PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS ON PLAY-BASED LEARNING AS EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL TOOL IN EARLY-PRIMARY GRADE

By

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A thesis submitted to BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Early Childhood Development (MSc. ECD)

BRAC Institute of Educational Development
BRAC University
January 2024

Declaration

It is hereby declared that:

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate references.

3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: <u>Perception of Teachers on Play-Based Learning as Effective Pedagogical Tool in Early-Primary Grade</u>

Name: <u>Uzma Ahmed</u>

1. Source of population: Convenient Sampling Approach.

2. Does the study involve (yes, or no)

   a) Physical risk to the subjects – No.
   b) Social risk - No.
   c) Psychological risk to subjects - No.
   d) Discomfort to subjects - No.
   e) Invasion of privacy – No.

3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)

   a) Nature and purpose of the study – Yes.
   b) Procedures to be followed - Yes.
   c) Physical risk - Yes.
   d) Sensitive questions - Yes.
   e) Benefits to be derived - Yes.
   f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study - Yes.
   g) Confidential handling of data - Yes.
   h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved - Yes.

4. Will Signed verbal consent for the following be required (yes or no)

   a) from study participants - Yes.
   b) from parents or guardian - No.
   c) Will precautions be taken to protect the anonymity of subjects? - Yes.

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

   a) Proposal - Yes.
   b) Consent Form - Yes.
   c) Questionnaire or interview schedule - Yes.

Ethical Review Committee:

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Abstract

A qualitative study was conducted to explore English Medium school teachers' understanding of play-pedagogy for the optimal development of children (aged 6 to 8 years) in early primary grades (1-3) within formal education. Teachers play a crucial role in developing children's social, emotional, academic, and democratic competencies. They serve as educators, mentors, and guides, imparting knowledge, instilling values, and fostering responsible citizenship. The study aimed to understand the perspectives, knowledge, and attitudes of early primary teachers in urban Dhaka regarding the use of play-based techniques to build functional literacy skills. Data were collected through remote In-Depth Interviews (IDI) guided by semi-structured, open-ended research guidelines. The findings indicate that teachers recognize the benefits of play-pedagogy in the classroom, emphasizing the positive impact of a creative and enjoyable learning environment. However, some teachers face challenges such as limited class time, workload, and a lack of technology use. The study recommends the inclusion of play-pedagogy in education policies to ensure that all primary-level teachers are qualified and possess adequate knowledge of early childhood development. Specialized training, supportive resources, and conducive classroom environments aligned with modern technological standards are suggested to facilitate the successful implementation of play-pedagogy.

Keywords:

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, Hamida Begum and Shafique Ahmed, and my adoring parent-in-laws, Nishat Rahim and Sk. Hamid. To my sisters, Amreen and Zara, and my sisters-in-law, Marium, Mahira, and Mahin, along with all my brothers-in-law. A special mention to the awesome next-generation – Amelia, Marwan, and Myreen. Finally, and most importantly, to my husband, Sk. Minhas Hamid, for being an exceptional individual and an expert mentor.

I am grateful to all of you for consistently helping me illuminate the light of education.

Acknowledgment

List of Acronyms

4IR	4th Industrial Revolution
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APSC	Annual Primary School Census
BEN	Bangladesh ECD Network
BSCL	Bangladesh Satellite Company Ltd
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDAN	Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN)
ERDFB	Education, Research and Development Forum Bangladesh
ICHD	Institute of Child and Human Development
ICMH	Institute of Child and Mother Health
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IEE	Innovative Education Ecosystem
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)
LAS	Literacy Assessment Survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PED4	Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP 4)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Sustainable, Modern, Aspirational, Resilient, and Technology-driven
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics
UGC	University Grants Commission

Chapter 1: Introduction & Background

Introduction:

Today and in the future, the world is becoming increasingly multicultural in perspective. Thus, as children grow, they need to acquire new sets of multidisciplinary skills in preparation for a lifelong learning journey. Research has shown that different areas of learning are more interrelated than previously believed. Prevailing day early childhood pedagogy's perspective on learning takes a holistic approach, extending beyond traditional academics. Playful learning experiences have proven to be highly effective in fostering deeper learning and inculcating a wide range of skills, as well as a deeper understanding of critical academic concepts. It encompasses various aspects of developmental domains such as physical, social, cognitive, language, emotional, and creative skills, which children develop as they play and grow. Therefore, to promote the development of creative, engaged, lifelong learners who can thrive in the modern world, basic learning needs must include fundamental learning-tools like literacy abilities, general communication skills, and innovative problem-solving capabilities, along with essential learning-content encompassing knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for human survival and development. (The Lego Foundation, 2023) These components are vital for living with dignity, participating in societal progress, enhancing the quality of life, making informed decisions, and continuing the learning process (Akter & Halim, 2016).

Bangladesh has a centralized education system administered by the Ministry of Education (MoE). The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) and Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) are responsible for planning and management of primary, mass, and pre-primary education. The national education system of 2023 currently caters to over 40.34 million students and involves many stakeholders (e.g., 14 types of providers in primary

education). (Bangladesh Education Statistics, 2022) The primary education system (overlooking Preprimary to Grade-V) is diverse, catering to approximately 20.09 million students through 25 types of heterogenous providers as per the 2021 Annual Primary School Census (Bangladesh Education Statistics, 2022), and has made spectacular success in improving access to education. Beginning with the academic year 2023, the government has been successfully implementing a new educational curriculum in phases, marking a significant step in revolutionizing the existing academic system and preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century. This is a substantial change from the traditional rote-learning approach, towards a vision of encouraging students' creativity, critical thinking, and practical skills by undertaking a nationwide shift in national curriculum from knowledge-based learning to skill-based education.

