

This Thesis examines the play-concept as an important facet in the life and education of human beings. Despite the purported importance of play, it is not well understood. The misconception of play makes it difficult for all human beings to engage in play, as should otherwise be the case. This thesis attempts to clarify the play-concept in the light of the different views held by different scholars.

Chapter one contains the introduction to the study. The background information, the statement of the problem, rationale for the study, research objectives, significance of the study, research methodology and definition of terms, are presented in this chapter.

Chapter two presents theories of play. In the chapter, theories of play are presented and then classified. These theories are classified into speculative theories of play and the scientific theories of play. The speculative theories of play are mainly concerned with the purposes play serves where the scientific theories mainly focus on individuals' behaviour in play. A conceptual framework is also provided in this chapter.

Chapter three examines the theory of play as presented by Johan Huizinga. Huizinga, a Dutch historian provides a fairly elaborate theory of play. His views on the play-concept, however, are inadequate in that he mainly emphasizes competitive forms of play. He therefore does not consider the other attributes of play in detail.

Huizinga's views on play are treated as the thesis of this study. This is in conformity with Hegel's method where a series of relations are treated in three fold movements. A thesis is hence confronted by a contradictory antithesis. The positive aspects of both the thesis and antithesis are then combined into a synthesis.

Chapter four looks at the theory of play as provided by Roger Caillois. Caillois, a French sociologist, examines play with emphasis on the games of chance. This is as opposed to Huizinga's study of competitive games. Caillois' study of the play-concept is as a result of his reflections on Huizinga's debatable premises. Caillois' theory of play, is therefore, the antithesis of this study.

Chapter five of this thesis is a synthesis of the two theories of play in chapter three and four as provided by Huizinga and Caillois respectively. Huizinga's theory is the proposition, which proves to be inadequate because of emphasizing the competitive forms of play. The opposite, which is the antithesis, is Caillois' theory of play. The antithesis also proves inadequate because it only emphasizes games of chance or luck. Chapter five then provides us with a synthesis of thesis and antithesis by combining the rational views in them. In the synthesis, the basic elements of play as provided in the thesis and antithesis are integrated to form a clarification of the play-concept. We have hence maintained that play is a liberal activity, which is prescriptive and non-utilitarian; although it is cosmological in that it operates in time and space.

Chapter five also deals with the educational component of this thesis. It examines the implications of play for educational practice in general and for Kenya in particular. Play is not well provided for in the educational system in Kenya though it is a natural manifestation in human nature. The education system as currently constituted suppresses the urge for play.

Freedom for play, which is a basic quality of play, if provided for in our educational practice, can be an effective way of learning.

Chapter six, which is the concluding chapter, provides the findings of the thesis. A chapter-by-chapter summary is provided together with the recommendations in this chapter.