

**Abstract Template**

**TITLE: Play and profit at KidZania Kuala Lumpur**

**AUTHOR: Brendon Tagg - Monash University Malaysia; UCSI  
University Terengganu**

**Wang Shirley - UCSI University Terengganu**

This article examines KidZania Kuala Lumpur – an ‘edutainment park’ in Malaysia – within the context of the literature on play. The argument is based upon textual analysis, observation of children at KidZania Kuala Lumpur, participant-observation of a child and her mother, and a focus group interview with children who have previously visited on a school trip. While KidZania claims to provide edutainment through role-play, the evidence presented here suggests that the children’s ‘play’ is actually so highly structured that it is hardly play at all. While the children may appear to be amazed by KidZania’s impressive façades, this realistic environment leaves little room for imaginative play. Furthermore, because KidZania relies heavily on sponsorship collaborations, the label ‘advertainment’ seems justified. Many of the issues raised in this paper actually reflect and reinforce broader issues in Malaysian society – and appear to be exasperated by the recruitment of largely young and potentially inexperienced workers. KidZania’s apparent weaknesses as an educational destination also relate to broader questions about the theoretical underpinnings of edutainment and the rise of education as a commodity.