Statement of the Problem:

The overall literacy rate is 76.8% according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) 2023 report publication on "Literacy Assessment Survey (LAS) to Monitor Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Project". (BBS Publication, Dhaka Tribune, 2023) Subsequently, the national functional literacy rate can serve as a gauge for general literacy and education strength. Functional literacy goes beyond basic reading and writing, encompassing critical thinking, problem-solving, and contextual language understanding, enabling individuals to effectively function in their daily lives. People who possess the ability to read, understand, articulate thoughts verbally and in written form, convey information effectively, and carry out numerical computations are recognized as having functional literacy. The above report further highlights that presently in Bangladesh (2023), while the latest functional literacy rate (population aged 7+ years) is 62.92%. The rate is higher in urban areas (72%) than rural areas (59%). The functional literacy rate (population aged between 11-45 years) is 73.69%. Though the overall rate of functional literacy is not bad, some critical things can be inferred from the

result. Despite the government's efforts to enhance the quality of education, certain limitations and shortcomings persist. The state of functional literacy highlights the increasing educational disparity. Urban students enjoy superior infrastructure and support in their educational institutions compared to their rural counterparts. Additionally, residents in urban areas have greater access to opportunities for skill development and training. These factors collectively contribute to a higher level of functional literacy in urban regions. In the past, the national education system, which comprised of a mix of heterogeneous providers and involvement of various institutions, highlighted that a clear mismatch between academic curriculums and unequal economic outcomes as the knowledge and skills being taught institutionally was becoming exponentially irrelevant to future demands. (The Daily Observer, 2023) This issue was deeply rooted in the absence of a unified policy framework that can ensure coordination, consolidation, and flexibility within the primary education system (Islam & Fardosh, 2022). Many documents, both from the public and private sectors, highlight the need for developing a new ECD training infrastructure and revising existing ones (Zaman, n.d.). Policies relevant to early childhood development now emphasize the use of contemporary pedagogical tools for ECD by responsible professionals. (Editorial Publication, Dhaka Tribune, 2023) The fundamental aim of the following study is to gather insights into how play-based learning in early primary grades of English medium schooling are presently perceived by teachers within the context of Dhaka. Ultimately, findings from this study can help to enhance national school practices by establishing play-based pedagogical tools in formal education system to foster a more supportive learning environment for optimum development of children within a classroom setting.

Purpose of the Study:

Students spend most of their time in schools and classrooms learning different concepts with the help of their teachers, therefore it is very important to know the way of interaction taking

place between them. This study aims to identify and assess any differences in classroom practices during reciprocal interaction that takes place between the teachers and students in English medium schools. The paper will draw attention to contemporary practices and help to gather evidence on how such classroom interactions proceeds – addressing how it involves the student participants, what are the impacts of it, what are the do's-and-don'ts of teachers, how it is affecting students and teachers' learning - that can be later holistically assessed for enhancing learning procedures of all primary schools. (Rahman, 2020) This research will also serve the purpose of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the current awareness levels and potential receptiveness to innovative, yet structured, teaching methods to develop and uplift the education system of Bangladesh.

Significance and Justification of the Study:

The Government of Bangladesh provides basic education to all its citizens, making primary education completion a priority in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030. Both government and non-government organizations are actively working to achieve this objective (Akter & Halim, 2016). Though the overall rate of functional literacy (73% for the age group of 7-14 years) is not bad, there are some areas that require more attention to improve overall literacy. Further breakdown at the advanced level of the population (people aged 11+ years) shows that only 52% are functionally literate, while 14% are functionally semi-literate, and 12% are functionally illiterate. Recognizing that children's learning and development are influenced by various environmental factors, the national board of education has updated its objectives to prepare children in a way that values individual learning styles and fosters positive attitudes toward education (Azam & Halim, 2016). To enhance teaching quality and promote student engagement and participation in learning, child-centered pedagogy is now being emphasized. Functional literacy goes beyond basic reading, writing, and math, extending to the application of these skills in the complex

21st-century world, particularly in fields like science and technology. This encompasses literacies such as civic, computer, financial, health, legal, media, and scientific literacy. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), understanding technologies like coding is crucial. As society changes, functional literacy must adapt, including ethical literacy for responsible data and social media use, and critical thinking for navigating the internet. Tech-smarts involve practical skills for ethical and sustainable technology use, while in the professional world, digital interaction, effective information use, and collaborative innovation are key. Addressing socio-economic issues in Bangladesh, where the constitution emphasizes citizen equality, justifying secularism ensures a dignified life and promotes communal harmony. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution transforms our world, maintaining well-being relies on continually developing and applying these functional literacies. (The Daily Observer, 2023) Primary education, being the first formal learning stage, should focus on essential reading, writing, and math skills to establish a robust foundation. UNICEF emphasizes that this focus contributes to aspects such as poverty reduction, lower child mortality rates, gender equality, and increased environmental awareness.

Research Questions:

In Bangladesh, the education system is categorized into three branches, and students have the option to select any of them based on their resources. These branches include the English Medium, the Bengali Medium, and the Religious Branch. English serves as one of the primary mediums of instruction within the Bangladeshi education system. However, the outcomes of English teaching and learning in this context are not on par with those observed in English medium schools, where English takes precedence as the primary language and Bangla assumes a secondary role (Hamid & Erling, 2016). Since Bangladesh gained independence, proponents of a Bangla-centric approach have often overlooked the significance of the English language. Nevertheless, in secular education, English now holds

the same official language status. English medium schools offer a global standard of education characterized by progressive values and diverse worldviews. The research topic for this study is 'Perception of Teachers on Play-Based Learning as Effective Pedagogical Tool in Early-Primary Grade'. To address this, the following question captures my key agenda: "What is the understanding of English Medium school teachers of early primary grade (1-3) about play-pedagogy for optimum development of children (aged 6 to 8 years) within the sphere of formal education?"

The following sub-questions will act as a guideline towards achieving effective survey results during sample participant interview sessions:

1.   What is the current scenario of pedagogical practices of classrooms in the English medium schools? What new progressive approaches and materials do the teachers use in their classroom?

2.   How is the assessment procedure designed to ensure the learning of the students? To what extent teachers can implement different types of classroom assessment related to their pedagogy?

3.   What kind of training is provided to prepare the teachers for implementing such play approaches and how do teachers perceive these trainings? What is the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of the training? How can teachers be guided in an even better way by the school to implement the learned approaches?

Operational Definitions:

Play-Based Learning: Also known as 'Play Pedagogy' or 'Play-Based Learning,' it is a modern approach to early childhood education that stresses child-directed, open-ended play to promote early reading skills. This study dives into how teachers use directed and unstructured play to provide pleasurable, hands-on, and engaging learning experiences for children. Teachers, like architects within the educational framework, play an important role in

developing children's social, emotional, academic, and democratic competencies. They serve as educators, passing on knowledge, instilling values, and guiding students toward responsible citizenship. They serve as mentors, assisting students in achieving academic objectives that are connected with the curriculum. The core objective of this study is to understand the perspectives, knowledge, and attitudes of early primary teachers (grades 1-3) in English Medium Schools about the use of play-based techniques to building literacy skills in children aged 6 to 8. The investigation reflects the many perspectives and thoughts of teachers on the subject.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A strong foundation in early development, particularly from birth to eight years, is essential for future success in education, economic productivity, responsible citizenship, lifelong well-being, community strength, and effective nurturing. New insights into early brain development have led to innovative approaches in addressing ongoing challenges (CDC, Harvard, 2016). This shift moves away from the traditional 'ages and stages' developmental model (linked to Piaget) and emphasizes the role of adults in supporting children's learning (associated with Vygotsky). It recognizes the influence of social and cultural factors on children's learning. The interplay between biology and environment as a transactional, relational development process highlights a theme where children actively contribute to their own development, not just passively receiving from the environment. Children show differences from the start and respond uniquely to their surroundings. They choose different elements from their environment and evoke varied reactions from teachers and others. Teacher-child relationships are seen as reciprocal interactions where teachers influence children, and children also impact their teachers (BRAC, IED 2023). Incorporating theoretical perspectives that go beyond specific development stages allows for various pathways to unfold as a child grows.

