.

The Children's University in Australia and Malaysia share a program logic; however, their implementation practices function differently in the different socio-cultural and political settings in which they operate. Through the extreme-comparative approach, the following issues emerged. The first involves playful learning and purposeful learning. In Australia, the emphasis is on interaction, (co)-creation, and (re)connection with parents and care givers having a role in the non-formal learning process. In Malaysia, the activities are geared towards observing, engaging, and changing student performance, where the learning outcomes are tested. The assessment in Malaysia is more formal and rigorous. Such an approach is frowned upon in Australia because it is considered too serious and intimidating to the young participants. Related to these issues, is the different parental engagement styles in the two places. The program in Australia offers a structure for parents to organize weekend and holiday activities for the whole family. Families visit places that they may not otherwise attend. In Malaysia, the parental engagement is at the level of paying for the activities and receiving feedback on the progress of their children. Yet it has been observed that when thinking about play, there is a need to be mindful that definitions, classifications, and reductions may do an injustice to the phenomena (Schwartzman, 2012). Playful learning is carnivalesque, simultaneously challenging and easy, measurable and unmeasurable, deeply serious and seriously fun.

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