

Preschool Teaching and Learning: A Case Study Exploration in Dhaka

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work while completing my degree at Brac University. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing. It does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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September 2022

Approval

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Ethics Statement

This is my original work. Inspiration for conducting a case study on pre-schooling has come largely from my own experience. I have been a pre-school educator for a couple of years. It is then that I realized the pre-primary education I had received was not the same as the current one. This realization was a large inspiration for digging out more about current preschool teaching and learning. As such, I have acquired consent from the major participants before including their quotes or any information about the school in the study. However, I have tried my best to consciously avoid any point of views from my own experience and to only present the facts.

Abstract

This case study investigates preschool teachers' strategies to regulate a successful learning environment in preschool. These are manifest through an observational journey in a preschool located in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The purpose of the study was to describe how teaching and learning are conducted in a student-centered learning environment. The study was accountable to find out three major components: firstly, plan, implementation, and assessment of preschool teaching and learning; secondly, the impact of the preschool environment on children's thinking ability; and, thirdly, the use of technology in preschool. In order to present the description of teaching and learning based on the three components, a case study methodology was applied. With an aim to keep the objectivity and complete representation of the data, the researcher gathered the data from multiple sources: five preschoolers, two preschool teachers, and an early childhood specialist who is also the director of the school. The observation and interaction with the participants occurred in a learning environment. The study findings reveal how the pre primary education system varies from the traditional academic education system. How 'learning through play' is being incorporated to engage students and to promote early development was an important aspect found in 'learning'. These outcomes were described in detail by linking with several studies on early childhood programs.

Dedication

To my parents

To the mentor of my life, Sonia Akram

To the person who TRIED: Me!

Acknowledgement

“Wisdom and knowledge are things that the believer lacks. He should take them wherever he finds them.”

- [Tirmidhi, Al-Ilm; (Knowledge) 19]

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor Md. Al Amin for a grant that made the study possible. The world is a better place thanks to teachers like you who have always got their students' back.

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List of Acronyms

ECD: Early Childhood Development

ECE: Early Childhood Education

ECEC: Early Childhood Education and Care

ELDC: Early Learning Daycare Center

Motor Skills: Skills that are required for coordinating muscles for movement.

Developmental Domains: Areas of development. There are 5 developmental domains - 1. Gross Motor 2. Fine Motor 3. Language 4. Cognitive 5. Social/Emotional

Pre-K1/Pre-K2: Short for Pre-Kindergarten 1 and Pre-Kindergarten 2

Child-centered: An approach that is taken keeping children's needs, abilities, and interests in mind. Students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills in an independent manner.

Teacher-centered: An approach where the teacher is in charge of the learning process. The teacher will deliver a lecture and the students will be listening while sitting quietly.

Preschool Assessment: Assessment is a great way for the educators and the parents to observe and monitor the learning progress and track the development of all 5 domains. Preschool Assessments are supposed to be taken informally.

Speech Delay: It is a type of communication disorder when a child has difficulties to understand or use language. In such cases, a child is delayed to meet the typical linguistic requirements.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Overview

In the summer of 2022, the researcher began to observe, investigate, and record all the activities inside the preschool of ABC Early Learning Daycare Center (Pseudonym). It was founded in 2017, and since then ABC ELDC has continued its preschooling sessions for children of age group 3 to 5. This research shows that children who attend preschool have improved social, emotional, and personal growth and development. At preschool, children are provided games and activities that boost pre-literacy skills (National Blue Ribbon School, 2020). According to a Unicef report, children who receive at least one year of pre-primary education are more likely to develop critical skills while having less chances of dropping out (2019). However, in Bangladesh, the picture is bleaker with only a 40.27% pre-primary gross enrollment ratio. Moreover, not providing Early Childhood Education (ECE) results in limiting the children from reaching their full potential (Unicef, 2019).

Nevertheless, in recent years, Bangladesh is making remarkable progress to provide pre-primary education for all young children aged 3-5. Although much more remains to be achieved, there are a number of private and NGO institutions offering preschool facilities. However, the question remains about whether these institutions are encouraging learning through play and having fun, or if they are only focusing on studying. To find this out, the author visited ABC ELDC for 15 days and studied every possible aspect of preschooling. A team of four Pre-K2 students (aged 3.5-5) were under observation who were attending pre-school for at least 6 months or more. Alongside them, attention was given to teachers' roles on children during the observation period. The continuous growth of this preschool since its establishment has received the author's special attention. While searching for the causes, it was found that the institution has an uncompromising teaching philosophy. ABC emphasizes on their curriculum which is entirely based on learning through fun games and activities unlike typical studying methods. The school follows the

Australian Standard curriculum, and the thematic activities teachers set for learning sessions are loved and enjoyed by the children. As a result, at the end of the year, students meet and exceed learning standards and Kindergarten readiness.

Statement of the Problem

This case study project was designed to determine how teaching and learning is occurring in the preschools of Bangladesh. It also identifies how pre-primary education helps strengthen students' social, emotional, and personal growth which is the primary goal of preschool education. Where the Early Childhood environment works behind shaping a child's entire development, not being able to maintain the environment can impact negatively both physically and mentally. The first four to five years are the most crucial and significant time of a child's life. A child's brain is the most flexible during this period and grows rapidly. However, brain development is sensitive to what it experiences (Unicef, 2019). Keeping that in mind, children should not only sit on chairs and tables, focusing on pen and papers; for this would only limit their potential. This develops the basics of Early Childhood Care and Development or ECCD (Unicef, 2019). However, most parents in Bangladesh are unaware of the necessity of ECE. There can be found a lot of early education centers; however, how many are providing standard early education remains unknown because of a lack of research done in this field. Indeed, research in this field requires proper coordination, adequate funding, and a lot of research.

This qualitative study aims to gather detailed information on preschool teaching and learning, alongside exploring other aspects of this field. A preschool of an early learning daycare center in Dhaka was surveyed to determine how teaching and learning is being done and how it should be. As very little to no research has been done on the relevant topic, the author believes that

this case study would substantially revise and even extend existing knowledge on preschool education.

Background

The roots of early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies and programs are found in Europe during the mid-19th century development. Preschool education, back then, was focused on protecting neglected children of the poor working class and improving the development of children from middle class families. Afterwards, during and after WWII, a huge amount of women had to join the labor workforce (Kameran, 2006). Mothers who worked in the labor force very much needed qualified and affordable care for their children. Alongside care, preparation for school was one of the recent factors. By the 1970s, more women started working outside the home which developed the need for providing care alongside early education. According to a Unesco report, starting from 1960 to the end of that century, ECEC has largely developed and one year of preschooling before compulsory school has become mandatory in all EU countries (2007).

Since the formation of Bangladesh in 1971, ECE has been given importance. The first education commission Qudrat E Khuda has acknowledged the importance of ECE and proposed to introduce it to the country in 1974. Later, in 1988, Mofizuddin Ahmed of the Education Commission emphasized on government primary schools along with establishing kindergarten and nursery schools. However, these proposals were never implemented. In 2010, the Bangladesh government announced a national policy for ECE. However, keeping the policy's goal in mind, this sector needs more prioritization and investment in order for it to achieve its goals. According to the 2013 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, only 13.4 per cent of children aged 3-5 years are attending ECE. Apart from this, the Bangladesh government is recognizing the importance of this sector and

working on improving and ensuring the quality of Early Education for all children. The government is working in collaboration with NGOs like BRAC, JAAGO, Save the Children, international agencies such as UNICEF, and many more private/non private communities. Non-governmental or private agencies and NGOs have been pioneers in establishing the development in ECE.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative case study focuses on teachers' and children's perspective of their preschool. The author explores and tries to cover almost every aspect of preschooling education.

This study highlights an in-depth understanding of preschool teaching techniques of an Early Learning Center in Dhaka and how much the children are provided with a child-centered learning environment.

Significance of the Study

Children develop a strong foundation in pre-academic skills, basic life skills, and motor skills in a preschool. It is an appropriate setting for preparing children for their future success; the very first place where children learn the value of their own identity and develop self-esteem.

Even with the importance of ECE in Bangladesh, available data and information regarding this sector are inadequate and disorganized. Besides, very little effort has been made to comprehensively review the sector. Against this backdrop, this study aims to provide a comprehensive review of the ECE by looking into an Early Learning Center in Dhaka, Bangladesh and present some key policy recommendations for addressing the identified challenges and opportunities. It is expected that the findings of this study will contribute to future policy discussions on making quality ECE available to all children in the country.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

A concern that has been troubling educators is that students of Bangladesh are not capable of using the skills learned academically to solve real world problems. This may have been caused by the lack of ‘critical thinking’ scopes in the education system. Education should allow a person to be able to think critically, creatively, and earn problem solving skills through the years of schooling. This is how learning remarks its effectiveness. Moreover, this learning should start from the very beginning of one’s schooling, which is preschool. The primary purpose of this review is to ascertain if there is any convincing evidence that supports the importance of preschool education in promoting children’s effective learning by enhancing or adopting the good practices gathered from effective preschools.