To investigate the main question of this study, which is "What do English Medium school teachers in early primary grades (1-3) understand about play-pedagogy for the optimal development of children (aged 6 to 8 years) in formal education?" The following literature review explores how teachers can improve their effectiveness using a play-based, developmentally suitable teaching approach. It aims to assess their awareness, openness, and alignment with current practices and challenges in child-centered education within formal classrooms that incorporate modern teaching and play-based learning methods. Focusing on the development of both general cognitive (intellectual capacity) and socio-emotional (social

skills) abilities, the content is divided into three main sections for a comprehensive overview: (A.) Play-Based Learning: Interconnected Attributes of Competency-Based Learning & Character Development. (B.) Classroom Discourse: Integrated Curriculum and Teaching Approaches for Multidisciplinary Development of Early Literacy Skills. And (C.) Existing Linkages: Inclusive Education.

(A.) Over time, various thinkers have delved into educational philosophy, pondering what and how children should be taught. Primary education, vital as per the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), initially targeted basic reading, writing, and math skills for children aged 5 to 8. By 2011, the focus shifted to "establishing a solid foundation for learning" beyond mere subject understanding. UNICEF recognizes primary education for its role in reducing poverty, lowering child mortality, promoting gender equality, and enhancing environmental awareness. In child development, Jean Piaget's theory identifies four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Piaget recommends teaching based on a child's cognitive development stage. Lev Vygotsky's theory emphasizes social learning, where a more knowledgeable person aids a child within their zone of proximal development (ZPD). In the ZPD, children learn with assistance, progressing from dependence to independence. This support, termed instructional scaffolding, covers intellectual, physical, learning skills, language, and emotional aspects. (Wikipedia, Primary Education 2024) The New Curriculum Framework 2021 (NCF-2021) in Bangladesh aims to address unemployment and meet the growing demand for skilled human resources. Aligned with SDG-4, Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), and Vision-2041, this competency-based curriculum evaluates students based on knowledge, skills, and attitudes, emphasizing ten competencies for comprehensive development. These skills include expressing ideas creatively, making informed decisions through critical thinking, cultivating global citizenship, collaborative problem-solving, adapting to change, contributing

artistically, maintaining healthy relationships, addressing disasters, using math and science for problem-solving, and contributing to nature and humanity through religious discipline and integrity.

In Academic Learning, play-based pedagogy effectively develops literacy skills, including language, social communication, and pre-reading. Combining teacher-directed and child-directed play supports academic goals. Teachers' professionalism in implementing play-based activities is crucial. Understanding individual differences in learning preferences, proclivities, and personality characteristics helps apply strategies for effective learning. It involves making connections and establishing positive relationships with students, responding to their educational needs. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) demands embedded skills, including functional literacy, civic, computer, financial, health, legal, media, and scientific literacy. Character development, as emphasized by Martin Luther King, Jr., is integral to true education, promoting respectful behavior, accountability, empathy, and diversity appreciation. The educational value of play and creativity is not well understood, but foundational capacities developed in play impact a child's later success. Play pedagogy in formal education nurtures holistic development, emphasizing spiritual, physical, and mental well-being. Moral education involves cultivating problem-solving skills and instilling values through play-based activities. Optimum Well-Being in early childhood mental health involves managing emotions and developing self-regulation skills. Play-based learning combines fun with education and promotes brain growth. Resilience, essential for handling life's challenges, should be nurtured in children's early years, with teachers playing a vital role in fostering resilience through relationship-building and creating a supportive classroom environment. Resilient children rebound quickly from setbacks, become better problem solvers, and enjoy improved physical and mental health. (Nolan et al., 2014).

(B) The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) in Bangladesh creates the curriculum and textbooks in both Bangla and English versions. Religious education covers Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Private schools follow international curriculums, and madrasahs focus on Islamic education. NGOs run non-formal schools like BRAC for primary school dropouts, differing from private schools in serving underserved areas. Various child-centered, play-based educational approaches worldwide share characteristics such as holistic learning and recognizing children's self-motivation (Walsh et al., 2010). Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) guidelines incorporate principles focusing on development, individual differences, relationships, and culture (Walsh et al., 2010). UNICEF's Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) set expectations for children's behavior and performance. Bangladesh developed ELDS for children aged 0-8, aligning with UNICEF's global recommendations. The New Curriculum Framework 2021 (NCF-2021) introduces new teaching methods, like Experiential and Collaborative Learning, aiming to equip students with practical skills and a cooperative mindset for the twenty-first century (Ahsan, 2023).

Recognizing each child's unique approach to education, effective teaching methods must consider individual qualities. Children contribute their own experiences, interests, attitudes, skills, and personalities. Teachers need to be responsive to these unique combinations to connect successfully with children. Effective activities in early childhood settings require educators with expertise and a strong commitment to fostering basic skills and competencies through high-quality play and creative classroom activities. Such experiences play a crucial role in shaping children's brain development. Schools are crucial in teaching important values and concepts like justice, democracy, and human rights, empowering young people to promote peace and justice. Teachers and families play a big role in shaping children's attitudes and behaviors. Global citizenship education provides an overall framework, aiming

to empower learners to contribute to a fair, peaceful, and sustainable world (Wikipedia, Primary Education 2024).

The Playful Structure concept integrates formal and informal learning with work and play to create a playful learning environment for children, promoting interactive, flexible, and joyful teaching. Incorporating both play and structure in early years primary schools is recommended. The shift towards play-based teaching influences pedagogy and curriculum design, and teacher education and professional development must align with these changes. The role of teachers in a formal academic setting is to provide vital life lessons, guiding principles, and moral values, engaging with young children and primary students, demanding a diverse set of both hard and soft skills (Gillis & Pratt, 2023).

