

# Child Rights, Cocreation and Empowerment through Play in Emergency Settings

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## Pilot Project Aim

To co-create & test a child-centred assessment tool for play-based early childhood education, supporting quality improvement through culturally sensitive and context-aware assessment in complex environments.

## Research Questions:

- Is the developed assessment tool accessible, manageable and simple to interpret? Is it fit for purpose? Does it collect and produce a robust data set that informs future practice to improve provision and outcomes for children?

### Methodology

- Pragmatic Paradigm (Dewey, Morgan)
- Social Cultural Theory (Vygotsky)
- Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman)

### Methods

- Pre-PATT online Survey
- Post-PPAT online interviews
- Gap analysis

### Participants

- 35 ECE Settings
- 143 Children
- 30 Community Educators
- 11 Community Assessors
- 2 Organisation Lead Educators

### Ethics

- Informed Consent
- Anonymity
- Voluntary Participation

## Project Background

- Partners: Children on the Edge (Uganda), Learn to Play (Botswana), and University of Chichester.
- Focus: Harnessing the power of play to promote community-led ECE
- Global Context: United Nations SDG 4.2 calls for universal access to quality early childhood education by 2030.
- Challenge: Existing tools often assess child development but overlook the quality of play-based learning environments.



Dewey, J. (2008) 'The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924, Volume 9: 1916, Democracy and Education, Volume 9'. Edited by J.A. Boydston and S. Hook.

Morgan, D.L. (2014) 'Pragmatism as a Paradigm for Social Research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(8), pp. 1045-1053.

Vygotsky, LS (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

Zimmerman, M.A. (2000) Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis. In: Rappaport, J. and Seidman, E. (eds.) *Handbook of Community Psychology*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, pp. 43-63



### Tool 1:

**An observational child assessment** across 6 developmental domains using 8 play-based activities with a representative sample of 5-year-olds to highlight strengths and areas for improvement.

### Tool 2:

**A checklist assessment** completed jointly by facilitators and assessors. It evaluates play provision against evidence-based standards across areas including safe spaces and pedagogy.

**Key Findings:** The pilot demonstrated that the play-based assessment tool is a flexible and valuable resource with potential to enhance ECE.

- **Accessibility, Manageability & Interpretation:** Training was appreciated for building understanding and confidence in using the tool. Joint training sessions fostered supportive, reflective practice among educators. Participants requested more support and the consistency of this varied across locations.
- **Fitness for Purpose:** The play-based approach was widely endorsed, reinforcing the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- **Implementation & Data Collection:** Some play activities were easier to implement than others; challenges included storytelling and physical play. The length of the assessment was a challenge, with some children becoming tired or disengaged.

**Next Steps:** Scale up implementation across settings and organisations. Collect year-on-year data for COTE and LTP; secure funding for further research to refine and expand the tool.



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