Qualities of Effective Preschooling

Researchers have investigated that most effective preschool programs have one thing in common - small student-teacher ratio. This is one of the vital qualities of effective preschooling. According to a study report by Chicago Public School (1985), there are several different ratios that are considered standard. However, the ratio should not cross 16:1, as students were found to perform better up to this ratio. Young children require intense care and attention; as such, the smaller the classroom, the better the outcomes.

Sequencing in learning themes or topics is another important quality of early education. The curriculum needs to be carefully planned so that it maintains the sequence with previous learning

activities (Chicago Public School, 1985). Children should consciously know that there are connections between the previous learning theme/activity and the current one. Besides, investigators have examined several learning approaches to see which learning approach works best for the developmental objectives. These approaches included structured learning programs, non-structured learning programs, children centered learning programs, teacher centric learning programs, and some others. A study by Huston-Stein et al. (1977) revealed that preschool programs with semi-structured environments along with a child centered teaching approach result in benefits for the children. Reports also show that students who attended highly structured classrooms as children are more likely to express negative attitudes as teenagers.

Therefore, curriculum of an effective preschool should be well-designed. How the activities will be presented to the children during learning sessions should be scripted and instructed. Rather than providing a mere guideline, the curriculum should be such that it helps in developing the children.

Effective Practices at Preschool

To make a classroom environment positive and effective, educators can practice some strategies. To engage children in the activities and promote their interests, there should be adequate materials and resources. Clear instructions should be given to children on using these materials, as stated in the report of Chicago Public School (1985). Besides instructing the children, monitoring and providing help as they perform activities are also important. The study also emphasized that proper allocation of time and ensuring proper use of it are vital to meet the preschool goals. Finally, one of the most important practices can be when the teachers communicate with parents regularly and both work together with the same goal. The involvement of parents can result in more effective

learning. However, nothing tops the importance of a warm and caring attitude of a teacher towards the children.

Effects of ECE

A great many educators have viewed the 'too formal' education system for young children to be very dangerous. Educators such as Elkind (1988), Katz (1987), and Zigler (1986) have given fair warning against highly structured and formal education for children under six years of age. Early childhood specialists also consider this sort of learning environment developmentally inappropriate for elementary-age children (Katz, 1987, p. 2). Given this, it is important to examine if the 'preschool graduates' who were under informal and play based learning environments are doing better. Bronson et al. (1985) shared in his research that children who attended preschools are more likely to be cooperative towards peers and complete tasks better. This was one of the short-term effects. In order to find out the long-term effects, several longitudinal studies have observed students until their adulthood. The outcomes reveal that the preschool graduates most of the time do better than the non-preschool graduates in many areas. Firstly, they score higher grades and have a lesser drop out tendency (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984). Secondly, preschool participants are highly motivated when it comes to completing any academic tasks, whether in a group or independently (Bronson, et al. 1985). Thirdly, preschool participants are more career focused and have a better employment rate than non-participants. Several research (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1985; Consortium for Longitudinal Studies 1983; Gray, et al., 1982) show that preschool participants have better earnings and lower unemployment rates.

Although the study does not intend to emphasize parents' reactions towards preschool education, some research outcomes on parents are worth examining here. Researchers have found

differences in the attitude of parents whose children have attended preschool compared to non-preschoolers' parents. For example, the preschoolers' parents show a very positive attitude towards their children's education (Illinois State Board of Education, 1985). Besides, they tend to keep in touch with children's school teachers more often and stay updated about children's development (Featherstone, 1986). Most importantly, these parents have a higher satisfaction level with their children's achievement (Featherstone, 1986).

While it is clear that children are largely benefited by preschooling, it is yet to be confirmed specifically which group of children are more likely to be benefitted. Middle class children, especially those who are from low-income families, are benefitted the most by participating in preschool programs, reports the Illinois State Board of Education (1985, p. 17).

Effective Preschooling Vs. The Picture of a Bangladeshi Preschool

Early learning has importance in a wide range of contexts in a person's life. Firstly, in order to expect favorable outcomes from a child, a sensitive, supporting and emotionally safe environment, alongside verbally stimulated interactions need to be ensured between educators and students (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984). Secondly, studies show that such an environment can only be ensured by highly qualified teachers (NICHD 2005; Philips et al., 2001). The findings from the case study report show that most of the early educators do hold a bachelor degree in the respective field.

Bangladesh now has a wide range of options for training courses on ECD and half of the teachers have one or multiple trainings (GOPRB, 2007). At ABC, teachers are educated and trained on various ECE programs. Teachers who do not have bachelor degrees in early child education or have completed their education long ago are trained on several ECD programs. However, the

effectiveness of these trained teachers could not be cleared. Further, the teacher-student ratio should be small; as at this age, children need intense care and attention. However, maintaining this ratio is quite rare (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984).

Besides, to successfully develop a child's language and cognitive skills, a wide range of children centered learning activities should be introduced, suggests a cross national study (Gray et al., 1982). While very few private preschools in Bangladesh have initiated high quality children-centered learning activities in their teaching approach (Gray et al., 1982), most of the preschools follow a teacher centered approach. One UK based research has shown that variation in learning activities alongside teachers-child good interaction is a way to bring positive outcomes, thus promoting the effectiveness of preschool education (Sylva et al., 2011).

Research Gap

The review is not without limitations. The purpose is to look for qualitative analysis of the existing research and survey reports. However, limited access to data is the first limitation. Not much research has been conducted on this topic in the context of Bangladesh. Insufficient data was followed by an insufficient sample for a broad statistical measurement. As there is an inadequate amount of research conducted, secondary data was in short supply to see how effective learning there is in Bangladesh preschools. This has limited the measure to evaluate the effectiveness of the findings from the current case study. Although relevant samples and references have been included in several studies by influential researchers, there is scope for additional research because of the lack of such studies.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a specific and detailed plan about the procedure that has been used to complete this study. Moreover, this chapter aims to explain the reasoning behind the approach to this research, the data collection method I chose, and the primary research questions that are to be answered. Therefore, firstly, this chapter describes the purpose of this study and the questions to be answered. Secondly, the methodology used in the study is specified. Finally, the plan of how the research is to be designed is outlined: the design includes a data collection section showing the who, when, how, and where of the data collection. Afterwards, a data analysis section will be included, under which the data interpretation method, data validation steps, and the possible ways to use the data from this study are introduced.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study is to explore teaching and learning in a preschool program in Bangladesh. This will include various teaching methods and practices in preschool classrooms, learning through plays and other fun activities, parents' thoughts on the importance of preschooling, and teachers' experience of teaching preschoolers. This study also explores children's participation in a preschool under different structured and semi-structured learning sessions.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following primary questions:

1. How are teaching and learning planned, implemented, and assessed in a preschool in Bangladesh?
2. How is the preschool environment helping the young students to think creatively?
3. What is the role of technology in the teaching and learning in the preschool?

The study was conducted by observing several preschool learning sessions from 10 am to 12:30 pm by experienced teachers for 15 days. Students under observation were between the ages of three to five years old. These are the ages when children get enrolled in preschool and kindergarten. In order to keep the focus on the particular group, infants, toddlers, and handicapped students were excluded during the data collection.

Research Design

This is a qualitative study where the data were gathered from a selected preschool located in Dhaka. Data collection was done primarily through observing the teachers and children while they were interacting with each other during regular preschool sessions. The activities during the observation were mostly recorded through capturing visual images or taking notes. These photos and notes were analyzed later. Unstructured interviews were taken to gather further data. From the interviews, besides exploring important facts and information, the author asked a few personal opinions of the interviewees. The author discarded the opinionative data and keep only the relevant facts. One thing about an unstructured interview is that it can get diverted from the actual topic. However, this turned out to be helpful for the researcher as she was receiving many additional data from the interviewees.

The case study methodology fits the best for this inquiry as the aim is to give details of teaching and learning in the preschool program in Bangladesh. The “first obligation” (p. 4) in case

study research is to entirely develop and understand the case, states Stake (1995). Case studies are chosen in cases where the research requires the “close examination of people, topics, issues, or programs” (Hay, 2004, p. 218). However, depending on the purpose, the research can be conducted using any one of the three types of case studies, argues Yin (2003). They are - exploratory case study, explanatory case study, and descriptive case study.

