

# **Playground Study**

**The playground: A place full of interactions and diverse expectations**

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## **Playground study**

### **Background of the study**

The design for a playground study came following a previous study<sup>1</sup> on the Freeship Quota Policy in private/ public schools for children from socio economically weaker sections. The purpose of the previous study was to explore the expectations and experiences of the parents of children who have been enrolled with private/public schools under the 20 percent reservations scheme in public schools of the Government of Delhi, and the children themselves. The lack of information and the relative silence of the parents and children on the subject pushed forth the idea of a more in depth study, of their integration, within the school itself. Also, an online review on playground studies, thus far, suggests a very limited investigation on the subject in India. By the end of the study we also hope to formulate certain suggestions for such private schools that could strengthen the integrative process.

Besides that the idea of studying the space of the playground was also inspired by several studies<sup>2</sup> led in Western countries on the playground itself, conceptualized as a “micro society”, as a space where socialization of children takes place.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study was designed as an exploratory study, which would help identify dimensions of the interaction on the playground and implications for social development.

The first question was about the playground in its physical aspect, as a “territory” marked off, a “micro society” with its own codes. The intent, here, was to see how the children appropriate that space and how they share it, if they actually do. We also hoped to identify, within the marked off space, different prominent places, each one with diverse ‘purposes’ and possibly also different ‘owners’

Another part of the study intended to focus on the games that the children play. This is, firstly, because through the games the children learn a set of knowledge and know-how which could be seen as an initiation, as a mutual socialization. Also, looking at the games can give information on the process of arriving at a consensus around games and rules, and the emergence of leadership on the playground through the process.

It was also aimed at looking at the function of the access to certain resources used on the playground and the consequent inclusion or exclusion. Moreover, we intended to gauge the level of involvement and interest of children in the goings-on on the ground. The study also planned to look at the teachers’ intervention in the playing field, if any.

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<sup>1</sup>Shubh and Sophie , Freeship quota for children from socio economically weaker sections, ISST, New Delhi, December 2006

<sup>2</sup> Julie DELALANDE, La cour de recreation: pour une anthropologie sociale de l'enfance (The playground: for a social anthropology of childhood) Presse Universitaire de Rennes, France, 2001

The study also came to be a comparative study between two different grades and two different age groups, as it focused on the fourth grade (nine to ten year olds) Nursery (four to five year old children), the purpose was to spot the differences between the two grades and to examine the evolution and the socialization process.

As stated earlier in the background to the study, the exploration also was also meant to observe the process, the kind and the level of integration of the children enrolled under the free ship quota policy in the private school.

## **Methodology**

### **Scope of the study**

The field for the investigation was located with the help of ISST's Community Centre, situated in Vinod Nagar in East Delhi, which has helped and continues to help several families with the process of admission under the freeship quota policy. Under the recommendation of Ms. Amita Joshi we obtained an appointment with the chairman of one of the public schools of the area, where a number of children from socio economically weaker sections are enrolled under the 20 percent reservations scheme<sup>3</sup>.

Following purposeful sampling, two different grades have been chosen to incorporate a comparative dimension in the study, Nursery, the youngest group of children attending school, and fourth, the last group which still really "plays" in the playground and is the oldest grade with atleast one freeship student. Particular sections within the two grades with the largest number of freeship children (seven in Nursery and one in the Fourth grade), confirmed by the register at ISST's Community Centre, were picked.

### **Frequency of visits**

Eight sessions were at our disposal spread over a month, 1<sup>st</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> February 2007, considering that in the month of March the children would be busy with the annual examination. The rate of the visits was of two per week and two to three sessions per visit, one session lasting 40 minutes. The first visit to the school was devoted to meetings with the school staff, sharing our project, obtaining permission, adjustment of schedules and organizing the visits. The second visit was reserved for "floating observation" and the last sessions for primary research itself.

### **Methods used**

- Passive and active observation

The second visit, as said earlier, was devoted to "floating" observation<sup>4</sup> in order to identify the striking characteristics of the playground. This session also aimed at getting

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<sup>3</sup> For reasons of confidentiality the name of the school and the school staff will not be mentioned, and all the children's names will be changed.

<sup>4</sup> Initial

to know the children, their names, background (identify the freeship quota children), affinities and groups, and also to build a rapport with them. For Nursery a ball game was used, where the children had to pass the ball to the person of their choice (to identify the affinities) after calling his/her name. With the Fourth grade simply a formal communication of names was done. Further in the sessions, passive observation was used with the Fourth grade, in order to allow us to keep an eye on the entire space, whereas participative observation and informal talks were required with Nursery on account of the impossibility of formal interviews with such small children.

- Directive interviews

With the Fourth grade we opted for directive taped interviews. Given the lack of time, we felt that directive interviews would be the fastest way to get information on the aspects we were looking at. In the Fourth grade four main groups were identified (two groups each of boys and girls) and in each of them one child was chosen as a case study. Group interviews were also conducted in order to stimulate the children to talk. Besides the children, we also held interviews with the school staff (Nursery teachers and helpers, and PT teachers)

- Case studies

Following purposive sampling again, case studies were chosen based on the following criteria of sex, enrollment under freeship quota, and the level of and kind of involvement and interest on the playground. In Nursery four children were selected as case studies<sup>5</sup>. Each of these children was observed for few minutes, every five to ten minutes, to see his/her different activities in space and time. In the Fourth grade one child was chosen as a case study for individual interviews, from each of the four groups distinguished, as stated earlier. The name of another boy, Sagar, was added to the list of case studies because he is the only boy who plays with girls sometimes. Due to the paucity of time, information about the socio economic background of the case studies could not be gathered.

