

# Perspectives of play in three nations: A comparative study in Japan, the United States, and Sweden <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** Early Childhood Research and Practice

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 1 May 2010

## AVAILABILITY

Full paper <sup>[2]</sup>

## Abstract:

This reflective paper discusses findings about differences and similarities in perspectives on play among early childhood educators in Japan, the United States, and Sweden. Analysis of survey data collected from educators in those nations yielded six themes regarding the meanings and uses of play: (1) process of learning, (2) source of possibilities, (3) empowerment, (4) creativity, (5) child's work, and (6) fun activities. Processes of learning, fun activities, and creativity were the universal themes of play that emerged during analysis. Japanese and Swedish teachers related play to the theme source of possibilities, but American teachers did not. The theme play as child's work was represented in the American and Swedish teachers' notions of play but not in those of the Japanese teachers. The theme of play as empowerment differentiated Japanese teachers from the others. Japanese and Swedish teachers reported offering unstructured play to children, while their American counterparts did not. Two themes emerged in the participants' responses regarding adult play: "state of heart" (state of mind) and positive feelings. Although American and Japanese teachers associated playfulness with a "state of the heart/mind," their Swedish counterparts did not indicate such associations. Teachers from all three nations did, however, agree that playfulness involves and promotes positive feelings.

**Region:** Europe <sup>[3]</sup>

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