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Entitled

CONSTRUING CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF IDEAL LEARNING SPACES: HOME VS. SCHOOL

By

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Abstract

Learning is an intrinsic aspect of human experience, predominantly shaped by interactions within the socio-physical environment, including engagements with educators, peers, and the built surroundings. The design and character of these learning spaces influence children's cognitive, perceptual, and motor development while also embodying different pedagogical philosophies. Therefore, designing these spaces to align with educational shifts and enhance learning experiences requires a deep understanding of learner's needs and perceptions. With the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating a shift to home-learning, there arose a unique opportunity to explore children's perception of ideal learning spaces as they experienced both home and school settings. [Aims:] This research aimed to identify the physical attributes of ideal learning spaces from children's perceptions and place them within the context of existing learning theories. Using the principles of the personal construct theory and the repertory grid technique, a detailed qualitative approach was adopted. Thirty children aged 8 to 10 were engaged in semi-structured interviews to identify the design-related attributes they associate with ideal learning spaces. The newly developed Integrated Learning Space Framework (ILSF) was then utilised to align these attributes with the spatial implications of various learning theories. The study identified 51 key design-related attributes of an ideal learning space. Key findings highlighted children's preferences for spacious and versatile environments, with themes of personalization, aesthetic consistency, and functional design emerging prominently. Additionally, there was a strong resonance with humanistic principles in their conceptualizations. Beyond emphasising the impact of the pandemic on children's educational expectations, this research introduces the ILSF, a tool that aligns children's spatial preferences with five learning theories. By linking children's perceptions with learning theories through the ILSF, this research provides insights for the architectural design of future educational spaces that align with both theoretical foundations and learners' preferences.

Keywords: Children's perception, learning spaces, RGT, PCT, ILSF, learning theories