For this research, a descriptive method of case study was selected. The reason behind choosing this particular type of case study is that the descriptive method allows in-depth research of the topic along with gathering detailed observational information. The goal of this research, firstly, was to develop an in-depth understanding of teaching and learning in the preschool program. Moreover, descriptive case studies answer questions based on theories. The descriptions of teaching and learning provided throughout the research will be helpful to construct theoretical definitions under which classrooms of preschool programs operate.

Participants

The sample of this study comprised five kindergarten students aged 3-5 years old, their parents, two senior teachers, and the school director who is an Early Childhood Care specialist. Each of the educators were interviewed multiple times. However, the school director and the parents were interviewed only once during the study period. The students were part of the researcher’s observation only, not interviews, as they were too young. Moreover, the students were chosen for observation depending on their abilities to share multiple perspectives on the data. The study was placed at an early learning daycare center, named ABC Early Learning Daycare Center. In order to identify the school and all the participants, pseudonyms are used in this paper to ensure confidentiality. The students who were observed regularly are:

1. Musavee (5 years old)
2. Nusaifa (4 years old)
3. Ehan (3.5 years old)
4. Otri (5 years old)

The teachers are:

1. Leena (Senior teacher and school coordinator)
2. Rakhi (Preschool Teacher and supervisor)

Both the teachers are associated with preschool teaching and setting up learning activities for everyday. Finally, Mrs. Sonia Akram (pseudonym), the director of the preschool the research is based on, was interviewed.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected from a team of four students by observing them. Observation data may be collected in both formal and informal manners, suggests Hays (2004). The researcher has selected an informal way of observation in order to be able to observe the environment openly. The observation occurred during the regular learning period. As mentioned earlier, the researcher took photos of different learning activities and events. Beside taking current photographs, the researcher collected photos of previous years' activities. Moreover, documents such as children's portfolio books, school magazines, center policy handbooks have been used to collect more detailed information beside classroom operational data. Important data have been collected through notebook notes. Further information was gathered from interviews given by the teachers and the child care specialist. The interviews were conducted in a non-directive way; thus, it can be called an unstructured interview. The author did not rely on premeditated questions in the interview, rather,

the interviewees were asked relevant questions and then went into deeper discussions. Although sometimes the actual topic was getting diverted, this allowed this study to collect a few necessary data. Permission for data gathering from the institution was taken through a face-to-face meeting, and a permit consent form was signed by the authority of the institution.

To analyze the data, the researcher has considered the findings to come up with logical assumptions. The assumptions were made based on the three primary questions. Using multiple sources for data collection makes the findings reliable, and so both observational and interview data were analyzed. Thematic analysis approach has been used to analyze the qualitative data in this study. The phases used here to analyze the data in the thematic method were adapted from Brown and Clark (2006).

Ethical Issues

Ethical consideration was given high priority in this study. Before starting the student activity observation, their parents were informed and gave consent. While taking photographs, videographs, and recordings inside the institutions, permission was taken beforehand. Although no objection was given to reveal identities in the photos, the researcher made sure no such pictures were added where a person can be identified. The teachers and the early childhood specialist (who is also the director of the school) also expressed their willingness to give interviews on the topic of preschool teaching and learning. Pseudonyms have been used to refer to the school and all the participants of the study. As this study site is significantly focusing on the teaching and learning of the preschool and the case study aims to provide an in-depth insight of Early Education, pseudonyms have been used to simply avoid this study to be used for the organization's sole convenience.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

Qualitative data collection method that has been used in the descriptive case study can provide a huge amount of information. The gathered data comes from observations of activities and interviews with targeted informants. Later, various themes were developed in order to answer the research questions. The aim of this chapter is to share the data that has been collected throughout the study period.

Findings Concerning the Researcher

During the study, not only preschool teaching and learning data were collected, but also many other aspects of preschool were uncovered. The experience from the field observation, data collection, and data analysis led the researcher to come to a diverse understanding about pre-primary education.

Before the data collection period, the researcher was limited by her own understanding about ECE. There are many misconceptions about ECE which are hard to differentiate from reality. During the research, the researcher emphasized on this matter and was able to debunk three such misconceptions. One of the most common misconceptions is that preschool is equivalent to babysitting. Many believe that children do nothing but play and sing rhymes in a preschool, whereas, in reality, trained teachers are working on children's development of social skills, independence, self-esteem, and communication skills. Secondly, parents tend to believe that they can teach these at home. However, preschool teachers are trained and experts in planning the daily

lesson and activities in such a way that it facilitates the developmental domains of every child. Moreover, in preschool, children have company with many other children which benefits them by increasing their joy, vocabulary and communication skill, and social skills, making them friendly and feel independent. Unfortunately, parents cannot provide such an environment and teach these at home. Thirdly, people tend to think that preschool education is expensive. In Bangladesh, there are many PPE (Pre-Primary Education) centers that are financed by either government or NGO organizations. However, if parents are looking for private preschools, then the fees might be much too high, especially for the middle class or lower-middle class families. Therefore, this belief cannot entirely be called misconception as it is not entirely false. The researcher stressed not to adopt any popular belief until she found out the truth in the field.

The researcher concludes the case study answering the questions posed by herself when proposing the research statement. She presents some problems regarding PPE with some possible solutions. However, this study does not aim to solve a problem; rather, the researcher leaves the readers with questions of their own.

As a qualitative method, "thematic analysis refers to identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within a data corpus" (Scharp & Senders, 2018). Themes that emerged from the findings are presented.

Educational Context

Lesson planning and Implementation

Preschool learning is done through a theme-based approach. This way, preschool children learn to make connections constantly and can relate the academic learning to their surroundings.

ABC Early Learning center has developed a theme-based lesson plan for a whole year. Afterwards, they break the lesson plan into weekly themed activities as well as daily activities. For instance, May 8th-12th was 'Flower and Bees' week for the preschoolers. At the end of that week, they learned the Letter 'F' and 'B', number counting with flowers (1-10), color names using different colored flowers, painting/crafting bees and flowers, know how bees collect honey, know how honey tastes (eating snacks with honey), and exploring an outdoor garden to find bees.

All the preschool teachers and school supervisor have access to the lesson plan. The co-ordinator of the preschool is responsible for organizing and monitoring the whole preschool activities of all four branches of the school. Therefore, every week the co-ordinator discusses the weekly learning objective and delivers ideas of various learning activities based on the specific theme for the entire week (Sunay-Thursday). The teachers then have the freedom to choose what activities to be introduced in the classroom. In front of the main entrance, the weekly lesson plan is posted on the notice board. It is for the parents to stay informed about what the students are learning.

The daily LP grid consists of 6 weekdays named columns alongside 5 skill developing sectors' rows.

Daily Lesson Plan

Date :

Theme :

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group time						
Cognitive learning						
Fine motor						
Craft / science work						
Gross Motor						

Notes :

Letter	Number	Color	Shape

Figure 1: Daily Lesson plan sheet

The daily learning objectives are mainly focused on 5 different developments of a child.

They are -

Group time: It is time for social interactions among young children. Every morning, all the students of the center including preschoolers and other daycare children sit together in a circle for 30 minutes (10am-10:30am). With the monitoring of a teacher, children do action rhymes (both Bangla and English), songs, introduce themselves to the new teachers/students, or talk about the theme of the week. For example, on the ‘Flowers and Bees’ week, the teacher tells the names of a few flowers. Students, being excited, then share which flowers they have seen, which flower plants they have at home, etc.

Cognitive Learning: Cognitive development refers to brain development, way of thinking, problem solving capacity, language acquisitions, etc. After the group time, students will go

to their classrooms. The classroom has three different tables set up for three different skill development activities (cognitive, fine motor, craft/science). Students are not bound to sit on any one table; rather, they are encouraged to explore all three tables and do the activities they like. One of the tables, which is for cognitive learning, is set up with reading books, tracing books, worksheets, copies, white board writing, etc. For instance, on May 9th, students learned 'F' is for flowers, the phonic sound of 'F', other words that start with 'F' (with visuals from worksheets and real objects), and the tracing letter 'F'.

Fine motor skills: Fine motor activities help increase the use of the small muscles in hand. These muscles work to build the ability to do small tasks, such as - holding pencil, using scissors, sewing, threading, connecting plugs to the switch board, using the computer mouse, and so on.

As stated in the previous section, one of the three tables is used to keep fine motor activities. Some great fine motor activities used in ABC preschool are: sorting, cutting, buttoning, tracing, painting, balancing, beading, sewing, spooning, etc. Fine motor activities that preschoolers had on *Summer Fruit week* (May 22nd-27th) are: sorting the fruits based on colors, cutting the fruits, matching Letters (fruit themed), and making water melons using playdough.