- Social mapping

For both grades one session (on a rainy day when the playground was flooded and it was impossible for the children to play outside) was devoted to individual mapping. During the exercise, we asked the children to draw their playground without giving them any directions to enable them to draw with spontaneity. This exercise was intended to help us gauge the children's perception of the playground. With Fourth grade, in particular, we also conducted a social mapping exercise. Here, the children (mixed group constituted of children from each of the four groups) were asked to represent the playground, with the help of a stick, on the ground itself. The exercise has been filmed to see the consensus process during the exercise. Pictures of the playground were also taken.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Annexure: Case studies

- Story telling

With the Fourth grade, again with a mixed group, we organized a story telling exercise. The children were asked about their favourite cartoon characters and then were instructed to integrate these characters in a story about the playground. Each child had to add a sentence to construct the story.

### **The playground: A place full of interactions and diverse expectations**

#### **Introduction**

Exploring the space of the playground, we came to understand it as a place bustling with interactions. First, interactions between individuals with different personality traits, of the opposite sex and from different social backgrounds. Secondly, interactions between diverse groups with different centers of interest and affinities, all that making the playground a very heterogeneous place. Through the study the playground also appeared as a place where the children build/ develop various expectations which the school needs to be responsive to. The school also has a perception of the playground as a place and time for learning.

We propose to design the report according to two different themes. The first thrust would look at the playground as a place for interactions, and the second would explore the expectations of the children and the school staff from the time and space of the playground.

### **The playground: A place full of interactions**

#### **Gender**

We noticed that the number of boys is larger than that of girls in both the grades. Gender segregation appears as the most striking dimension of playground interaction with the Fourth grade, much more than the freeship quota. This separation emerges instinctively among the children themselves, and is further encouraged by the school staff. With nursery, besides that, gender does not appear as a decisive aspect. Children of both the sexes play together without any inhibitions. Although, we did meet some children who like to play in pairs with children of the same sex occasionally. However, at the same time we also met some mixed couples (Mini playing *pakran pakrai* with another little boy). Thus such duos seem to have more to do with individual affinities than gender separation.

In the case of the Fourth grade, the phenomenon of gendered interaction can be perceived right from the entry of children onto the playground, where all the boys and girls come, as well as leave, in separate rows. If they do not, they are instructed by the sports teacher

to do so. Infact, once we witnessed the sports teacher scolding the children who arrived in a common line, immediately after which boys and girls stood in different rows.

*“Yeh kaise line banayi hai, line banani nahin aati!”*

The teacher’s insistence on separate rows is also a reflection of his emphasis on discipline on the playing field, but this aspect shall be dealt with in a later section.

Boys and girls of this grade play separately, as well. We did not get the opportunity to observe any mixed groups. When we inquired if boys and girls did play with each other, we got a collective “No!” from both the sexes. The explanation from the boys’ side was that girls are slow runners and they keep hurting themselves.

*“Ladkiyan bahut dheere daurti hain aur unhe chot bhi lagti rehti hai.”*

Girls do not play with boys because boys do not like to play with them and because majority of the boys play ball games. Shobha elaborated that boys only play with them only on days when there are a lot of absentees and they fall short of people to play with.

*“Boys humare saath tab hi khelte hain jab bahut log absent hote hain aur khelne ke liye log kam pad jate hain.”*

In the course of the interviews we came to learn that there is only one boy, Sagar, who plays with girls occasionally. Nevertheless, his confession was not without embarrassment on his part and giggles from the girls standing around.

Through observation and interviews we learnt that most boys play games that involve the use of a ball like cricket, football, basketball, dodge ball, throw ball, volleyball. Besides that they play *pakran pakrai, chain, barf pani* and with the equipment, more often than not due to non availability of a ball, as shared by a group of boys.

*“Hum aur games tab hi khelte hain jab hum ball bhool jate hain aur sir bhi ball nahin dete.”*

Girls play games like *hide and seek, hop hop, kho kho, pakran pakrai, barf pani, kikli, colour touch, murti ghoom, chiclets*, with the *swings* (equipment) and sometimes basketball and football. They also spend some time on the field simply standing around and chatting.

Even when, both, boys and girls play with the equipment they do not share one at the same time. For instance, once we observed a group of boys and that of girls taking alternate turns on the *caterpillar* (balancing equipment), to the extent that it became a cyclical process for around half an hour.

Girls expressed that they do not play with the ball because they forget to get a ball and ‘the sports teacher refuses to give them one’. We observed that whenever the sports

teacher got a ball to the ground he gave it to a group of boys and also played with them for a while. Ashwin when asked to comment on this instinctively said that girls cannot play with the ball.

*“Ladkiyan ball ke saath nahin khel sakti.”*

Sagar, the only boy who plays with girls, replied that girls can play with the ball but they do not.