(C) In the past decade, Bangladesh has achieved substantial progress in expanding education access, achieving 98 percent enrollment for primary school-age children with gender parity. The Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP4) is a key government initiative targeting quality education for Grades I to V and one year of pre-primary education. Launched by the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), PEDP4 emphasizes the importance of an Information Management System (IPEMIS) for data-driven decisions. Initiated in July 2020 with support from UNICEF and ADB, IPEMIS addresses challenges, improves data accuracy, and enhances visibility. The project involves mapping processes, transforming them into a digital solution, and defining user roles. Development commenced in April 2021, and the solution became available to users in March 2022 after bug-fixing and module development (IPEMIS, 2024). The Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), a coalition of government, non-government, and international organizations committed to early childhood development (ECD), was formally launched on September 7, 2005. BEN plays a crucial role in advocating for policy development, capacity building, knowledge generation, partnership establishment, and knowledge sharing. With approximately 159

member organizations, BEN actively promotes the optimal and holistic development of children in Bangladesh (BEN, 2024). BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BRAC-IED) collaborates with the public sector to enhance education in Early Childhood Development (ECD), focusing on quality, equity, and efficiency. They promote a holistic approach, covering early years' learning, play-based learning, psychosocial well-being, adolescent mental health, and curriculum design. BRAC International, a global NGO, implemented pre-primary programs in Africa and Asia since the 1990s. With the LEGO Foundation, they launched the Humanitarian Play Lab project in 2016, impacting over 115,000 children in Bangladesh. The project assessed the impact of play-based interventions on learning and skills, revealing significant improvements in physical, intellectual, and socio-emotional development scores for children in Bangladesh. Co-locating play labs within government schools and working with education officials proved notably effective (BRAC-IED 2024).

Despite progress, challenges persist in providing quality education for many children. Bangladesh, an early adopter of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has influenced child-focused programs globally, endorsing the World Declaration on Education for All in 1990 and the Dakar Framework for Action 2000, emphasizing the importance of early childhood years in achieving Education for All. The UN Charter aims for global peace and collaboration, envisioning a brighter future, especially for those with limited opportunities. It outlines a flexible strategy recognizing individuals as crucial for positive change, providing a platform for their activism to create a sustainable world. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) allow each country to set targets based on global ambitions, incorporating them into national plans considering economic, social, and environmental processes. SDG-4, 'Quality Education,' aims for inclusive, high-quality education with lifelong learning opportunities, addressing data gaps through strengthened data collection. The primary years, up to age eight,

cover school and early childhood, including play, literacy/numeracy, family/community, critical thinking, cultural understanding, early identity, and peer relationships. Out-of-school children pose challenges, and USAID collaborates with Bangladesh to address issues through various initiatives. These include introducing Sisimpur (Bangladesh's Sesame Street) for diversity and inclusion, establishing parent-teacher forums, distributing learning materials, creating classroom-based libraries, and providing vocational skills training. In 2022, Bangladesh and the World Bank signed agreements, including the $210 million Enhancing Investments and Benefits for Early Years Project, focusing on early childhood development. The $300 million Learning Acceleration in Secondary Education Operation Project aims to enhance secondary education, introduce online learning, provide stipends to 8 million students, and prevent dropout rates. The World Bank also approved $300 million to support Bangladesh's post-COVID-19 learning recovery, emphasizing online learning, improved teaching quality, and reduced secondary education dropout rates (World Bank PRESS RELEASE, November 23, 2023; September 22, 2023).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Approach/ Design:

This study examines three key aspects to address the primary research agenda. The first question explores English medium school teachers' opinions on play pedagogy in early primary grades (1-3), scrutinizing current practices and innovative approaches. The second question investigates how these teachers perceive play-based learning's effectiveness for children's development (6-8 years), examining assessment procedures and their ability to implement diverse assessments. The third question focuses on challenges faced by teachers in implementing play pedagogy in formal primary education, exploring training effectiveness and ways schools can support teachers in successfully applying learned play-based approaches.

For this, the research utilized a qualitative design, employing an inductive process to extract meanings and insights from various situations. Through convenient sampling, primary data was collected through remote, in-depth interviews guided by semi-structured, open-ended research guidelines. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain detailed insights into the central phenomenon as it aligns with the study's principal focus on understanding English medium teachers' perceptions from grades 1 to 3 regarding the effectiveness of play-based pedagogy for the optimal development of children aged 6 to 8 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Research Site:

In this study, the research focused on four English medium schools in urban Dhaka, chosen based on personal familiarity with the academic context. This location criterion prioritized individual connections with key stakeholders in formal education, aligning with the study's central agenda of understanding English medium school teachers, as they constitute a significant portion of the target population. According to the Annual Education Survey 2022,

Bangladesh has 137 English medium schools, with 71,456 students and 9,666 teachers. The Dhaka Division alone houses 121 of these schools (Bangladesh Education Statistics, 2022).

Research Participants:

In this study, six English medium teachers from schools in Dhaka city were chosen using a convenient sampling method. The selection was made for In-Depth Interview (IDI) sessions from a compiled list of recognized English medium schools in Dhaka. All participants were female teachers with professional accreditation and a minimum of six months of teaching experience in grades 1 to 3, covering multiple subjects. The selection of teachers and schools was based on convenience, and the participants willingly consented to participate.

Sampling/ Participant Selection Procedure:

In this study, a convenient sampling method is employed to select participants for interviews. Convenient sampling involves selecting individuals or objects from a population based on their accessibility and availability. The aim is to gather information from participants who are easily accessible. The sample for this study consists of experienced primary school teachers from selected English medium schools in Dhaka, overseeing children aged 6 to 8 in Grades 1 to 3. The selection process involved initially shortlisting potential participants through informal communication channels, followed by formal invitations for in-depth interviews based on their verbal agreement to participate.

Participants were selected, with the criterion focusing on a minimum of six months of teaching experience in any English medium school in Dhaka. Preference was given to active teachers in this role, although those with prior experience in teaching children aged 6 to 8 were also considered. The participants' formal designation, whether full-time, part-time, teachers' assistants, or substitute teachers, was not specified. This selection criterion aligns with the study's main goal of gaining insight into how English medium school teachers in

early primary grades implement play pedagogy for the optimal development of children within the formal education context in Dhaka city.

Data Collection Tool:

In this study, a research guideline served as the tool for collecting data through In-Depth Interviews (IDI).

Data Collection Method & Procedure:

This study utilizes a remote call survey for conducting online In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with an unstructured questionnaire featuring open-ended questions. The IDI guideline, created by the researcher and validated by experts, serves as the data collection tool.