Craft/science work: ABC ELDC believes that science activities improve young children’s reasoning and problem solving skills. Besides, craft works enhance children’s hand eye coordination along with brain productivity. Alongside occasional crafts, every week once or twice, the preschoolers of ABC do craft activities.

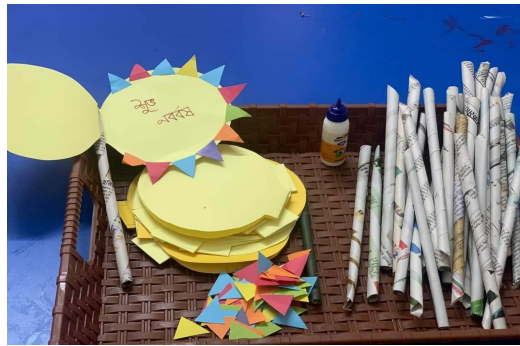


Figure 3: Preschoolers crafted cards on the day of Pahela Raishakh

Gross motor skills: In early childhood, gross motor development involves movement of large muscles that eventually help young children to balance, walk, jump, run, and climb. ABC maintains an international time table to execute and divide all the activities from time to time. Following the time table, every day from 11:30am-12:20pm, children participate in gross motor activities such as dancing, bubble play, chasing and racing, sliding, riding a rocking horse, ‘kana macchi’, ‘borof pani’, and more spontaneous activities. Children are carefully observed and looked after by the teachers and caregivers during the gross motor games, in order to avoid any unexpected incidents.

For instance, on *Healthy Food* week, students had a challenge to collect as many healthy food toys as they can in a basket, amongst other junk food toys. Each child had 20 seconds to complete the task by running, while others were cheering and counting down time.

Academics

The children learn fundamental academic skills in reading, language, math, science and social studies through discovery and creative activities. Their developments are done through fun activities as observed. For instance, the children create and trace patterns. The patterns can be of alphabetic letters, numerals, shapes, etc. The children also play with building materials, such as blocks, construction sets, and many other types of connecting toys. They play with puzzles and games that require counting.

Preschoolers learn through theme-based study, as mentioned before. There is a theme for every week. All the studies and activities are followed by that particular theme. For example, in 'Bee week', they learn number counting by counting bees, the letter 'B' for Bee, and the science behind honey bees' honey collection method.



Figure 4: they learn number counting by counting bees



Figure 5: Children's interaction in art and artifacts on account of victory

“Artifacts” such as child art, science projects, crafts - are done by the students alongside the guidance of teachers. The children do arts and crafts from time to time based on a weekly theme and on the account of monthly/yearly occasions. For instance, one might see the preschooler doing art or craft activities once or twice a week. According to Miss Rakhi, the weekly lesson is planned in such a way that it must include at least one art/craft activity every week related to the weekly theme. The other arts and crafts were done during national and international occasions, such as - Independence Day, Victory Day, Eid, Bengali New Year, English New Year, Earth Day, Environmental Day, Australia Day, Fathers’/Mothers’/Grandparents’ Day and many more.

Indeed, ABC has several special events and programmes throughout the year. They have a yearly event calendar which includes all the national/international programmes and events name listed according to the dates. The school has shared the event calendar with the researcher.

YEARLY EVENT CALENDAR		
JANUARY 1ST - NEW YEAR CELEBRATION 20TH - AUSTRALIA DAY	FEBRUARY 15TH - PAKHILA TALGON 21ST - INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE DAY 28TH - GLOBAL STRIKE FOR IDD BUILDING DAY	MARCH 8TH - WOMEN'S DAY 17TH - BIRTHDAY OF MUJIB 26TH - WISDOM WEEK
APRIL 1ST SAT - INT. CHILDREN BOOK DAY 14TH - POHELA BOISHAKH 25TH - ANZAC DAY	MAY 8TH - MOTHER'S DAY 14TH - EID DAY	JUNE 19TH - FATHER'S DAY
JULY 20TH - EID UL ADHA	AUGUST 18TH - NATIONAL MOURNING DAY	SEPTEMBER 5TH - INT. DAY OF CHARITY
OCTOBER 4TH - WORLD ANIMAL DAY 5TH - TEACHER'S DAY 15TH - HAND WASHING DAY 20TH - WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY	NOVEMBER 13TH - WORLD KINDNESS DAY	DECEMBER 16TH - VICTORY DAY 25TH - XMAS DAY

Teachers kept prompting students to explore an idea further. One might hear: “You're pouring water, but it keeps falling down. What could you do differently to make it pour inside?” This way, the children could learn other ways to do the same task. Further, teachers would prompt

students to predict what they thought would happen next in a story, a math puzzle, or a science experiment. One might hear: “We know Mithu, the green pet parrot, loves his friend, Raju. Now that Raju is stuck in a tree, what do you think Mithu will do?” The rationale was that predicting encourages students to think actively. Also, teachers used this strategy to keep the students engaged.

Another very crucial learning that happens in the preschool is students are introduced to all the community helpers repeatedly every year. The aim is to grow respect for the community helpers from an early age. The school arranges events like 'traffic police event', 'Meet the Firefighters', 'Meet the doctors/police'. Through these programmes, students get to learn how to ask for help, and to whom to ask. Senior teacher Miss Leena informed that during the Firefighters' event in 2019, the students learned how and when to call 999, what primary things to do if a fire breaks out. Again, during the Traffic police event in 2021, the students learned about traffic signals and how the traffic lights work. They repeatedly sang a rhyme during the whole event week. The rhyme is -

Twinkle twinkle traffic lights

On the corner shining bright

Red means stop!

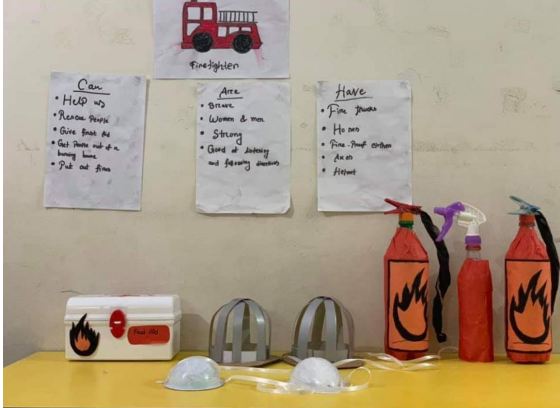
Green means go!

Yellow means drive very slow.

Twinkle twinkle...

No wonder, after the program, the students could tell which traffic light means what. Miss Leena also told us how the children learned to take care of their teeth, after meeting a doctor in 2017.

Besides, they have also arranged meetings with the 1971 freedom fighters of Bangladesh on the Victory Day program. That day, the freedom fighters shared many stories and facts from 1971 from their personal experiences. The children were amazed to hear such different stories of war.



The Director of the school, Miss Akram, was asked in the interview if it is necessary to know about the community helpers at such an early age. According to Miss Akram, the first crucial reason behind this program is safety: "First of all, this is necessary from a safety point of view. Alongside, it helps children learn to respect everyone in the community."

Time Allocation

ABC ELDC designs preschoolers' daily schedule to meet the needs of the children. The shifts are focused more on fine motor, language/cognition abilities, and other kindergarten preparation skills. The other big shift is turning towards more cognitive and literacy skills in preparation for kindergarten. Here, the daily preschool schedule includes more table and task-centered activity. This way it is ensured that the students leave preschool fully equipped to handle the transition to school.

Preschool teachers' lesson plans invest more time on imaginative activities and pretend play. The students are required to have physical activities for up to two hours daily. The teachers work on improving balance on children's fine motor and gross motor activities. According to the senior teacher and coordinator of the school, Mrs. Leena, students of this age should spend half of the day in group activities. When she was asked about how much time is spent in free play, she replied that preschoolers are given at least an hour per day of free play time. According to Mrs. Leena, free plays are kept unstructured for them to explore their interests, but still supervised. She also added, "When a child get the chance to take the lead in a play, they become much more creative. They elaborate the play. Therefore, we emphasize on time to time free play, instead of structured play all the time". Another preschool teacher, Miss Rakhi, said that even during preschool table work time, they keep free choices for the students. She added,

For example, there are usually 3 tables in the preschool. If a child does not want to do alphabet tracing, s/he may go to another table to solve puzzles. Then again, s/he may go to another table for color sorting games at any time.

According to her, students are given free choices for learning. Moreover, the daily schedule invests time on all the developmental fields such as - group work, individual work, fine motor, art and craft or science activities, cognitive learning, and gross motor. Furthermore, as observed, there are several corners: namely, construction corner, dramatic play corner, building blocks corner, book corner, etc.

Below is preschoolers' daily schedule that is followed by the teachers of ABC ELDC.