*“Ladkiyan ball se khel sakti hain, par khelti nahin hain.”*

During the interview with the sports teacher, when he was asked to comment on the separation between boys and girls on the playground, his response was as follows:

*“They play separately because of their maturity, they are not able to play together because of the physical differences between boys and girls and their adolescence feelings”*

He also did get defensive and said that sixth grade onwards girls and boys start playing together when they are assigned different sports, according to their skills. However, this statement remains to be verified.

These observations indicate that on the one hand education is an instrument of individual achievement and equal opportunity. On the other hand, critical perspectives communicate that education reproduces social inequality. The main functions of schooling, according to the latter views, are the reproduction of dominant ideologies and the distribution of knowledge and skills in a manner that will reproduce the structure of social inequality. Some studies have suggested that teachers’ preconceptions, biases and behaviour operate to discriminate against girls, schedule castes and tribal children.<sup>6</sup>

There is sufficient evidence to show that schools discriminate in subtle and not so subtle ways. Sports activities are used to reinforce this divide because girls are not encouraged to play football or cricket and are expected to play with the swing, hopscotch. The convergence of extra curricular activities at school with other dimensions of gendered socialization reinforces the belief that this division is natural, and hence must be maintained.<sup>7</sup>

This can be linked with Sudeshna Chatterjee’s findings in her study on a park in Nizamuddin, New Delhi<sup>8</sup>. She shares that Nizammuddin children during their

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<sup>6</sup> Padma VELASKAR, “Unequal schooling and social inequality in India”, in Sharmila REGE (eds) *Sociology of gender: The challenge of feminist sociological knowledge*, Sage publications, New Delhi, 2003

<sup>7</sup> Karuna CHANANA, “Female Sexuality and education of Hindu girls in India”, in Sharmila REGE (eds) *Sociology of gender: The challenge of feminist sociological knowledge*, Sage publications, New Delhi, 2003

<sup>8</sup> Sudeshna CHATTERJEE, “Investigating environmental child friendliness for children in Nizamuddin Basti”, SARAI reader, 2005



interviews revealed that they had internalized the negative cultural stereotypes as part of their community image.

Interesting findings emerged out of the drawings that the children made of the playground, girls drew both boys and girls, though not playing together. But the boys used only boys in their drawings and no girls. The first hypothesis we can formulate, here, is that the girls are more conscious of the boys' presence. Girls understand the special value accorded to brothers. Sisters and mothers cook and serve food to brothers, fathers and husbands, whereas boys are not expected to do much for their sisters. From infancy girls are socialized to help.<sup>9</sup>

Another proposition can be that when children enter early adolescence it becomes embarrassing for boys to represent the female body. This is supported by the PT teacher's opinion on the gender division, as shared earlier on the previous page.

In the story telling session girls and boys sat separately in the circle. Girls started the story with Barbie, swings, birds, trees and the canteen. As soon as the story reached the first boy he started a brand new story, as if he had not given any heed to the story so far, with power rangers, boys' friendship, ball, fights, twisting people's neck and the doctor. The story was ended by a boy with going back to class. During the social mapping session both the sexes stood and worked separately, too.

### **Socio economic background/ Freeship quota**

Class distinctions are not so visible, even with the freeship students. Most children seem to be from the lower or middle strata. The language of the children, especially on the playground, is Hindi, which is in favor of the freeship children. Also, we were unable to notice any regular trend or pattern in the absenteeism among the freeship students.

With nursery, during a ball game that was organized, freeship children stood next to each other in the circle, however they were not isolated from the rest of the class. The class teacher tried to involve all the children in the game, at the same time she did keep in mind the existing affinities. Though, she did tend to address the freeship children in Hindi more than the others.

When the children were left to themselves with the equipment, the freeship children were more dispersed, though they focused on and were involved more with the equipment than with their mates. In the case of the Fourth grade, the group of boys that mostly plays with the ball and more often assumes leadership positions is the only group that spoke of the influence of the television on the games they play, which could be a sign of better economic status.

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<sup>9</sup> Karuna CHANANA, "Female Sexuality and education of Hindu girls in India", in Sharmila REGE (eds) Sociology of gender: The challenge of feminist sociological knowledge, Sage publications, New Delhi, 2003

Here, we would like to mention that given the small number of freeship students in the school and the limited data collected, it would be inappropriate to make any conclusive statements.

## Groups

‘Groupism’ as a phenomenon was very apparent with the fourth grade. In the case of Nursery, children seemed to focus on and were involved more with the equipment than their mates.

In the Fourth grade four different groups stood out on the playing field, based on the attributes of affinity, centers of interest and distance from or rejection by other groups. Two groups, each, of boys and girls were identified. One group of boys is the one which is called by others and by the group itself the ‘team’. The ‘team’ often assumes leadership positions on the playground and almost monopolises the ball. Sagar’s comment, a boy from the other group, highlights this phenomenon

*Main ball ke saath nahin khelta kyun ki main ‘team’ se nikal gaya. Pehle football aur cricket khelta tha.”*

The ‘team’ plays other games, like *chain*, *pakran pakrai* and with the equipment, only when the ball is not available for them.

*“Hum aur games tab hi khelte hain jab humein ball nahin milti”*

Another group of boys was the one which plays games besides those with the ball, like *chain*, *barf pani*, *pakran pakrai* and with the equipment. Ashwin, the only freeship student in the fourth grade, and Sagar, the only boy who does play with girls sometimes, are a part of the same group. This group plays with the ball only when it is challenged by the ‘team’ to any such game.

