



Urban Transitions Conference, Shanghai, September 2016

## Inclusive play in urban cities: A pilot study of the inclusive playgrounds in Hong Kong

Kin Wai Michael Siu<sup>a,\*</sup>, Yi Lin Wong<sup>a</sup>, Mei Seung Lam<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

<sup>b</sup>The Education University of Hong Kong, 10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong

---

### Abstract

Public play spaces are designed for children to develop their social and physical abilities and enrich their experience. Through play, children can learn various cognitive skills in a relaxing environment. All children should have the same right to play in play spaces. However, many existing playgrounds lack inclusive facilities to facilitate the needs of the disabled children. This paper takes Hong Kong as a case study. In our preliminary observation there is no disabled children playing or even appeared in nearly all of the play spaces. The current design of the playgrounds also does not take the needs of children's care takers into consideration. This results in misusing playground facilities by the care takers. In order to address the issue of inclusive play for children and the care takers, the paper reviews the playgrounds in Hong Kong in terms of the accessibility and availability and identifies the inclusive issues in playgrounds of the densely populated city. It also highlights the current strategies that the government has developed to deal with the problem. The paper argues that in a populous city such as Hong Kong it is inevitable to encounter difficulties in building inclusive play spaces and promoting inclusive play, and specific strategies of using spaces creatively is a must to ensure an effective design for children's play in needs.

© 2017 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of the Urban Transitions Conference

*Keywords:* Inclusive; play spaces; playgrounds; densely populated cities

---

### 1. Introduction

Play is essential in children's cognitive, social and physical development [1]. It facilitates children to practise motor coordination, learn the physical world, and develop their problem-solving skills and abstract thinking.

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +852-27665455; fax: +852-27745067.

E-mail address: [m.siu@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:m.siu@polyu.edu.hk)

Children can also learn to be emotional intelligent and develop social skills through playing and interacting with others. Play is generally considered as children's business [2]. It is the 'culture of childhood' [3]. Playgrounds are the designed environment to provide facilities for playing and engage children in play [4], and children born in urban cities often play with others in public playgrounds.

All children at different ages with different abilities have the right to play. According to the Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, States should "recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts" [5]. The Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also suggested that States Parties should ensure that physically disabled children are able to engage in play activities equally with other children [6]. Therefore, it is essential to include children with disabilities in playgrounds so that they can enjoy the right and the benefit of play. In addition, including children with disabilities in playground is also essential to promote an inclusive society, as it is the first step to fight discrimination and marginalisation [7].

Research studies about including children with different physical and cognitive abilities (or called, capabilities) in public play spaces and designs of inclusive playgrounds are numerous (Note: "play space" in the following paragraphs means "public play space"). For instance, Wolley, Armitage, Bishop, Curtis and Ginsborg [8-10] investigated the inclusion of disabled children in primary school playgrounds and identified social, organizational and physical issues which affect disabled children's inclusive experience. While some good social and organizational practices were found in their studies, very few good physical practices could be observed. The only good practice was the provision of ramps. Holt, Moore and Beckett [11] launched a participatory design project investigating the aspiration and barriers of inclusive play. They found that social barriers of inclusive play could be removed by using a better design of play facilities. Jeanes and Magee [1] discussed the physical and social issues hindering disabled children to play in public playgrounds and provided a guideline of developing more inclusive play facilities. Through a case study, they suggested that 'consultation, suitable access, opportunities to develop relationships and demonstrate capabilities, fully trained and supportive staff' were essential.

Despite the well-establish research studies and the significant findings, some children are still unable to do the play business due to cognitive or physical constraints. Especially in some densely populated cities, such as Hong Kong, play spaces specially designed for disabled children are inadequate. The limited space, the unawareness of the related government departments, and the lacking understanding about the needs and preferences of children with disabilities are some of the reasons. Academic studies related to inclusive playgrounds and inclusive play in Hong Kong context is lacking. In order to understand the topic more clearly, this paper investigates the issue of inclusive playgrounds in densely populated cities through a case study of Hong Kong. It aims to pinpoint the issues and concerns of inclusive play in high-density living environment that previous research did not concern.

## **2. Playgrounds in Hong Kong**

Playgrounds in Hong Kong are managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the Housing Authority and Housing Department, or private sectors. In general, the playgrounds managed by the LCSD are larger in size and have more diverse play facilities. The general designs of all the playgrounds are similar. In our preliminary study investigating 105 playgrounds in a district with highest population density in Hong Kong, it was found that almost all playgrounds consist of numbers of composite play structure including slides and climbing facilities (Fig.1). Other play facilities include swings, rocking chairs, seesaws, climbing facilities and merry-go-rounds. Some playgrounds also include cognitive games such as tic-tac-toe. These facilities are one and the same, and nothing new can be found in playgrounds.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5027384>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5027384>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)