10:00am - 10:30am	Circle Time (books + action rhymes + songs + puppets/finger plays)
10:30am - 11:00am	Table work (language and literacy/math + fine motor activities)
11:00 - 11:20am	Snack
11:20am - 11:45am	Sensory or art activities
11:45am - 12pm	Individual play Time
12pm - 12:25pm	Outside play/gross motor
12:25pm - 12:30pm	Water break
12:30pm - 1:00pm	Departure

Teaching Approaches

Teacher's Responsibilities and Role

In ABC, preschoolers are divided into 2 sections - Pre K1 and Pre K2. Students of age group 3-4 years are in section Pre K1, and students of age group 4-5 years are in section Pre K2. Pre K1 students are basically the new ones who have recently been transferred from the toddlers group. Therefore, most of their activities are designed similar to toddlers' activities with little new challenges. On the other hand, Pre K2 students are able to take challenges such as starting to write without tracing/dots.

There are several guidelines that preschool teachers of ABC are supposed to take care of. Firstly, they focus on the looks of the classroom. This includes displaying pictures or posters at the eye level of the children, labeling all the classroom objects in English/Bangla, placing a week names calendar and a weather calendar on the wall, placing alphabetic, numeric, and shapes posters on the preschool wall as visuals. Secondly, the teachers organize a daily schedule. They plan everyday's structured activities a day before. In need of making posters, worksheets, crafts, or games - teachers prepare it the day before. Activity plans are done in such a way that there is some movement and free actions through transition activities. Months of the year, days of the week, and rhymes are included in preschoolers' daily routine. Moreover, the previous lesson is revised every day. If the lesson includes any new vocabulary items, then that is to be introduced to the students first. Moreover, while learning new words, the initial sounds of the words are to be emphasized. This helps the students to catch phonic sounds easily. In addition, conversations between students and teachers are done mostly in Bangla. However, teachers use English to ask academic questions and give instructions. The English conversations are mostly like - *What is your name? / How old*

are you? / What is your favorite ____? / Pick up the toys. /Clean up the toys, everyone. / Let's all dance together. / Please, stand up. / Let's form a circle. / Clap your hands. / See you tomorrow. / Good morning. / Good afternoon.

Using these sentences enables the students to comprehend and use them in conversations. Teachers make sure that the students answer in English, when asked in English.

Besides, formal writing is not started before Pre K1. Teachers ensure that students in their toddler age receive enough exposure to develop their fine motor skills by air tracing, sand/salt/flour tracing, slate work, using crayons and chinks, etc. Also, teachers use flashcards with labels in English and Bangla for preschoolers' vocabulary enhancement. Finally, the fifth day (Thursday) of every week is left for the teachers to revise the whole week's concept, or complete any leftover activity/worksheet.

As the researcher observed, teachers maintain a pattern of behavior with the children. First of all, teachers crouch at eye level when talking to children. Secondly, teachers (along with caregivers) constantly observe children as they work and play. Furthermore, teachers ask open-ended questions for example -

"Would you like to tell me what you have drawn?"

"How did you build this robot/shape?"

Then, teachers repeat students' feelings back to them. One might hear: "Are you feeling upset? It's fine to feel this way!" Then the next line would suggest to them how to shift from this feeling. One might hear: "Do you want to join these friends to play? See! They're having fun!"

Moreover, teachers prompt students to resolve disputes and keep children engaged. Children offer spontaneous gestures of endearment to teachers such as reaching for teachers' hands, giving them a quick hug, etc. Quick physical contact is one way young children express their

comfort with adults. They ensure different learning activities that cater to all domains of development every day.

In addition, teachers maintain a daily attendance sheet to track the students' learning development. Most importantly, they use minimum 'keeping out' tactics for punishment. For example, they use short time-outs tactic which is beneficial, but they are no longer than three to five minutes. Moreover, this is presented to the children not as a punishment, but as a chance for them to calm down and regain self-control. The children are never exiled from the classroom or kept confined in a separate area from their classmates. Physical punishment is never used. Instead, teachers deal with misbehavior while avoiding shouting or any kind of harshness.

Student Observation and Assessment

Learner's Attitude towards Early Education

All students are observed and monitored by the educators at preschool. Teachers observe children in order to see if the children are achieving the specific goals, and developing skills and abilities so that they can inform their parents about their learning. Observation is also essential for an assessment. There are two major assessments for the preschoolers - one is a half yearly assessment (November), and the other one is a final assessment (July). The educators effectively observe the progress of children and share it as a progress report, portfolio, and certificate. Moreover, students are kept under observation throughout the months to keep the parents informed about the children weekly/monthly progress.

In the interview, senior teacher 1 said that there are several ways to record an observation: "We usually follow the 'photo observation' method. This way we take photos of a child while

performing activities, or practicing skills.” The teacher was asked how these photos are shown to the parents. She informed that there is a Facebook group where parents and teachers are added. The photos of children doing daily/weekly activities are posted in the group for the parents to see. The school director was asked if any particular teachers are assigned for observing, to which she answered, “No. Although there are particular teachers assigned for each room, all other teachers’ can have their individual observation and share it with the other teachers or the co-ordinator.” She also told the researcher that besides daily/weekly observation records, monthly records are added to each child’s portfolio. Further, the director was asked how the Pre K students are assessed as there are no exams. On this, she says that Pre K assessment is a good way to record children’s developmental progress. “Teachers assess the students during learning activities and carefully observe the students’ actions,” stated Akram.

According to the researcher’s observation, students are not notified that they are being assessed; rather, teachers ensure that they have a regular activity environment during the assessment. The four students (participants) - Musavee, Ehan, Otry, Nusaifa were observed during their daily activities as they were interacting with each other, participating in classroom activities, and spontaneous events. Besides the researcher’s observation, reports from teachers’ observations were taken into consideration too. Nevertheless, during the observation, the researcher only just watched the selected four children without interrupting. Particular attention was given to what and how the children were doing and how they were interacting with others. Through the documentation of the observation, the researcher tried to identify the learning and achievements of the children.

Students are graded using the 'smiley face' method in their report cards, where different emojis refer to different grade levels, as the following subsection explains.

Nontraditional Assessment

Students are assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Firstly comes cognitive learning. Under this section, preschoolers learn the alphabet, names of shapes, names of lines, names of colors, and names of five flowers/animals. They learn these through matching games, drawing, tracing, writing a few alphabets/numbers, sorting, comparing, hiding and finding objects, etc. Among the five children, Nazifa, Musavee, and Otry could complete all the cognitive activities on their own during the assessment. They were given small problem solving worksheets of Math and English. These three children were able to solve it effortlessly. Ehan completed the worksheets with a little help from the teacher. Nusaifa remained unable to solve the worksheets, although the teacher offered help.

The second criterion is speaking and language. While observing the development of children's speaking and language, teachers focus on their (C) vocabulary. According to the Australian parenting guide which the school follows, by the age of 3-4, children learn many new words and start to use 3-5 or more words in a sentence. Moreover, by the age of 5, they are able to use more complex sentences along with talking about imaginary things such as fairies, dragons, unicorns, etc (Raising Children Australia, 2020). In order to improve their communication skills, teachers involve them in fun activities such as pretend play, singing songs or silly action rhymes together, let them tell stories, or ask simple questions, and most importantly create such an environment where children feel free to talk. Finally, during the assessment teachers only observe how well a child is being able to communicate, keeping their age in mind. Except Otry, all the other children are good at verbal communication and have achieved 'Excellence' grade. During the assessment, Otry had a lack of engagement with other children in pretend play. Throughout the entire observation, Otry was not heard talking about emotions, or anything imaginary. Besides, she

mostly spoke in present tense - “he hits me,” “she takes my toy”; she barely talked about any of her past experience or future, and never was heard singing rhymes/songs. The teacher could only grade her language and communication skills as ‘developing’. On the other hand, the rest of the four children are very good at talking about their emotions, their feelings, past experiences, future plans, engaging with others, and singing. All these communication skills led them to having ‘Excellent’ grades.

Thirdly, children were assessed on their ‘Social and Emotional’ skills. At the age of 4-5, children use words to ask for their needs instead of crying or screaming. They are expected to be cooperative towards the educators and the other children. They now know how to make friends, and may even have best friends. They are also expected to be demanding at times; for instance, choosing their own clothes, choosing their favorite color chair to sit. Besides, they can name the different emotions, such as differentiating between a sad face and a happy face.