*“Hum ball se tabhi khelte hain jab humein ‘team’ kisi game ke liye challenge karti hai.”*

One group of girls is larger in number than the other. This is the group which Shobha, one of our case studies, is a part of, and which Sagar plays with occasionally. This group seems more dominant than the other that will be spoken of as Priya’s group.

When we tried to find out if different groups played with other groups, what we got was a collective ‘No!’ from most of them. The justification received from all the groups was similar and made on the grounds of affinity, enjoyment and an interest in different games. Each group also blamed the others saying that others do not want to play with them, though they are open to others joining them. Shobha, from the bigger group of girls, explained

*“Friends ke saath khelne mein maza aata hai, aur maza ke bina khelne ka kya fayda. Waise bhi aur log alag games khelte hain aur humein khilatein bhi nahin hain. Hum aur logon ko apne saath khilane ko tayyar hain.”*

We also enquired if the composition of different groups on the playground was linked to the proximity in the residence of children and their friendship back at home. But it was confirmed through the interviews that there is no such relationship.

### **The playground: a place of diverse expectations**

#### **From the children**

- Pleasant environment and nature

The session devoted to social mapping and individual drawings allowed us, among other things, to point out an important aspect concerning the environment of the playground. In, both, Nursery and the Fourth grade the main element that emerges in the drawings is ‘nature’, an important majority of the children represented grass, trees, plants and flowers along with the sky and sunlight when asked to represent their playground. In the drawings, few boys from the Fourth grade used signs saying ‘Use me’ and ‘Do not throw waste on the ground’. It is extremely interesting to see that there is a general interest in ‘nature’, regardless of gender or age. Boys as well as girls, the older children as well as the younger equally attach importance to the environment.

We can link our data with the findings given by Sudeshna Chatterjee in her study on a park in Nizamuddin, New Delhi. Places that children respect for the intrinsic qualities are not the MCD parks specifically designed for children with slides etc. Rather the children of Nizamuddin almost unanimously value a neighborhood park on the outskirts of the basti in Nizamuddin West. What does this park have to offer? It is clean and well-maintained. It has no play equipment, but a beautifully designed landscape with pretty flowers, grass, paths, seating etc. Yet rules are obeyed and the place enjoyed.<sup>10</sup>

Willing to further analyze the children’s concern for “nature” and a pleasant environment, in the different directive interviews with the Fourth grade we took the opinion of children regarding the environment of the playground, how they liked the presence of trees and natural elements. Unanimously the children answered that they liked the trees in the playground. Priya’s group further elaborated

*“because they are green, because they are really beautiful and because they give oxygen”*

This last very conditioned answer shows that the importance of a pleasant environment is also instilled in class by the teachers, as we will also see later. Something that suggests

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<sup>10</sup> Sudeshna CHATTERJEE, “Investigating environmental child friendliness for children in Nizamuddin Basti”, SARAI reader, 2005

that this response is automated is the fact that it came in English, unlike all the other answers from the children.

Sagar shared that his liking for the playground was due to the trees here and Sarpreet said that he liked the playground because of the sunlight outside. The 'team', Priya's group and Sagar shared that, to them, the worst place in the playground was the garbage and the dirty table next to the canteen.

During an interview with a Nursery teacher when asked about what the children do in the playground, she replied,

*"They enjoy themselves, they enjoy the space more than the equipment because it is their first interaction with nature, most of them don't get a place to play near their homes"*

Asked about her role in the playground, the same teacher answered

*"Mostly to ensure children's safety because parents do not let their kids play outside home as they are scared for their children's safety, they prefer to send them to school where they have a secure place to play"*

It appears that children living near the area of Mayur Vihar have few places, such as parks and playgrounds, at their disposal to play. We can say that they hope to find in the playground a friendly place where they can enjoy themselves. But, how do the children want to enjoy themselves in the playground? What does the playground mean to them? What is its purpose? We will see that expectations in the playground vary from one grade to another and from one child to another.

- Equipment

Importance of equipment is evident, particularly, for Nursery. Infact, contrary to the Fourth grade, Nursery children play few games besides the equipment. According to the Nursery teacher the children play a lot of other games, such as races and ball games. But in the course of our observations we got only few chances to witness such "other games". Once they arrived in the playground the children used to run right to the equipment, slides, sea saw and 'horses', and spend all their time playing with these. Even if few of them did play other games, like *pakran pakrai* and races, it was only after sometime into their playground time.

Some children, like our two case studies, Rani and Dharam, were seen running from one equipment to another with different children, without sticking to one specific equipment or giving much heed to their mates. Some other children liked to stick to one specific equipment, for instance Nandini who, session after session, was always found quarrelling over the horse with her classmates, the game here being defending her property.

The responsibility of the teachers and helpers on the playground gets limited to ensuring the children's safety, as all the staff liked to repeat in the interviews.. This is because of

the “solidarity” we witnessed among the children, helping each other, “solidarity” that will be explained in a later part.