Oral consents from the participants were obtained before data collection, and they received the questionnaire upon confirming their scheduled participation and providing both oral and written consent. Prior to the survey, participants were briefed on the study's purpose and objectives, and a consent form, along with the IDI Questionnaire, was shared, emphasizing the confidentiality of recorded responses.

For this study, participants were encouraged to engage in self-reflection to ensure unique insights. The IDIs, conducted by the researcher, lasted approximately 40-60 minutes, and a mobile recorder, with participants' permission, was used to record data. Additional field notes were taken for comprehensive data collection.

Data Management & Analysis:

In this research, the content analysis technique is used to examine all data, aiming to identify patterns, words, themes, and concepts. The goal is to present trends, patterns, and ideas objectively as qualitative information. The analysis targets include simplifying complex content, identifying trends and relationships, determining content characteristics, understanding participant's intentions, and identifying implied aspects.

The data management and analysis process followed specific steps. First, clear research questions were formulated to develop the interview guideline as a research tool for in-depth interviews (IDIs). Using this guideline as the only data collection instrument, audio-conversations and handwritten notes were collected from the IDI sessions, archived, and checked for accuracy. Raw data, along with personal notes, was transcribed, translated into English, and rewritten in a narrative form. Transcriptions were then read, coded, and memos created to understand the overall data. This preliminary understanding helped to categorize concepts into different themes. The data were aligned with research questions, categorized into three themes for clearer presentation, and then analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. This method proved valuable for extracting insights by identifying relevant texts aligned with research objectives.

The preliminary data were systematically examined, categorized into themes and patterns, and interpreted to understand meanings and concepts relevant to the topic. Following this, relevant content, including raw interview data, was chosen for initial assessment. The existing data, including personal notes, transcripts, and summarized findings, were further organized. The refined dataset was categorized into specific themes or patterns, facilitating manual classification and labeling for qualitative data analysis. The interpretation within each category justified the research agendas outlined in the thesis proposal. Conclusions drawn from this analysis encompassed key findings, major observations, and significant implications, aligning with the overall goals of the thesis. Finally, the findings were presented descriptively according to the identified themes.

Validity & Reliability:

To ensure authenticity, the collected data underwent triangulation. A field test of the tools was implemented, and the guidelines for In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were validated by experts from BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BIED).

Ethical Issues:

My supervisor at BRAC University approved this study, which focused on individuals as subjects. Ethical principles were strictly followed to prioritize the rights, dignity, and autonomy of each participant, ensuring no pressure or undue authority. Participation was voluntary, with no risk of harm at any stage. Before conducting the study, selected school teachers were contacted through email, mobile phone call and text message, and WhatsApp messaging to share relevant documents such as the interview guide and letter of informed consent, to seek permission for IDIs and provide transparent information about the research protocol, objectives, data anonymization, and storage. They were informed in detail about the study, researcher's profile, and reasons for approaching them. This information was presented clearly without intimidation. Only those willing and interested were selected, and no prior connections were discussed to avoid bias. Participants could withdraw or retract responses at any time. Privacy was emphasized, and uncomfortable questions were skipped. Participants were respected if they chose not to complete the IDI, and all information was shared openly.

Limitations of the Study:

The play-based pedagogy is relatively new in Bangladesh, and the teachers involved in this study have limited experience with it. Consequently, their perspectives could not be cross-verified with more seasoned teachers familiar with play-based pedagogy, and there was insufficient documentation and literature for analysis. Additionally, the occurrence of political instability within the city, influenced by the National Election timeline, resulted in impromptu school holidays, further complicating the extraction and cross-checking of derived data with existing classroom practices.

Chapter-4: Results / Findings & Discussion

Results:

This section explores the viewpoints of English Medium school teachers in early primary grades (1-3) regarding play-based pedagogy for the optimal development of children aged 6 to 8 within the formal education setting. The chapter outlines the study's findings from in-depth interviews. As highlighted in the literature review, teachers play a vital role in fostering resilience and nurturing creative, engaged, lifelong learners. Understanding the dynamics of teacher-student interactions is crucial, given the significant time students spend learning from their teachers in schools. The study results aim to identify, assess, and establish connections to significant classroom practices related to play pedagogy during interactions between teachers and students in selected English medium schools. Six primary school teachers from grades 1 to 3 were selected for In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) from three English Medium Schools in Dhaka. All participants were female, with four currently employed as teachers and the remaining two not employed as teachers during the interview. Their ages ranged from 30 to 45 years, and most held higher educational qualifications, including higher secondary certificates, bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees. Only one participant had completed a master's in education. While most had experience in providing early childhood education, none had received separate training on play-based pedagogy before their teaching careers. Play-Based Learning effectively combines fun and education, focusing on the optimal development of children aged 6 to 8 within the formal education setting. Aligned with the initial research questions and primary study objectives, concise summaries of the main study results, derived from discussions with the mentioned participants, are categorized under three thematic dimensions. The findings in this section are further organized into sub-themes, providing insights into teachers' understanding of play, opinions on the importance of play in school, play-based learning, the comparison between conventional methods and play-based

learning, views on play-based learning in early primary grades, and essential strategies for learning and teaching in these grades.

Theme-1: English Medium School Teachers' Perception on Play Pedagogy in Early Primary Grades (1-3).

This section focuses on the first objective of the study, aiming to gain insight into early primary grade teachers' perceptions of play-based learning and simultaneously explore the current pedagogical practices in English Medium Schools. The findings are presented under sub-themes, describing teachers' understanding of play, opinions on play-based learning in early primary grades, views on the importance of play in school, a comparison between conventional methods and play-based learning, and essential strategies for effective learning and teaching in early primary grades.

1.1 - Views on play-based learning: The significant finding is the unanimous agreement among teachers on the overall benefits of play-based learning. One participant mentioned, "Pedagogical practices are still in the early stages but are slowly being incorporated, especially in sciences and math, showing signs of improved pupil engagement." All participating teachers express strong support for play-based learning.

1.2 - Significance of Play-Based Learning for Early Primary Grades: Teachers emphasize the importance of play-based learning aligned with specific goals and objectives, promoting focused learning. They acknowledge the establishment of goals as essential for guiding learners in their learning paths. One teacher advocated for a balanced approach, combining traditional methods with play-based learning to build foundational knowledge. Teachers observe increased student engagement and enjoyment in play-based learning classes, where active participation and hands-on experiences enhance learning.

1.3 - Integration of Play Pedagogy in the Sphere of Formal Education: All educators recognize play-based learning as crucial for primary students, contrasting it with conventional

methods like rote memorization. They highlight the superiority of play-based learning in fostering individual creativity and engagement. Teachers note the importance of hands-on activities, providing tangible understanding and real-life connections for better retention of information. Play-based learning encourages students to find their solutions, collaborate, and diversifies teaching methods. Teachers share insights into improved pupil engagement, particularly in subjects like sciences and math, through the gradual integration of play-based techniques. Visual tools are increasingly employed to enhance discussions, linking play-based techniques with the weekly curriculum plan for a comprehensive understanding of topics.

Theme-2: Play-Based Learning as an Effective Pedagogical Tool for Optimum Development of Children (aged 6-8 years).

After exploring respondents' perspectives on play-based learning and their teaching practices, this theme addresses the second research objective. It delves into teachers' perceptions and evaluations of the effectiveness of the overall play pedagogy approach. The section is divided into sub-sections investigating participants' views on student responses, student assessment within a play curriculum, support for the curriculum, teacher's classroom experience, classroom environment, teacher preparation, and training on play-based pedagogical practices.

2.1 - Student Response to Play-Based Learning Approach: Teachers highlight positive student responses to play-based learning, noting that students eagerly anticipate non-textbook activities. A mix of free-play and guided-play allows students to incorporate their ideas individually or collaboratively. Learning together fosters discussion and collaboration among students, inspiring better performance. Children tend to imitate and learn from their peers, forming a habit that evolves into a mindset as they grow.

2.2 - Student Assessment from Play Curriculum: Participants describe the main form of assessment as weekly classroom markings, avoiding timely or yearly exams to prevent undue

stress on young minds. Weekly grades are averaged to update parents on their child's progress. Different schools employ various assessment methods, including announced class assessments, block teaching with regular assessments, and daily class interactions evaluated based on predefined criteria.

2.3 - Teacher Training on Play-Based Pedagogical Practices: Teachers report diverse training experiences. Some undergo comprehensive training facilitated by their schools, equipped with dedicated facilities and research teams. This collaborative effort ensures trainers are well-prepared to subsequently train teachers in play-based learning methods. Others receive detailed weekly work plans and methods from supervisors. Training may focus on curriculum updates and necessary adjustments to lesson plans. Regular training sessions, routine checks with supervisors, and curriculum adjustments are considered crucial for effective teaching.

Theme-3: Challenges Faced During Implementation of Play Pedagogy in Formal Primary School Education.

The final part of the interview focused on the challenges encountered by participants when implementing a play-based learning approach in early primary grade classrooms. This aligns with the third objective of the research, aiming to understand teachers' perceptions of training related to play pedagogy and how schools can guide them effectively in implementing learned approaches. The findings are categorized into sub-themes covering teachers' perceptions of classroom lesson plans, play curriculum, optimal student development, student assessment, classroom design, and the extent of support received from schools.

3.1 - Designing Flexible Lesson Plans: One participant identified a challenge in allowing time for students to think and prepare for participation in a non-stressful manner. Providing feedback on student learning based on play was also deemed difficult.

3.2 - Extra Work Pressure and Time Commitment: Many respondents believed play-based learning would be time-consuming and increase their workload. Some thought that while it might be time-consuming initially, a pattern would emerge over time, reducing the additional workload on teachers.

3.3 - Supportive Classroom Environment: Participants unanimously acknowledged the importance of a supportive environment for both teachers and children. Some teachers faced challenges due to traditional classroom designs lacking digital resources. They had to use personal technological devices to enhance teaching with various audio, visual, and video materials. Others highlighted well-equipped classrooms with the latest technology, in-house online systems, and devices for interactive learning. Having a supportive environment was emphasized to facilitate meaningful engagement with course content, ensuring the growth of every child. Regular oversight, collaborative teaching approaches, and seeking help from fellow staff members were encouraged in maintaining discipline while incorporating fun-based learning.

Discussion:

This section focuses on the theme of optimal child development (ages 6-8) through play-based teaching in early primary grades (1-3). It presents interpretations and a concise analysis of study results, connecting them to evidence from Chapter-2 of existing literature. The subsequent discussion follows the same themes as the earlier section. Education is a liberating force, unlocking intellect, fostering imagination, and essential for self-respect. It serves as the key to prosperity, offering opportunities for everyone to contribute to a progressive, healthy society. Accessible learning is vital for all individuals, benefiting humanity as a whole. Accurate education statistics are crucial for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) and progressing towards becoming a developed nation. SDG-4, focused on 'Quality Education,' aims to ensure inclusive and equitable education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities. Schools play a crucial role in meeting Global Goals and can use the outlined charter's ten targets to act for ensuring quality education.

Theme-1: English Medium School Teachers' Perspective on Play Pedagogy in Early Primary Grades (1-3).

This research explores the views of early primary school teachers in English medium schools on play-based learning. The aim is to enhance knowledge, science, skills, and technology in the national education system. The findings show that teachers, despite being aware of new curriculum policies, often prioritize their beliefs, personal experiences, and immediate classroom needs. Early childhood education is recognized for its positive impact, reducing mental health issues, and promoting independence in children. Teachers see play-based learning as crucial for developing critical thinking, open-mindedness, and analytical skills in children. Overall, teachers see a natural connection between play and learning, considering learning to naturally occur during playtime. Functional literacy goes beyond basic reading, writing, and math, extending to the application of these skills in the modern world, especially

in science and technology. It includes literacies such as civic, computer, financial, health, legal, media, and scientific literacy. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), understanding technologies like coding is crucial. Functional literacy needs to adjust to societal changes, including ethical literacy for responsible data and social media use, and critical thinking for navigating the internet. Tech-smarts involve practical skills for ethical and sustainable technology use, and in the professional world, digital interaction, effective information use, and collaborative innovation are essential. Addressing socio-economic issues in Bangladesh, where the constitution emphasizes citizen equality, justifying secularism ensures a dignified life and promotes communal harmony. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution transforms our world, maintaining well-being relies on continuously developing and applying these functional literacies. Primary education, as the first formal learning stage, should concentrate on essential reading, writing, and math skills to establish a strong foundation. UNICEF emphasizes that this focus contributes to aspects such as poverty reduction, lower child mortality rates, gender equality, and increased environmental awareness. Education Minister Dr. Dipu Moni foresees a shift in teachers' roles with the new curriculum. The qualities that make a good teacher are essential for effective education and training, shaping the teaching and learning environment. Teachers are considered role models with a significant impact on students. It is crucial for teachers to promote empowerment, well-being, and overall development through their interactions. Encouraging positive behavior allows students to discuss their learning experiences, share discoveries, express thoughts, and develop critical thinking skills. Effective discipline, focused on supporting learning and building relationships, aims to teach students responsibility for their actions. A supportive approach, including clear communication of expectations and rule agreements, is recommended to foster student accountability rather than relying on strict discipline. Educating children is seen as a demanding job that needs skilled teachers who grasp children's viewpoints. Love is