The fourth category to assess is Physical Education. A child’s physical education is assessed based on their active performance. Physical activities like dancing, running, jumping, throwing a ball, hopping, sliding, etc improves a child's gross motor skills. Besides, PE promotes physical growth by strengthening bones and muscles. Not only physical improvement, but PE also helps to develop emotional skills. Mostly, teachers come up with some made-up games that involve physical movements; running or walking along painted lines, jumping like a bunny, flapping like a butterfly, etc are examples of made-up games. Apart from these, popular traditional games such as - hopscotch, hide n seek, *kanamachi* (blind man’s bluff) are played. For PE assessment, the teacher arranged a made-up game where preschoolers had to arrange the chairs according to colors. There were five blue chairs and five red chairs. The game was to put the same color chairs together on the count of 10. Musavee and Otry were able to complete sorting all the ten chairs on time. Ehan sorted

nine chairs in 10 seconds. In contrast, Nusaifa was saying, “I can’t do this” even after receiving constant motivation from the peers and the teacher. She started sorting the chairs with the help of a caregiver, and completed the game in 20 seconds. Considering their previous performances alongside this game, Musavee, Otry, and Ehan have been graded as ‘Excellent’, and Nusaifa has been graded as ‘Developing’.

The fifth skill to be assessed is ‘playing and sharing’. According to the Australian parenting website the school follows, by the age three, children usually start to understand sharing and turn taking, mostly through playing. Nevertheless, it is OK to not want to share some of their favorite things, or to be impatient for their turn to play at this age. To develop their sharing skill, teachers involve them in pair or group activities; for example, making a craft together, or sharing a crayon box while drawing. This particular section was assessed based on the teacher’s observation throughout the months, as it is not possible to assess in a day or two. Throughout the observation, it was evident that Musavee, and Nusaifa engaged themselves in shared games - Musavee helped her friend find particular crayon colors and shared (4.4.2022), and Nusaifa shared half of her blocks with a friend (6.4.2022). From the observation, Ehan contributed in shared games too; however, sometimes, he refused to share until a teacher encouraged him to. On the contrary, Otry did not like to share things with others, she would rather play alone than share. Also, she became impatient while waiting for her turns. In ‘playing and sharing’, Musavee and Nusaifa have received ‘Excellent’, Ehan has received a ‘Very good’, and Otry has received a ‘Satisfactory’ grade.

Finally, students are assessed on their active participation in ‘Art & Crafts’. Creative activities like artwork and craftwork are very important in developing children’s imagination and creativity, besides building confidence. These are great non-verbal ways for children to express emotions and imaginations. Students do art and craft works based on the weekly theme once every

week. At times, the teacher would provide a sample art/craft and assign the students to follow that (of course with their help); at other times, students are assigned to do a free drawing and they would draw whatever and however they wish. Both in structured and unstructured creative activities, Musavee, Ehan, and Otry did well - Musavee painted a village scenery using water color during the assessment session (10.4.2022); Ehan crafted an Eid card for his father with a little help from the teacher (24.4.2022); Otry crafted an Eid card following the teacher's sample and added a rainbow design by herself as well (24.4.2022). According to the teacher and researcher's observation, these three love creative activities and are able to complete assigned craft works or free drawings. Nusaifa faces difficulties during creative activities. She tends to think she 'cannot do' craftwork if someone does not help her or do it for her. Also, she struggles to draw using her imagination during the 'free drawing' session, as shown below -

Nusaifa: I cannot draw, Miss.

Teacher: You can draw whatever you wish!

Nusaifa: I can't!

Teacher: You can use different colors to draw a rainbow. See? Your friend is drawing a rainbow!

Nusaifa: You help me, Miss. I can't! (Starts crying) (22.4.2022).

In 'art & craft', Nisaifa has been graded as 'developing'. The rest of the three students have been graded as 'Excellent'.

Learning Environment

Classroom Atmosphere and Design

ABC ELDC believes that a preschool classroom should feel joyful and friendly and be designed around clear focus areas, called corners that offer a variety of activities. Objects that are required in a preschool classroom - Building/connecting toys, Books, Dress-up clothes and props, Art supplies, Unique child art on the walls, Age-appropriate learning materials (There might be a number line, but not a multiplication chart, picture books, but not chapter books, etc.), Low shelves (so that children can reach them) with accessible toys, child-sized tables and chairs.

Clearly delineated areas (One might see a finger gym area, a fruit shop station or a mini-library, for example.), Charts and pictures on the walls to help kids identify feelings and senses (five senses), A quiet, calming corner in the classroom where upset children can relax.

Discipline Learning

ABC uses positive discipline strategies to teach children to effectively manage their behavior and to keep them away from harm. ABC believes that learning discipline at an early age promotes healthy development. By talking to the teachers besides observing, the researcher has noted the following techniques that the preschool teachers apply to establish discipline amongst the preschoolers:

To begin with, teachers establish the basic classroom rules by reminding the children everyday. Instructions are given orally about a few rules that the teachers are expecting. One of the essential rules of preschool is 'Listening'. Thus, teachers will always remind the children why it is not nice to talk when others are talking. Children are often caught too excited to share their stories to wait for their own turn. Therefore, they start talking without letting their peers finish. In such situations, the teacher would nicely tell the children to wait until the other children finish talking.

Secondly, teachers reward the students for good behavior. Acceptable behaviors are always appreciated. Based on the situation, teachers may give a goody bag, a candy or a sticker would make them happy too. Teachers may appreciate them by clapping for their good actions, or just by using words of encouragement too. For example, Nazifa helped Ehan in tracing when she saw he was having trouble. For such helpful behavior, she received a sticker of her favorite animation movie from her teacher. Besides appreciating good deeds, teachers articulate the consequences of bad behavior. The researcher noticed that some students like to wander around the room during preschool time. Teachers keep articulating every day that they are not supposed to do it. Another important thing that is done is briefing the rules to the parents, so that the rules can be followed at home as well if needed.

However, many times children break the rules or do not want to listen/cooperate. The teachers (Mrs. Sonia, Mrs. Leena) were asked what the measures are taken if the rules are broken. According to their answers, there are some supportive disciplines that they follow in such cases. Firstly, NOT choosing a punitive approach. Punishments will only disconnect them and leave them feeling fearful and also bad about themselves. Therefore, offering a calm, kind, and understanding approach comes handy to guide children. Besides, teachers tell them the consequences of their actions. Moreover, the teachers listen to them calmly and involve them in fixing the mistakes. For example, one may hear the teachers saying, "This is very untidy when we go without cleaning up the toys. What can we do to make it look tidy next time?" And then the students would try to give an idea on their own, "Maybe we can clean up the toys after finishing playing". Furthermore, telling them that it is OKAY to feel mad sometimes but NOT OKAY to hit someone or throw/break things. Teaching them how to deal with emotions positively is very effective. For instance, Otry usually does not like to share her toys with anyone. And every time someone even touches her toys, she

cries out loud. In such cases, the teachers would first try to calm her down. "Otry tell me what happened? I can't understand when you cry and talk." Says Leena Miss. She further says with a firm but affectionate voice, "Wipe your tears. Come with me. Sit here. Drink some water first" By the time Otry calms down a bit and then Leena Miss asks about the reason "Now tell me what's wrong?" and resolves it, "Your friend just wanted to play with you. It would have been more fun if you two had played together!" Then Leena Miss would offer to try this method. This method helped Otry to eventually learn sharing over time. Another approach is to remind them of something they are good at and motivate them so that they do not feel bad about themselves. Finally, using strict strategy and firm voice is suggested if none of the above methods work.

Safety

Students are kept safe from any kind of undue physical risk while at preschool. Precautions are taken to ensure everyday safety of the children and the others. For example, Chemicals are stored in closed cabinets and locked away out of reach. No open bodies of water (such as a filled tub) is available. Tall furniture is secured to walls in such a way that they do not move easily. Moreover, corners of the walls are covered with foams. The process for entry also maintains security. Whenever a child enters school, the arrival time and receiver's signature has to be recorded in a daily sign in sheet. Basic standards of cleanliness are met from the entry to inside. Most importantly, fire safety certifications are up to date and rehearsed.

The supervisor in charge, Miss Rakhi was asked during the interview about the door safety. According to her, the main door is always locked and only opens upon ringing the doorbell; not just anyone would walk in. She added that there is a safety barrier of wooden boards before the main gate so that any child cannot just easily walk out. Moreover, Rakhi informs us how she makes sure

everyday cleanliness, "I have a *Health & Safety Daily Cleaning Checklist*. Every morning, one of my first tasks is to inspect the whole center area and make sure all of the things mentioned in the checklist are done.

Accidents and Injuries

The researcher, during the observation, has found that children often get injured during the normal activities of a day. Most of the injuries are minor such as bumps, bruises, scrapes, small cuts. These are treated with simple First Aid by the teachers or caregivers. "In case of small injuries, sometimes we rub ice cubes on the affected area, sometimes we clean the affected area with antiseptic or alcohol pad, or put Savlon cream depending on the need" Says Mrs. Leena. For instance, once while dancing a child unintentionally put finger on Ehan's right eye. As a cure, a teacher simply gave a warm compress on his eyes which gave him instant relief.