- Enjoyment with friends

Another really interesting finding emerged from the drawings. While in Nursery only four children out of twenty-four represented people in their drawings, there were nineteen out of twenty-seven in Fourth grade to draw their classmates playing on the playground. We can interpret this data saying that, where, for children in Nursery the social aspect is secondary, it becomes important for older children.

If in Nursery it seemed that the children played together and focused on the equipment, in Fourth grade we can see that the time in the playground is a time to share with one’s friends and more precisely with one’s group of friends. If the children also play with the equipment they play in a group and not “individually” like the Nursery students. Interviewing the four different groups emerging in the Fourth standard, whenever we asked about the consistency in the group composition, we obtained a very enthusiastic “Yes”. Shobha’s group explained the reason for this consistency,

*“Friends ke saath khelne mein maza aata hai, aur maza ke bina khelne ka kya fayda.”*

The ‘team’<sup>11</sup> put it as,

*“Humari apni team hai.”*

We can say that from the children’s perspective, the playground should be a pleasant place where one can play with one’s friends, and can enjoy equipment and facilities one does not find at home.

### **From the school**

Through our observations and interaction with school staff it appears to us that to the school, the playground is a place of learning, learning of new games, of physical and creative capacities, and learning also of social and human values requisite for a societal life. It also seems to us that on the playground discipline is an important principle.

- A place for learning

This dimension of learning was mostly visible for Nursery where the children are closely supervised and in an age of primary socialization. In her interview, the Nursery teacher when asked about what the children do in the playground, answered,

*“Children explore, explore their creativity.”*

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<sup>11</sup> Refer to Pg. No. 8, 1st paragraph

One of the helpers, to the same question, replied

*“Children develop their motor skills”.*

The sports teacher when asked about his role in imparting learning, reflected an obsession with sport and physical capacity.

*“We teach different sports based on the child’s skills.”*

Moreover, while speaking of the significance of discipline on the playing field, he attached a lot of importance to it being the foundation of sports,

*“Discipline is the most important value on the playground because it forms the basis of sports.”*

When asked about her role on the field, one of the helpers replied,

*“To give instructions to children during games.”*

To them the children have to improve their motor and creative skills on the playground. Though, when asked about their role on the playground, all the persons in charge of Nursery also stressed on the learning of basic human and social values. They shared that their role was to enable the children to share and be together, avoid conflict, and ensure that no child is isolated.

- The importance of discipline

Throughout our observations, we noticed the importance accorded to discipline in the classroom as well as in the playground. Both Nursery and the Fourth grade used to arrive in a line on the playground. The PT teacher insisted that the Fourth grade children stayed in line even while they collectively greeted us. According to the same PT teacher discipline in the playground is very important,

*“It is very important because it is in the playground that the children learn ethics through an interaction with others. Interaction in the classroom is very restricted.”*

When asked about his responsibility on the playground, his response was rather disturbing,

*“My role is like that of a SHO (policeman)”*

In the Nursery teachers’ opinion, discipline on the playground is needed to teach the children how to behave but has to be used “moderately”. One teacher’s comment elucidates this opinion

*“We need discipline to make them students. Basic discipline is important to enable them to share and not fight. But nothing beyond that is required”*

Another teacher adds

*“Too much discipline will not let the children enjoy, explore or express their creativity”.*

The method used by the Nursery teachers proves to be efficient. As a matter of fact, it seems that the Nursery children have internalized the principles of sharing with their classmates. The “phenomenon” is mostly visible for Nursery on the sea saw where the seats are limited. During our initial observations, seeing the absence of arguments concerning turns on the sea saw, we thought of it as a “tacit agreement”. But it eventually appeared as a result of that internalization of the principle of sharing. Most of the times, when a child wants to climb on, after few negotiations he/she wins his/her case. The children standing around help the players to make the seesaw go up and down and keep the see saw down to let a child climb on, participating in a way to the game as well.

Concerning the Fourth grade, the discipline aspect emerges from the drawings again. Infact some children drew garbage cans saying “use me”.

### **From a sociological point of view**

Learning is necessary in order to become a competent adult. From day to day the child has to acquire and control knowledge so as to become part of the peer group. Observing playgrounds in kindergartens and primary schools give us a glimpse of a ‘children culture’ a set of knowledge and know-how learnt within the age group via initiation based on mutual understanding. It provides children with the opportunity to appropriate what is really socially and culturally important for participation in a group.<sup>12</sup>

We can share Julie Delalande’s findings about initiation within a group to a certain extent, especially in the case of Nursery. In the context of the Fourth grade, most of the learning concerning the games takes place among the children themselves with minimal intervention of the adults. When we asked the children about how they learn the games they play, the most common answer was among friends at school and home, and siblings. However the group of boys that play with the ball pointed out a new element in their answer,

*“On TV, with the friends in the street near the house, the PT teacher also taught us some new games.”*

Through these answers we can see the contribution of home in school life, children bring games and references from ‘outside’, contributions that the school staff does not

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<sup>12</sup> Julie DELALANDE, “Culture enfantine et regles de vie. Jeux et enjeux de la cour de recreation” (“Children’s culture and the rules of life: learning the rules on the school playground”), Revue Terrain, n°40 march 2003 Enfants et apprentissage.

acknowledge. When we asked the Nursery teacher if children brought any games from home, she categorically refused.

Although when it comes to values, like those of sharing, discipline, cleanliness, gender separation, the adults' role is predominant as discussed earlier.

### **Conclusion**

This exploration did help identify interesting dimensions of the interaction on the playground and other related areas which can be further studied. One such aspect that can be delved into is the classroom interaction. We feel that the children's commute from home to school and back can also be looked into. Further study of the existing groups may throw some more light on the function of the socio economic backgrounds of children in integration. Also, the influence of family and friends back home on the school environment, as well as interactions in playgrounds outside school can be explored. A similar exploration with older grades in the same school and with other schools, particularly those catering to higher income groups, will help better understand the issue comprehensively, especially the dimension of gender segregation.

We would also like to utilize this space to give certain comments to the school for making the experience of children at school more enriching. We feel that the school authorities should make efforts towards the integration of both the sexes, providing similar facilities and opportunities to them, and try and make the playground as enjoyable, friendly and clean a place as possible.



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## **Annexures**

1. Case studies- Additional Details
2. Picture of the playground
3. Children’s drawings

**Annexure**  
**Case studies- Additional Details**

**Nursery**

Case studies were chosen based on the following criteria of sex, enrollment under freeship quota, and the level of and kind of involvement and interest on the playground.

**Mini**

Our attention was caught by Mini because this little girl does not take part in any games with others. According to her teacher

*“She doesn’t like to have a crowd around her.”*

She stays at a distance from the equipment. She confessed later that she is scared of them because once she fell from the merry-go-round. It was only once that we saw her playing *pakran pakrai* with another boy. And even this was after a great deal of insistence by the boy.

Mini, so, stays at distance from the equipment and watches others play. She always tries to catch the adults’ attention (*“Excuse me Madam!”*) and talks to her teacher, helpers and us. She keeps talking, even if the adults are not listening anymore, creating stories and talking to herself.

**Rani**

Rani has been picked, first, because she is a little girl enrolled under the free ship quota scheme. But she was also an interesting case to look at as she was really active in the playground. Rani was seen running from one equipment to another with different children, without sticking to one specific equipment or giving much heed to their mates.

**Dharam**

Like for Rani, Dharam has been chosen on account of his enrollment under the free ship quota policy. Also, just like Rani he was a really participative child on the playground and played with the different equipment without much concern for others around him.

**Dev**

The decision of choosing Dev as a case study came following our first visit when Dev spent the whole period sitting on the ‘horse’, away from the others. Dev participates in the games with the others, but yet is a shy child who does not seem to be really comfortable with others when in a large group.

## **Fourth grade**

In the Fourth grade, the criteria for selecting case studies were the same as with Nursery. However, one child was chosen as a case study for individual interviews, from each of the four groups distinguished, as stated earlier. The name of another boy, Sagar, was added to the list of case studies because he is the only boy who plays with girls sometimes.

### **Shobha**

Shobha belongs to the bigger group of girls. She seemed to be an active girl and eventually a decision maker. When asked about her favourite thing in the playground, her reply was the 'equipment'.

### **Priya**

Priya is part to the other, smaller, group of girls, like Shobha she has been picked because of her active participation in the talks and activities. She, too, like Shobha enjoys the 'swings' (playing equipment) most on the playground.

### **Sarpreet**

Sarpreet is part of the 'team' and seems to be an active member of the group. He said that he likes the playground because here he can play ball with his friends in the sunlight.

### **Ashwin**

Ashwin is the only child enrolled under the freeship quota policy in Fourth grade and has been chosen accordingly. He participated quite actively during the story telling session. When asked about how and where he learnt the games he plays with his friends on the playground, his answer was that he had been playing these since 'childhood'.

*“Bachpan se khel rahe hain.”*

When asked to comment on the participation of girls in ball games, he said that girls cannot play with the ball.

*“Ladkiyan ball ke saath nahin khel sakti.”*

### **Sagar**

Sagar, the only boy who plays with girls shared during his interview that girls can play with the ball but they do not.

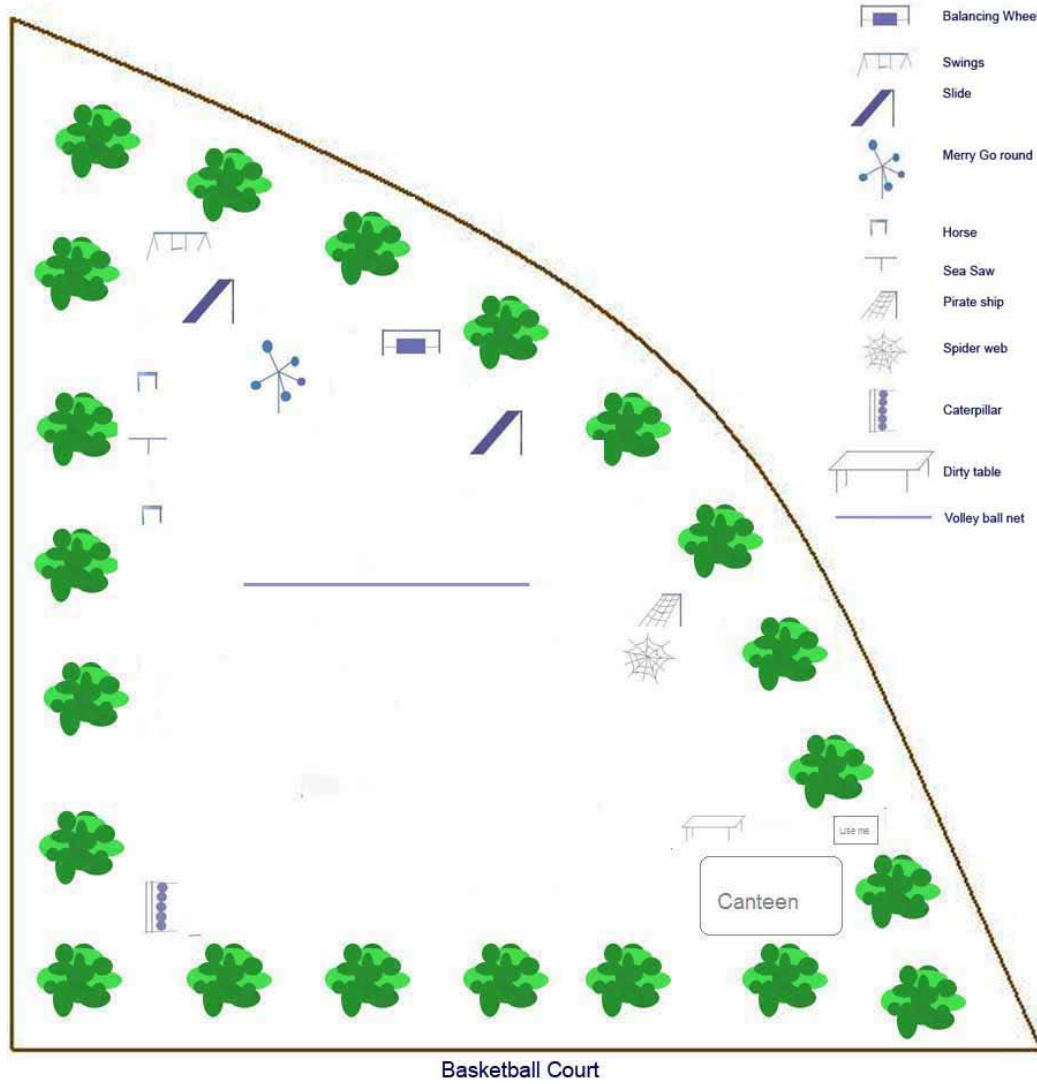
*“Ladkiyan ball se khel sakti hain, par khelti nahin hain.”*

When we tried to enquire if Sagar did play with the ball, he shared that he used when he was a part of the ‘team’.

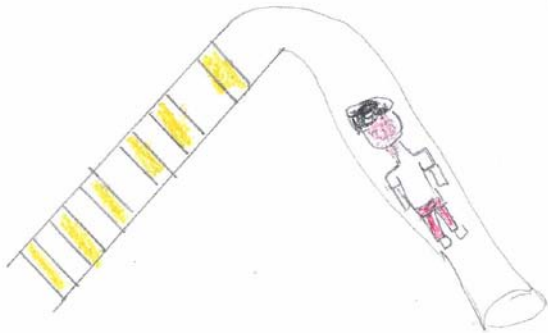
*Main ball ke saath nahin khelta kyun ki main ‘ team’ se nikal gaya. Pehle football aur cricket khelta tha.”*

When asked about his favourite things on the playground he shared that these were the trees and the equipment. He shared that the place he hates the most is where the garbage and the dirty table is, next to the canteen.

# Playground

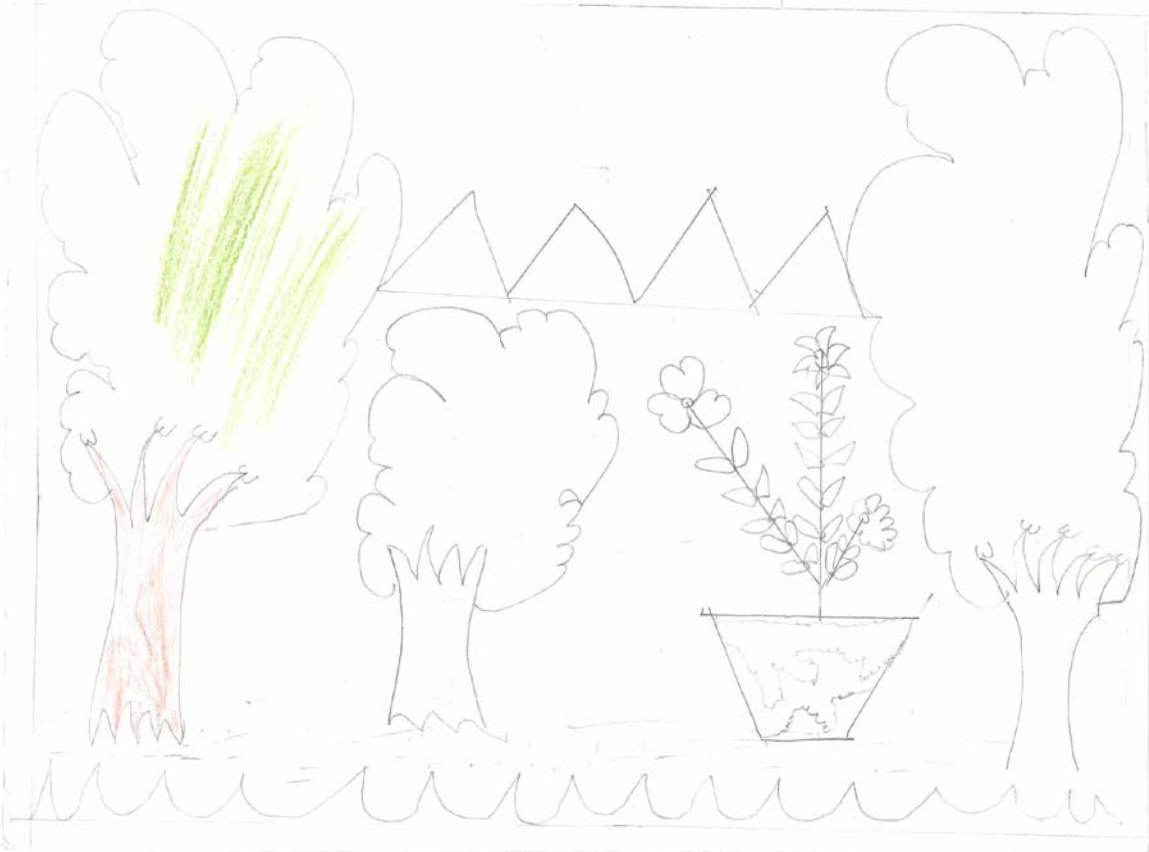


Name - Pragya Selaoki  
Class - IV - A  
Roll No - 22



playground

name - Ashutosh unjani



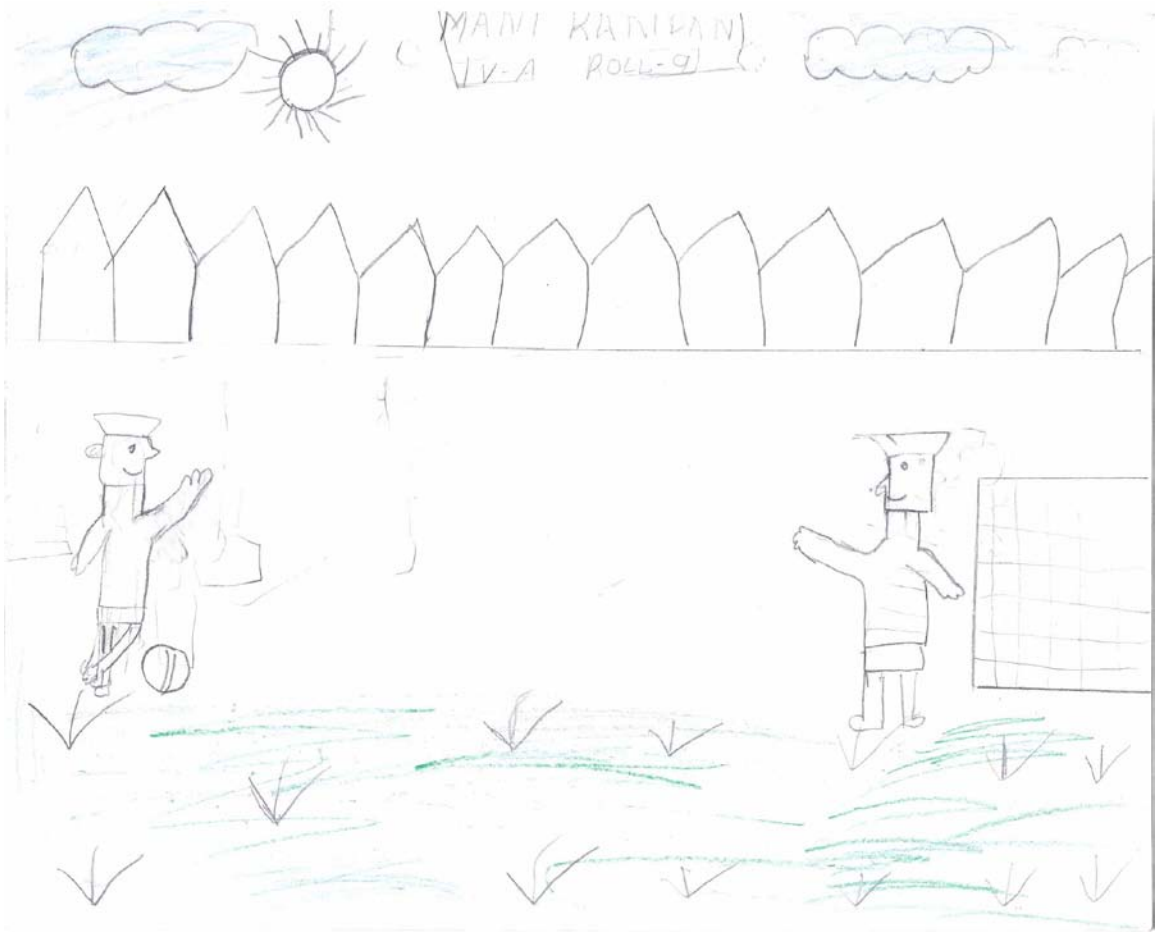




Nama-Pujangga  
Class-IVA

Playground





Shashant.  
Nursery

10/11



MRIDUL  
Nursery