emphasized as a crucial element in fostering positive attitudes that result in significant improvements in teaching young children. The focus is on establishing a secure and welcoming classroom environment, acknowledging the crucial role of early education in shaping children's drive and inspiration for future achievements. Dame Sally Coates, Chair of the independent Review of Teachers' Standards and Principal of Burlington Danes Academy, emphasizes how teaching quality significantly impacts a child's success. The Teachers' Standards, introduced in English schools in September 2012, set the minimum expected level of practice for trainees and teachers. These standards evaluate those aiming for qualified teacher status (QTS), completing statutory induction, and teachers under the Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012. They replace previous standards and serve as a framework for assessing teacher performance. Crucial for professional development, training, and new teacher induction, these standards help improve teaching quality. Maintained schools must use them for teacher evaluation, while all schools and teachers can use them for growth planning. Evaluation for teachers aiming for higher pay is based on these standards. The 2020 Headteachers' Standards assess headteachers, and Ofsted inspectors consider adherence to the Teachers' Standards in evaluating teaching quality across all schools. These standards, linked to relevant education regulations, apply to trainees, teachers completing induction, and teachers in maintained schools. The Teaching Regulation Agency applies Part Two of the standards for serious misconduct cases. These updated standards provide a framework for teachers from initial qualification, with ongoing self-evaluation, reflection, and professional development vital for career progression. They outline areas for self-assessment and feedback, expecting teachers to expand their knowledge, skills, and understanding as they advance in their careers (Guidance: Teachers' Standards 2021).

Theme-2: Play-Based Learning as an Effective Pedagogical Tool for Optimal Development of Children (Aged 6-8 Years).

The student-teacher interaction significantly influences student achievement, involving communicative tasks and institutional evaluations. A positive classroom environment is vital for student well-being, fostering increased attention, reduced anxiety, and supporting emotional and behavioral regulation, leading to positive learning outcomes. For children aged 6-8, achieving optimal development entails ensuring physical activity, academic success, interpersonal skills, emotional management, effective communication, and creativity. Nurturing independence and a love for learning are crucial elements. Evaluations and supportive environments play a key role in reaching and maintaining this developmental level. Early literacy skills, influenced by family and institutional interactions, encompass listening, speaking, reading, writing, phonological awareness, and numerical senses. Acquired through play, these skills involve understanding the alphabet, signs, symbols, decoding images, and effective communication. 'Functional Literacy' focuses on two key areas: (a.) General-Cognition, emphasizing brain changes aiding thinking and learning through activities like exploration and problem-solving. Early childhood education fosters cognitive development, creating a positive environment challenging intellectual capacity. Intellectual abilities in the 5-7 age range include creative thinking, artistic skills, problem-solving, a broad vocabulary, critical thinking, and analytical capabilities. (b.) Socio-Emotional: Nurturing environments help children learn to interact, display empathy, and manage emotions. Early childhood development programs establish positive connections, fostering essential abilities for daily interactions. Social skills, empathy, and emotional regulation are taught through interactions with peers and teachers, providing a foundation for a strong identity and self-esteem. The study underscores the continual importance of refining play-based learning. The New Curriculum Framework 2021 introduces innovative teaching approaches like Experiential and Collaborative Learning. Experiential learning, based on David Kolb's principles, emphasizes hands-on activities and personal experiences.

Collaborative learning, rooted in the African concept of 'Ubuntu,' encourages collective efforts for mutual enrichment, fostering critical thinking and effective problem-solving. NCF-2021 shifts from examinations to continuous assessment, aligning with Finland's educational model. Continuous assessment involves ongoing data collection, promoting complete growth and allowing students to demonstrate learning spontaneously. This change aims to cultivate a love for learning and holistic development, departing from traditional exam-centric education.

Theme-3: Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of Play Pedagogy within the Formal Primary School Education System.

Education, crucial for shaping a nation's human resources and imparting essential skills, faces challenges aligning with broader national issues in the public sector. Despite significant government investments in women's education, including skill-based training and access to information technology, a lack of an effective Human Resource Development and deployment system within the education system demoralizes personnel in primary education and contributes to poor performance.

Creating a holistic learning environment is considered a creative aspect of teaching, aligning with the decentralization of planning and management outlined in the 2010 Education Policy. Recognized institutions with effective leadership and progressive managing committees can serve as models for promoting greater institutional responsibility. The "Bangladesh Education Statistics 2022" annual report by BANBEIS consolidates comprehensive education data, emphasizing the interconnected nature of education levels and fields. The Annual Education Institution Survey (AEIS) by BANBEIS monitors progress on key variables, assisting education planners, policymakers, development partners, and researchers in formulating policies for national and universal education goals. SDG-4 strives for a better world by 2030 through quality education, addressing poverty, inequality, and pressing issues. Encouraging

the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals in this field can motivate people to make a positive impact. Target 4.7 emphasizes learners acquiring knowledge and skills related to sustainable development, encompassing education, human rights, gender equality, and global citizenship. Target 4.A highlights constructing education facilities that are child, disability, and gender-sensitive for safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments. Target 4.C focuses on increasing the number of qualified teachers, particularly in developing countries. These national objectives are achieved through partnerships with entities like Microsoft, Civil Society Organizations, Bangladesh Ministries, Scouts, Directorate of Primary Education, and others, collaborating with investors such as ILO, ITU, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, UK FCDO, and UNESCO-Core funds.

Conclusion:

After my research, I've gained valuable insights into diverse teaching methods and assessment approaches used by the school. Conversations with teachers highlighted a positive atmosphere, where creative teaching methods contribute to an enjoyable learning environment. Students attend classes not just for grades but to acquire knowledge. Many schools in this study incorporate modern techniques, ensuring quality education through practices like group work, flashcards, verbal explanations, hands-on activities, experiments, and visual displays. Effective assessment procedures, including analytical questions, multiple-choice questions, and oral quizzes, play a crucial role in the teaching-learning environment. Teachers receive regular training, adapting to online classes and assessments during the pandemic. The school aims to provide the best education for its students.

To improve the education sector in Bangladesh, it's crucial to focus on effective teaching practices in both private and public schools. This research serves as a resource for educators in English and Bangla Medium Schools, advocating for engaging and interactive elements in learning. Education, especially in English Medium Schools, is often seen as a luxury, highlighting the need to align teaching techniques and assessments across different school types. The study aims to assist educators in implementing effective teaching methods and learning tools, fostering a growth mindset for continuous improvement in the education sector.

Recommendations:

The study indicates that all participants support play-based teaching for the optimal development of young children's functional literacy skills. Since all primary teachers need to be qualified and have knowledge of early childhood development, ensuring quality education for children involves providing specialized training, supportive resources, and a conducive classroom environment for teachers that fulfil modern day technological and digital standards.

Recommendations to enhance and promote play-based pedagogy for developing primary-level children's functional literacy skills in Bangladesh include:

- Improve the national curriculum through existing media platforms. Authorized bodies overseeing the centralized education system can ensure that all schools are registered with IPEMIS to enhance national primary education coverage and meet basic standards.

- Conduct further research on play-based learning through in-depth qualitative studies in various schools, including private English and Bangla Medium Schools, faith-based schools, and non-formal schools.

- Direct research efforts to understand the support teachers need for successful professional development. Evaluate the effectiveness of Professional Development Trainings and identify ways to improve them. Additionally, assess the effectiveness of teaching-learning materials used in play-based learning.

- Establish a separate Teacher Regulation Agency to provide a Teacher Reference Number (TRN) for uniquely identifying qualified teachers in the education sector.

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APPENDIX-A: Data Collection Instrument (Research Tool)

<u>Interview Guideline</u>

1. What are your views on play based learning approach and the integration of pedagogical practices with the curriculum of Grade 1 -3 children?

2. What is the current scenario of pedagogical practices of classrooms in the English medium schools? What new progressive approaches and materials do the teachers use in their classroom?

3. Have you received any training on play-based pedagogy or another similar approach? What is your perception of the effectiveness of the training?

4. How do the children in your classroom respond when they are provided with play materials or taught through play related to their development?

5. How is the assessment procedure in your classroom designed and implemented to ensure the optimum level of learning of the students?

6. What are your views on the addition of a supportive environment (related to pedagogy) to enhance optimum development? Please elaborate with reference to your class.

7. What are the challenges to teaching children through play-based pedagogy? Please describe your experience.

8. How can teachers be guided in an even better way by the school to implement the learned approaches? Any suggestions to make the existing curriculum of primary grades 1-3 more play-based focus?

APPENDIX-B: Consent Letter for Participants

<u>**Letter of Informed Consent**</u>

Dear Participant,

I am Uzma Ahmed, an MSc. student in Early Childhood Development (ECD) at BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BIED) of BRAC University. The following research is a part of my final dissertation course which will be submitted to my thesis committee for completing this course and obtaining a degree.

You have been chosen as a participant in this study and before we proceed it is important that you understand why the research is being done and the methodology involved. Please read the following information carefully and if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information, please feel free to revert to me.

- **Title of the Research**: Perception of Teachers on Play-Based Learning as Effective Pedagogical Tool in Early-Primary Grade.

- **Research Objectives**: This study aims to identify and assess any differences in classroom practices during reciprocal interaction that takes place between the teachers and students in English medium schools in Dhaka. The key agenda being "What is the understanding of English Medium school teachers of early primary grades (1-3) about play-pedagogy for optimum development of children (aged 6 to 8 years) within the sphere of formal education?"

- **Expectations from you**: If you agree to participate, you are encouraged to be authentic and freely answer what you feel about each topic of discussion. As per my research objectives, I will ask you some open-ended questions from a predetermined semi-structured questionnaire. This questionnaire will be shared with you along with an interview link that we will preschedule based on your convenience. The discussion/interview will be conducted over an audio/video call for a duration between 30 to 45 minutes. Furthermore, if you feel uncomfortable you need not answer any questions or discuss anything you do not want to talk about.

- **Risks**: The study contains minimal risk; your participation will not cause any difficulty or problems in your personal and professional career. You may stop participating in the study at any time.

- **Consent for audio recording**: I would like to audio record our discussions over a digital recorder or mobile phone to further decode and transcribe.

- **Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality**: All information collected will remain strictly confidential. If you want to know further about the research, please contact me. I will be delighted to answer your queries.

<u>**APPROVAL:**</u>

"I have read, and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study."

Participant Signature: _____

Participant Name: _____

Designation: _____

Name of School: _____

Address: _____

Contact Details: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Researcher Name: <u>*Uzma Ahmed*</u>_____

Student of MSc in ECD, BRAC Institute of Educational Development (IED), BRACU

Date: _____

APPENDIX-C: Data Sample

Interview Transcript

1. Play based techniques in Pedagogical learning is a highly effective means of diversifying the teaching methods for the teacher. It can be linked with the weekly curriculum plan, so that pupils can understand the idea behind a topic outside of the textbook.

2. Pedagogical practices are still at nascent stages in the classroom, but they are slowly being incorporated, especially in the sciences and math, and it is showing signs of better pupil engagement. Teachers are using more visual tools, like maps, globes, flowcharts, diagrams, abacus, models as well as competitive games to engage pupils to the topic of discussion.

3. I have not received any training. But I have received detailed weekly work plans from my supervisor and methods to discuss the topic with the students. The weekly topic was thoroughly addressed, but not in the same way every day. It kept the topic interesting for the pupils, while ensuring that the subject matter was thoroughly and vigorously explained.

4. My perception is that pupils looked forward to the days when non-textbook activities were incorporated while at the same time, they applied the theories unknowingly.

5. The main form of assessment for primary school students was the weekly classroom markings. Often, the pupils did not even know that they were participating in marked classwork. They did not have any marked timely or yearly exams. it was believed that it added undue stress and pressure on the young minds. At the end of the term, the weekly grades were averaged to give Parents an idea of the progress of their child.

6. The idea behind having a supportive environment is to do something meaningful with the course content. Relentless attention to the growth of every child was the underlying message for all teachers at the school. In my experience in the classroom, I always had a senior member of staff overlook my markings and approach to active teaching and merging fun-based learning while maintaining discipline in the classroom. The idea was

that we not only challenge children who are highly capable to keep them motivated, but also support children who faced difficulties grasping the concept while maintaining overall group performance. A supportive environment was a core concept for the school, and it was encouraged to seek help from other members of staff whenever faced with a setback.

7. One of the challenges of play-based learning was to allow time for students to think and prepare for participation in a non-stressful manner. It is also difficult to give feedback on student learning based on play.

8. Having regular training sessions, routine checks with supervisors, and adjusting the curriculum to correct mistakes is the best approach going forward. Children thrive on consistency and routine and teachers need to ensure that they maintain this in the classroom.