Use of Technology

Efficacy of Technology in Early Education

Technology in the early education system of ABC school includes e-books, a television, movies, a sound system, a projector, mobile applications, etc. The school believes that these technologies can not only facilitate learning but also improve problem solving skills. Early educators are gradually but actively incorporating Information Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching. ICT provides great opportunities for ECE as it breaks the barriers between existing and new knowledge. During the observation period, the researcher finds that the director of ABC ELDC sees great opportunities for the educators that come from ICT. The school has a 24-hour Wi-Fi

internet facility. While the personal use of communications technologies is done with the colleagues, teachers are applying technology as a tool to reach the techniques and samples of play based learning activities. So far, the teachers have been seen using technologies to enhance children's curriculum. They have been using mobile phones or laptop devices to gain access to the curriculum, daily lesson plans, and ECD activities of developing countries.

Earlier in the paper, it was mentioned that the school follows the Australian curriculum for early education and child care. In order to set up the curriculum framework, several books are needed which are easily collected through the online websites. Moreover, the curriculum has many inputs from the early childhood academics and early childhood sectors of Australia. Thanks to the availability of ICT, this has been possible. During the Community Helpers Week, the preschool teacher planned to arrange a 'Doctor Role play' activity for the children, and thus she used Pinterest photos to get ideas for setting up the playroom according to the theme. The study identified that the usage of ICT by the teachers has enhanced the students' interests in learning, their learning styles, and promoted thinking abilities of the students. For the most part of the gross motor activity sessions, teachers play rhymes or music with beats for the children to dance. Aside from reading out stories from traditional books, the teachers here are often seen using e-books during their story timing. In particular, an educator used the story "Becoming Beautiful" by Tarang Rawat to read out during the story time. However, the book's hard copy was not available in the country; thus, the teacher used an e-book version of the book. It was visualized using the projector. Furthermore, often during their break times, students are engaged to watch educational television programs or movies. According to Mrs. Akram, engaging the students in digital media is a great way to promote their language acquisition as it expands children's vocabulary, not only in their mother tongue but also in the foreign language. Besides, research has shown that children learn any new information

more quickly by using moving animated visuals than still images or writings (Benefits of Technology for Early Childhood Learning, 2021).

Apart from student activities, the official works are done with the help of ICT. Files and documents are stored in cloud storage and shared through email. The authority of the school is also integrating technology with security by setting up CCTV cameras at the school rooms. The school director Miss Akram tells the importance of CCTV at the school. Firstly, the access point is monitored in order to prevent any unauthorized entry. Secondly, it supports students' as well as teachers' safety. Misbehavior of any type towards any student or teacher can be detected. Besides, Mrs. Akram says, "Although we constantly monitor children to avoid even a small accident, yet in case of any accident, big or small, the reason for the accident can be detected by obtaining CCTV footage."

All in all, ABC uses technology as a way to expand educational opportunities by making the learning sessions interactive and multisensory. Other than that, it is important to use technology within the framework while using it for learning purposes. Limiting and monitoring the screen time need to be kept in mind while setting up the technological learning environment.

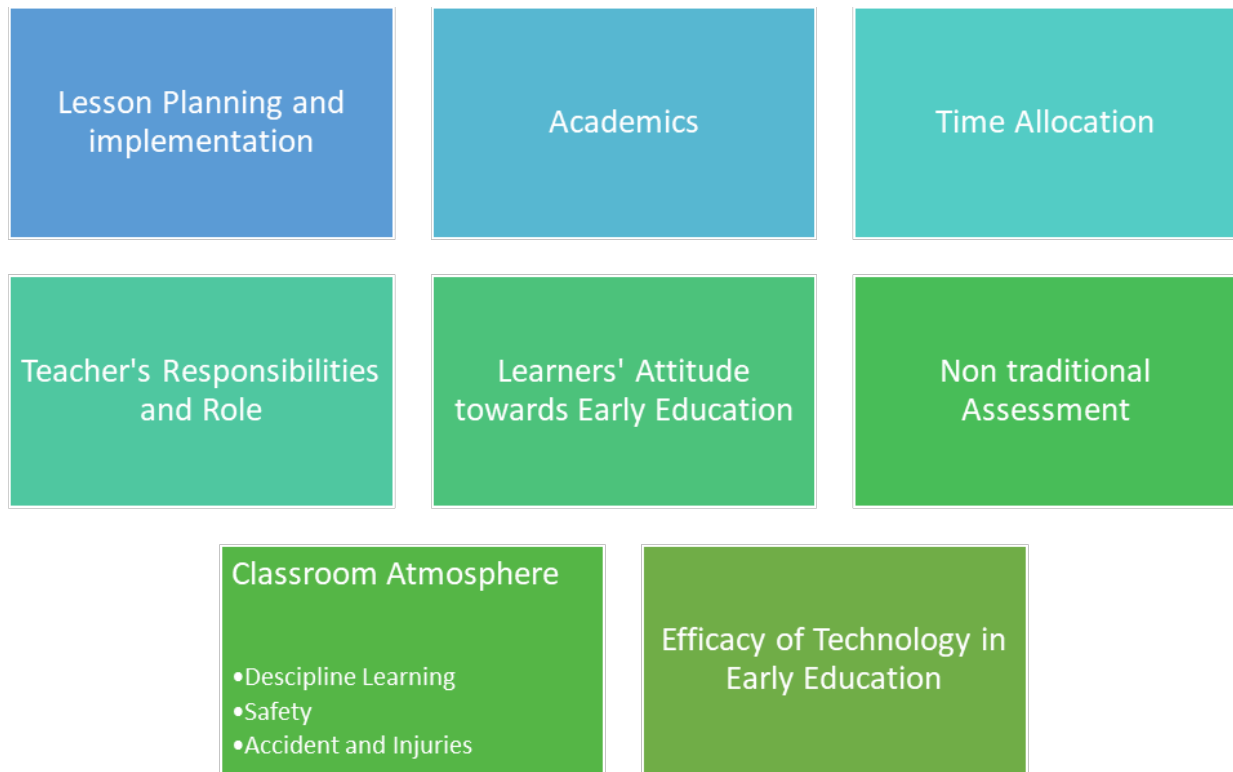


Figure 10: Emergent Themes of the Study

These are the emergent themes that are generated from the collected data. The themes indicate the operational programs of the preschool, their efficacy, and challenges.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

This study was conducted with an aim to update and expand the knowledge about Early teaching and learning, currently in Bangladesh. The data analyzed from the study were collected from the most recent observation and interrogations done at a preschool located in Niketon, Gulshan area. The data reflects the answers of the three research questions. As a primer, Chapter V summarizes the initial findings of the study along with its purpose. Followed by this, the researcher presented the core differences between the general thoughts about preschooling and the findings of the study. Moreover, the chapter reflects the unique experience of the researcher playing the role and how this has been a different journey than the previous experiences. No recommendation is made based on the findings; rather, the data are left for the readers, participants, and other stakeholders to interpret and apply. The next section then includes the most difficult challenges of the project, and how the researcher managed to overcome those. The chapter comes to a conclusion by acknowledging the contribution of all the people and the institutions who helped the researcher finish the dissertation successfully.

Summary of the Study and its Purpose

In order for a child to reach their full potential, ECE helps like a booster (Unicef, 2019). Early childhood learning is very different from the formal schooling system. ECE settings can be at daycare centers, public/private preschools, Early learning centers, etc. To collect data for this study, the researcher spent 15 days observing a preschool of an Early learning daycare center based in

Dhaka city. The educators and the director of the place were all ECE professionals; some selected of them were interrogated for the need of the study.

The study focuses on the two core components of preschooling - teaching and learning. The findings indicated that the selected school follows Australian standard curriculum for planning lessons. The educators plan the lessons and the activities following the framework of children developing domains - physical, emotional, psychological, language, and social. The daily activities are planned in a way that children learn everything while playing in a thematic setting while also developing their language, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, cognitive, and social skills. The educators also manage and take care of the classroom atmosphere by decorating them using appropriate and joyful learning materials. Besides, the school follows a daily schedule that is focused more on fine motor, language/cognition abilities, and other kindergarten preparation skills. There is also allocated time for developing social and literacy skills. The learning occurs through craft and artwork, playing connecting games, writing and tracing, role playing drama, reading or listening to stories, watching movies or educational videos, and so on.

The findings suggest that technology also plays a positive role in children's learning. However, the usage of technology must be well monitored and limited. One of the most important findings to mention is that the school emphasizes on and applies a student centric approach for teaching, and the teachers are trained in such a way too. Ensuring children's safety and preventing any accident and injury is given top priority. The educators and caregivers of the center are first-aid trained. Thus, all are aware of what to do in case any accident or injury occurs.

