

PLAY CENTRE : OBJECTIVES

27.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last lesson you have learnt about the characteristics and needs of children in early childhood. You have seen how these characteristics change with age and how the child feels more equipped in every respect as he grows physically. He can now move around with greater ease so much so that he becomes quite handful for his mother. He is also curious and therefore likes to explore and asks many questions. He starts taking interest in other children and wants to be with them. Is the mother equipped enough to take care of the growing child ? Can she be helped ? Can school help ? What kind of school be chosen for children at this stage ? etc. are just a few of the questions that we will try to answer in this lesson.

27.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to :

- define a play centre;
- explain the need for a play centre;
- enumerate the objectives of a play centre;
- handle children in the play centre;
- deal with behaviour problems in children.

27.3 MEANING OF PLAY CENTRE

A play centre is a place which provides children with certain facilities like toys, play space etc; allows them to explore and experiment; provides a meeting ground for many children and therefore enhances the all

round development of each child. The focus is *not* on formal teaching but on learning through play. The environment is friendly and stimulating.

The play centre caters to 2—5 year olds who come for 2-3 hours each day.

Thus you can say that :

Play centre is

- (a) child centred unit and allows children to progress at their own pace
- (b) focuse on holistic development of the child
- (c) invites independent and group learning through play, exploration and investigation. Learning therefore, is an enjoyable experience
- (d) it helps to sustain motivation for school and schooling.

Play centre is *not*

- (a) a miniature primary school
- (b) a place where teacher (-) centred form of education is encouraged
- (c) a place where passive learning and blind obedience is required.

Activity : Observe a play centre around and state how far it is/is not a play centre.

27.4 NEED AND BASIS FOR A PLAY CENTRE

Can you say why children need to attend a play centre ?

There are certain unique characteristics of the learning process of 2—5 year olds that demand a play centre. These are :

- (a) children learn naturally through play
- (b) children learn best by doing
- (c) Their attention span is not very long (7—15 minutes)
- (d) The brain at 3 years is eighty percent of the adult brain mass facilitating maximum learning, hence they need a stimulating environment at this age.
- (e) Children learn easily from each other, from older children, from adults and from the physical environment.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 27.1

State whether true or false :

- (1) Play centre is a sports club.
 - (2) Play centre involves rigid structuring and strict discipline.
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- (3) Children learn only when adults teach them.
 - (4) Play centre is child centred and not teacher-centred.
 - (5) At a play centre children are allowed to learn at their own pace.
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27.5 OBJECTIVES OF A PLAY CENTRE

By now, you must have understood the objectives for which a play centre usually works. Take a paper and pencil and write as many lines as you can. Compare your list with ours given here.

Following are the objectives of a play centre :

- (1) To provide the child opportunities to explore and experiment with a variety of activities, objects and places.
- (2) To provide opportunities for rich and positive interaction with peer group and adults.
- (3) To provide a secure and supportive environment for holistic development,
- (4) To encourage active rather than passive learning in children.
- (5) To structure the experience according to the developmental level of the children.
- (6) To allow children to learn and grow at their own rate without making learning stressful and yet provide enough challenges to sustain motivation and interest.
- (7) To promote self-control and discipline in the child.
- (8) To help in transition from home to formal school.

You must also be familiar with the document "New Education Policy". Following are the objectives of Early Childhood Care and Education mentioned in this document. Read them carefully and see what are the similarities and differences in the two lists.

27.6 HANDLING CHILDREN IN THE PLAY CENTRE

One of the objective of a play centre that we have discussed is that to allow him freedom to explore his environment. You might say that to achieve this objective the child should be allowed to roam around freely. If you had 20 children in the play centre can you imagine what will happen if you were to leave everyone free to do what they liked ?

Some kind of discipline is needed for the child to feel secure in any environment. Hence he should be told his boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The caregiver needs to provide constant supervision and ensure that the child, while exploring, does not hurt himself or others around him.

There are three basic forms of discipline that can be enforced. These are as follows :

Authoritarian, Permissive and Democratic

Let us know more about these :

Authoritarian discipline : When this discipline is enforced the child is told what to do and what not to do and no explanations are offered. Also the child is expected to *show complete obedience*. Have you seen this kind of discipline at home ? Who enforces it ? Do you think a caregiver in a play centre can enforce this kind of discipline ? Yes she can. With authoritarian discipline children will be expected to do only what the caregiver tells them and as we said earlier it is *complete obedience* without exception and question.

Children do not feel happy in this type of environment. Can you say why ? Yes, you are right, they have no freedom to do things they would like to do. If children are checked too often they do things quietly and behind the back of the caregiver. They also learn to tell lies. If children are all the time told what to do and what not to do they become dependent. They always look for instructions and never grow up.

Permissive discipline : this is exact opposite to authoritarian kind of discipline. The child is allowed to do whatever he pleases to do and whenever he pleases to do. There are no rules and no guidance or explanations provided. Can you tell the implications of this kind of discipline in play centre ? Yes, they will get into the habit of not listening to anybody, not obeying any commands and do what they please. This type of behaviour will make them self-centred and selfish. Also, with no guidance from the caregiver children can also go astray or pick up wrong habits.

Democratic discipline : This kind of discipline is in between the two we have just discussed. Can you think of some characteristics of democratic discipline ? See the following:

- Rules are explained before they are enforced.
- Children can question rules and the same can be modified with joint consent.
- Children are allowed freedom to do things on their own but they have to ensure that they don't hurt themselves or others around.

What do you think would be the advantages of such a discipline ? Yes, you are right, children would learn to obey and respect rules, develop confidence in themselves, learn to take initiative and work independently. Children also learn to take their turn, cooperate and have patience.

You may find this type of discipline in the family. Just observe any such family and see how children are disciplined.

Activity

Visit a nearby preschool/playcentre and find out its objectives from the teacher. Then evaluate these on the basis of objectives given above in the text.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 27.2

Q1. State whether true or false :

- (i) Objectives are the prerequisites for efficient running of a play centre.
- (ii) In a play centre all children should play only group games.
- (iii) A secure and supportive environment is as important as the facilities to develop motor skills.
- (iv) In a play centre, children are introduced to reading, writing and arithmetic.
- (v) A play centre focuses on the all round development of a child.

Q.2. Choose the correct answer :

- (i) Authoritarian discipline :
 - (a) demands complete obedience
 - (b) allows complete freedom
 - (c) demands little obedience and gives more freedom
 - (d) demands more obedience and gives little freedom
 - (ii) Permissive discipline :
 - (a) demands complete obedience
 - (b) allows complete freedom
 - (c) demands little obedience and gives more freedom
 - (d) demands more obedience and gives little freedom
 - (iii) Democratic discipline :
 - (a) demands complete obedience
 - (b) allows complete freedom
 - (c) demands little obedience and gives more freedom
 - (d) demands more obedience and gives little freedom
 - (iv) A good playcentre should follow a discipline which is :
 - (a) authoritative
 - (b) permissive
 - (c) democratic
 - (d) a little of each type
 - (v) Children will develop a habit of telling lies if the discipline is :
 - (a) authoritarian
 - (b) permissive
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- (c) democratic
 (d) none of the above
- (vi) Children will learn to take initiative if the discipline followed is :
- (a) authoritarian
 (b) permissive
 (c) democratic
 (d) none of the above
- (vii) Children develop confidence in themselves if they are brought up in discipline which is :
- (a) authoritarian
 (b) democratic
 (c) permissive
 (d) none of the above

26.7 BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN AT PLAY CENTRE

Young children often demonstrate behaviours which are inappropriate. For example a child may be in a habit of hitting everybody else, breaking things, abusing, telling lies, etc. These are behaviours which not only harm children physically but also make them unpopular with other children.

Causes : There can be many reasons why children develop these behaviours. Some are listed here :

- When children live in an environment which forbids any self-expression they pick up behaviours which are unacceptable.
- When parents and teachers expect too much from children and they are not able to keep upto expectations, they show unacceptable behaviours.
- Often children learn that unacceptable behaviours are tools to get what they want. For example, the child learns that when he hits his younger siblings parents attend to him or when he cries and rolls on the floor he gets the toy he wants.
- When family environment is disturbed then also children start showing unacceptable behaviours eg. when parents quarrel with each other, they hit each other or when their mothers and grandmothers don't get along with each other.
- When there is a crisis in child's life. Children show unacceptable behaviours on birth of another sibling, the death of a beloved member of the family.
- Children may also develop unacceptable behaviours because physically they are not able to cope up. This happens when they have had a long illness or when they fall sick too frequently.

The caregivers at the playcentre have to be alert and understanding. Whenever there is a child who shows unacceptable behaviour they must act immediately. Since, very often the cause of the behaviour originates from home they must ask for cooperation of the parents, understand the problem and develop a strategy which helps to cure the problem. Punishing and scolding or ridiculing will not help. Some of the common problem behaviours are described in the following table together with a description of what adults normally do but they *should not do* and what they *should do*.

Common Problem Behaviour Observed Among Young Children

Behaviour	Meaning	Do not	Do
(a) Hurts other children	- Anger feeling - Troubled	- Punish or hurt - Make him feel bad	- Divert attention - Separate other children quietly - Help the child feel loved by giving other outlets for feelings.
(b) Destroys things	- Feeling of helplessness - Jealousy - Boredom - Seeking attention	- Scold, shout, punish, spank or hit	- Keep precious things out of reach - Provide place for play - Offer low-cost substitutes - Divert and involve the child in other activities
(c) Sucks the thumb	- Need for sucking, love, comfort and assurance - Tiredness - Hunger - Dissatisfaction - Boredom	- Punish or scold - tie fingers or smear them with bitter medicine	- Provide sucking satisfaction - Offer love and affection - Pleasurable activities - Provide things needed for the child
(d) Wets the bed	- The child is not ready for training - Fear - Insecurity	- Threaten or punish - Insist on prior information - Tell you do not love the child	- Accept the child as he/she is - Expect accidental bed-wetting - Help and encourage the child to become confident

Behaviour	Meaning	Do not	Do
(e) Tells lies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fear of punishment - Exaggeration - Imagination - Attention seeking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preach or punish or reject - Make him apologize - Get upset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the reason - Give the needed attention - Provide opportunity for enriching the imagination - Tell the truth
(f) Refuses to eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is not hungry - Feels unwell - Dislikes particular food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Force, punish - Make a scene - Reward, threaten - Force to do the act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be calm - Introduce new foods along with the favourite items
(g) Fears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviews painful experience - Needs parent's closeness - Feels guilty or unloved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Force or seek reason for fear, shame or threaten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reassure and comfort - Make the environment a happy one. - Encourage efforts. - Avoid fearful experiences and help him to help himself
(h) Steals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ignorance of property rights - Unsatisfied needs - Irritation - Hostile feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scold, make feel bad, punish or reject - Cut off love - Humiliate before others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Let the child own things and get a sense of ownership - Be kind, understanding and not too strict. - Provide creative outlets - Help make real friends

Activity : Observe two children in your neighbourhood to identify any problem behaviour in them. Observe how close the behaviours are to the descriptions given above. Also observe how parents handle these behaviours of their children.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 27.3**1. Fill in the blanks :**

- (i) The child is provided with no guidance in _____ discipline.
- (ii) _____ discipline is most beneficial for the child because it allows freedom of expression.
- (iii) In _____ discipline parents rule by authority rather than reason.
- (iv) You should not _____ or _____ the child who exhibits stealing behaviour.
- (v) _____ can be caused by disturbed family environment.

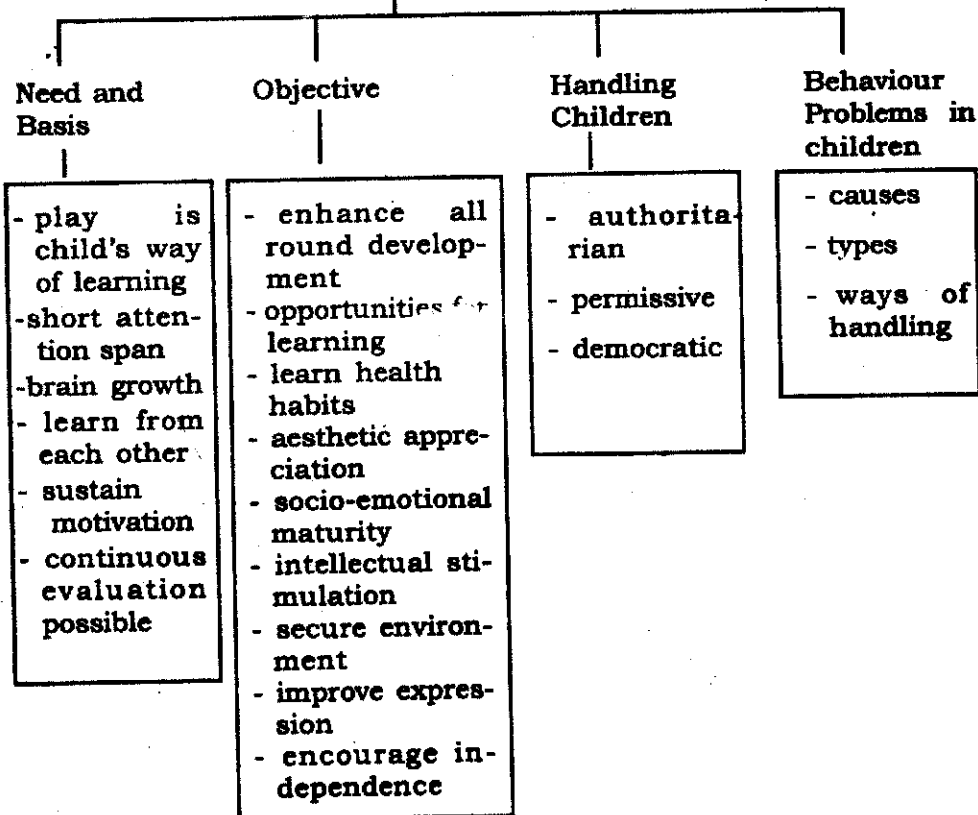
Q.2. Choose the correct answer :

- (i) Children develop unacceptable behaviours if the environment is
 - (a) forbidding
 - (b) free
 - (c) forbidding and free
 - (d) none of the above
- (ii) Punishing and ridiculing a child are used in :
 - (a) authoritarian discipline
 - (b) democratic discipline
 - (c) permissive discipline
 - (d) all the above mentioned disciplines
- (iii) A child sucks her thumb because she is :
 - (a) bored
 - (b) insecure
 - (c) scared
 - (d) asking for attention
- (iv) A child wets the bed because she is :
 - (a) bored
 - (b) insecure
 - (c) scared
 - (d) asking for attention
- (v) A child tells lies because she is :
 - (a) bored
 - (b) insecure
 - (c) jealous
 - (d) asking for attention

- (vi) A child destroys things because she is :
- (a) bored
 - (b) insecure
 - (c) jealous
 - (d) asking for attention
- (vii) A child steals when she is :
- (a) bored
 - (b) insecure
 - (c) jealous
 - (d) hostile
- (viii) A child refuses to eat too often because she is :
- (a) bored
 - (b) insecure
 - (c) hostile
 - (d) unwell

27.8 WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

What is play centre (meaning and characteristics)



27.9 TERMINAL EXERCISE

- Q 1. How do the objectives of a play centre define its characteristics and programme ?
- Q 2. Write a paragraph on how you will use the democratic disciplining technique in a play centre.
- Q 3. What are the causes of behaviour problems in children ?
- Q 4. What type of problem behaviour do you feel are the most difficult for parents to handle ? Give reasons.

27.10 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 27.1 (1) F (2) F (3) F
(4) T (5) T

- 27.2 1. (i) T (ii) F (iii) T
(iv) F (v) T
2. (i) (a) (ii) (b) (iii) (c)
(iv) (c) (v) (a) (vi) (c)
(vii) (b)

- 27.3 1. (i) Permissive
(ii) Democratic
(iii) Authoritarian
(iv) Punish, Humiliate
(v) Behaviour Problems
2. (i) (a) (ii) (a) (iii) (a)
(iv) (b) (v) (d) (vi) (c)
(vii) (d) (viii) (d)