



P4PLAY: RESEARCHING PEOPLE, PLACE, POLICY and PRACTICE for PLAY from the LENS of OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE

Examining policy processes to facilitate play

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The P4Play Mare Skłodowska-Curie (MSC) Training network is an innovative European Joint Doctorate (EJD) programme in Occupational Science for Occupational Therapists. This EJD was established in 2020 when 2.2m was awarded to a consortium of researchers and play advocates, in the highly competitive Horizon2020 scheme. P4Play is a collaboration between 4 academic universities in Ireland, Sweden, Scotland and Switzerland, and 15 partner organisations in Europe and the USA. The P4Play programme adopts a child's rights-based perspective and aims to investigate the nature of play through the lens of People, Place, Policy and Practice (P4Play). A refocus on play as a right requires further study as a central concern (or occupation) in children's lives. Occupational Science, a science dedicated to the study of humans as doers or as occupational beings, offers a unique lens to explore play as an occupation. Two research projects in policy focus on development and implementation of methodologies and tools to facilitate children's voices in planning for play and to support policy aiming for health, well-being and opportunities.

Background to the POLICY projects

Play is described as a child's way of interacting with the physical and social environment, behaviour for its own sake and essential to a child's health and well-being. The importance of play is recognised in article 31 and GC 17 of Convention of the Rights of the Child (ref). **Thus play is an occupational right for all children** as people should have the right to participate in meaningful occupations beneficial for health and well-being.

UN Convention of Rights of the child is ratified by 196 countries and influences directly policy development. National governments deploy this convention in establishing policies or frameworks for children services. **Policies are grounded in (inter)national agreements and should be research-informed to work with the best available data for solutions and actions for service delivery and societal challenges.**

The cooperation with policy makers as partners is vital in these projects for conducting research on relevant questions and to cope with dilemmas along the process as the academic world differs from the professional field of policy makers (Oliver et al., 2019). This cooperation is expected to inform future policies and practices on play, creating playful environments and restraining inequality. **Advancing knowledge in play policy and practice needs policy-driven research and research-informed policies and tools.**

POLICY PROJECT 1:

Applying children's right to share their view in (re)designing a public playspace

Children's right to share their views on matters that affect them, is challenged in its operationalisation. Involving children, in particular seldom heard children, in decision-making processes about public playspaces in the municipalities makes sense as play is fundamental to all children and the importance of taking children's perceptions into account has been reported before.

This project aims to understand the barriers and facilitators for using strategies for children's participation in (re)design of public playspaces and to explore what children with disabilities need for participation.

Involving children in (re)designing a public playspace supports the creation of inclusive playgrounds, but moreover generates opportunities for children to take part in democratic processes and being an active citizen.

Understanding the development and the application of tools, frameworks, policies and laws in municipalities will be supported via the partner organisations. They are engaged in providing play opportunities, supporting grassroots groups in the community leading to innovations and policy initiatives, e.g. Participation Framework (2021), Ready, Steady, Play (2019). **The cooperation will strengthen the relevance of the research questions and the quality of the research process and therefore the usability of the outcomes.**

POLICY PROJECT 2:

Identifying and exploring multiple outcomes associated with enacting children's play policy

The occupation of play cannot be understood as a linear, unidimensional phenomenon. Many variables and drivers, from the individual and societal context, influence play. There is potential to use occupational theories to influence play-focused-policy development and application as a way of addressing entrenched problems that limit health and well-being. Doing this requires the ability to examine and understand complex relationships between actions, people and contexts.

This project aims to review methodological approaches to investigating complex systemic issues associated with play and play deprivation, and outcomes associated with community level actions to facilitate play. It further aims to develop and apply a methodology that enables a complex systems perspective on exploring policy processes associated with facilitating play to identify areas for development.

Partner organisations in Ireland and Scotland are intense involved in P4Play for these policy related projects:



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
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