Although there are an increasing number of early learning centers or preschools around the country, the teaching and learning approach in a preschool setting was yet to be known clearly in a detailed manner. The purpose of the study was to describe the roles, behaviors and teaching

methods of the early educators along with the activities of the students in a regular learning environment. The study is designed to provide varied objective information to the stakeholders, participants, and the others, which can be used as a contributor to their knowledge of this field.

Examination of the Findings

This section aims to use the findings for analyzing and brings out logical assumptions in order to answer the primary questions. The questions are answered based on the findings from Chapter IV. The readers are referred to the pages and pictures from the previous chapter. Beside the observation and interview findings, Early learning books and websites have been used too. This helps in giving credibility to the data analysis. The analysis of the primary research questions has been presented below.

How are Teaching and Learning Planned and Implemented?

This section analyzes two themes of the question: who is responsible for planning the lessons, and how is the plan implemented during the learning sessions. Exploring these two questions will allow the readers to find out the roles, behaviors, and activities of teachers and students in the learning environment.

Findings from Chapter IV refers that the lesson planning is done in two levels - administrative level and operational level.

The interviews indicate that the director of the school along with the preschool coordinator have control of designing the learning objectives, yearly lesson plan, theme for weekly lessons, and event calendar. Next, the teachers of preschool determine which learning activities to provide while operating the classroom (operational level). Based on that learning goal, theme, and events,

preschool teachers plan daily and weekly lessons and activities. The teachers also make sure that children's five development domains are met through these learning activities every day. Teachers have the freedom to be creative while planning specific learning activities and what materials to use for the activities. The findings indicate that the coordinator of the preschool is responsible for organizing and monitoring the entire pre-schooling activities.

Before beginning the activities, the teachers plan the activities according to a timeline. As per the observation, the teachers emphasize on estimating time over each activity. It is important to engage the children in the topic, and, thus, the learning activities need to be fun and engaging. This is why the teachers follow a 'playful learning' approach. The plays and activities are mostly structured and pre-determined by the educators. However, one teacher points out, "At times we let the students play free; this way, they get to invent new games of their own." All the activities done by the children are shared with their parents. The teachers do this in order to maintain a coordination between children's learning at school and home. The findings suggest that the students are assessed based on their performance in these learning activities twice - monthly and half-yearly. The assessment is done through the teachers' observation. The teachers observe to see if a child's proper development is occurring or delayed. In case of any developmental delay noticed, "we inform the coordinator or the higher authority at first. Upon discussing, we share the matter with the parents," stated senior teacher 2. Generally, every year in August, preschool sessions end and graduate students are given progress report cards and certificates. The progress report card holds the information of the students' development on cognitive, physical, social and emotional, speaking and language, playing and sharing. Chapter IV includes observational assessment results of four selected students and what grade they have received in their 2021-22 preschool session.

How Is the Preschool Environment Helping the Young Students to Think Creatively?

According to the findings, preschoolers learn fundamental academic skills in reading, language, math, science and social studies through discovery and creative activities. In the *Academic* section of chapter four, preschool teacher 2 shares that the weekly lesson is planned in such a way that it must include at least one art/craft activity every week related to the weekly theme. Doing arts and crafts activities promote intelligence and creativity in children (Unicef, 2005). Further, the findings show that students solve puzzles at least once or twice a week, which promotes their critical thinking ability. On the occasions of cultural events, preschoolers sing, dance, create artifacts, etc. which help a great deal by enhancing children's confidence and allowing them to perform better in future. Celebrating cultural events also promotes open-mindedness and diversity amongst the children. All in all, preschoolers' developments are occurring through pretend play, solving puzzles, art, craft, music, and dance - all lead them to learn how to think creatively.

Findings collected through in-class observations suggest that the teachers arrange activities both in structured and semi-structured ways. As senior teacher 1 said, "structured plays/activities help children play in discipline, while the semi-structured activities give them enough scope to explore, enjoy and be creative."

What Is the Role of Technology in the Teaching and Learning in Preschool?

The findings detailed in Chapter IV on the use of technology can be broken down into two categories: technology for students and technology for teachers. The preschool educators of ABC use technology in a purposeful way to make learning fun and more interactive. Visual in projector, educational movies and videos in Television, music in music player - all these digital media are

included in the learning materials. Both the observation and interviews indicate that students become more attentive during story time when the projector is used for visualization. Besides, findings say that they learn new words and even new language through watching television, thus enhancing their linguistic skills. According to the school director, “ABC uses technology as a way to expand educational opportunities by making the learning sessions interactive and multisensory.”

The findings in Chapter IV indicate that the teachers of the school use several specific technologies almost every day to accomplish daily tasks. Names of these technological devices have been listed - laptop, pendrive, printers, CCTV cameras, monitor, and SmartPhones. Observational data showed multiple examples of using these. Designing lesson plans, preparing curriculum, making worksheets and other official papers - all are part of regular technology dependent tasks by the teachers.

It can be concluded that although the school has various forms of technological devices to ease daily tasks and activities, neither the teachers nor the students have access to these. The findings support that as the students are too young, all the controls of the devices are kept to the teachers. The findings suggest that the teachers and caregivers monitor children all the time while using technologies. Findings also indicate the educators make sure the screen time or digital dependency do not exceed limits.

Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations. To begin with, the inexperience of the researcher in the field of case study may not have made the research as strong as it could be. Also, this has limited the data to the researcher's own bias. The study did not examine the researcher's bias as interviews, observations, and data analysis - were done by the researcher. Furthermore, the inexperience of the

researcher in observational techniques has limited the data collection as the researcher had collected some of the point of views of the participants instead of facts. Secondly, the data collection activity took place in one institution, meaning the data cannot represent the entire preschool environment; rather, the data represent a small glimpse of the preschool environment in Bangladesh. Lastly, the data collection process occurred in a one-month time period. This has caused the exclusion of many teaching and learning activities that do not occur during that particular period.

Need for Further Studies

The gaps in the research provide two more scopes for further studies on this topic. The study aims to explore everything about teaching and learning of preschool in Bangladesh. The examination of teaching approaches and learning activities need to be more in-depth and detailed. Firstly, studies can explore the teaching approaches of the preschool educators and how they design the curriculum. This would create a scope to study on the teachers' roles, behaviors, teaching approaches of a preschool teacher in depth. Secondly, in-depth exploration on what children learn and how the learning occur in preschool in Bangladesh are feasible.

Conclusion

The study covers the entire process of teaching and learning in a preschool program through constant and in-depth interaction with the participants, observation, and interviews. The collected data of the longitudinal study were examined and presented in the paper. These findings bring attention to how preschool teaching and learning were planned, implemented, and assessed. The study reveals the type of learning activities and games played by the children which work behind not only their development, but also enhance their creativity and critical thinking ability. Finally,

the study presents the use of technology in the setting of preschool by both the teachers and the students, while being controlled and monitored by the educators all the time.

The researcher made an effort to come to a conclusion about the data, and presented with reference to the sources. The findings answer all the primary questions of the study. Next, the chapter presented the limitations of the study, and how the gaps in study can create scopes for possible future research.

The data presented in the paper can be helpful to and used by others to better understand the teaching and learning of preschool environments, as the study contributes in exploring a model of how the learning environment of a high-quality preschool in Bangladeshi context should be.

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Appendix A

Letter of Consent for Participants

Dear participants, I am Naz E Zabin. I am pursuing my undergraduate-graduation study in ELT & Applied linguistics at the department of English & Humanities, BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. My research title is “Preschool Teaching and Learning: A Case Study Exploration in Dhaka.” This study attempts to explore the teaching and learning of a preschool program. For being a part of the study, you/your child will be under observation during the preschooling activities. Your (teachers’ and authority’s) interview will be noted or recorded and only be used for the study. It will be kept entirely private and not disclosed to anyone. Also, some photos and videos will be taken during the activities; however, no faces will be revealed. If you are willing to take part in the study, please read the details given in the consent form on the next page and sign it. Your kind cooperation will be highly appreciated in conducting the study.

Thank you.

Naz E Zabin

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Research participation consent form. Please read the following statements and tick in the box.

1. I have read the description and understood the information given, which describes what this study is about, and which data collection process will be taken.
2. My participation is voluntary, and I feel free to withdraw at any time.

3. I agree to take part in telephone interview sessions of the study.

4. I agree to be audiotaped for my voice recording.

5. The researcher has my permission to contact me through the following phone number or email address for any clarification after the completion of data collection.

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Name:

1. Date:

2. Phone:

3. Email address: