

EXPLORING GOVERNMENT PRE-PRIMARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ABOUT PLAY PEDAGOGY FOR PRE-PRIMARY

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

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Brac University
January, 2024

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing 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 referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Exploring Government Pre-Primary Teachers' Perception about Play Pedagogy for Pre-primary

Student name: Sharmin Islam

1. Source of population: Pre-primary teachers (5+) from Government primary schools in Dhaka and Narayanganj city

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 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 be required (yes or no)

- a) from study participants- yes
- b) from parents or guardian - yes
- c) Will precautions be taken to protect 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

This thesis investigates pre-primary teachers' perception about play pedagogy in pre-primary schools in Bangladesh, with an emphasis on classroom practices and helping and challenging factors to implement play pedagogy in the classroom using qualitative analysis of interviews with pre-primary teachers. The findings show that teachers firmly believe that play pedagogy is the most suitable teaching method for pre-primary children, emphasizing the importance of joyful learning experiences through activities like songs, dance, and drama. The findings of this study indicate that teachers' understanding of play is limited to the utilization of teaching materials in classroom activities. The interviews also show less scope for child-centric play rather teachers use teacher-centric play examples. However, obstacles such as insufficient professional development, limited classroom space, a large number of students, etc. hinder the full adoption of play-based teaching. Furthermore, while teachers recognize the value of play-based pedagogy training, there is a considerable disparity in the quantity of formal training received, emphasizing the necessity for complete professional development programs. Despite these difficulties, teachers showcase a strong dedication to overcoming obstacles and using effective techniques to solve issues such as managing big class sizes and engaging parents in play-based learning concepts. Overall, this thesis emphasizes the need to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of play pedagogy through intensive participatory training and support for play-based pedagogy in Bangladesh's early childhood education system.

Keywords: Play-based pedagogy, Teachers' perception, Teachers' understanding.

Dedication

I want to be dedicated to my beloved parents and supportive husband, whose unconditional love, encouragement, and unwavering belief in my abilities have always been the driving force behind every achievement in my academic journey.

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I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisor, Areefa Zafar, a faculty member, BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University for her guidance, support and valuable and insightful input over the duration of this research study. I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to work under her guidance, and I am enormously grateful for her contributions to this work.

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Chapter I: Introduction & Background

Introduction

Play constitutes a crucial and valuable experience for children. Play can be viewed along a spectrum, including free play, guided play, games, playful instruction, and direct instructions (Zosh et al., 2018). A significant conversation within early childhood education revolves around the significance of play in the early years, particularly within preschool settings. Within these settings, children are afforded the opportunity to participate in play, fostering the enhancement of social, language, and cognitive abilities through interactions with their peers (Roden & Szabo, 2017). In the early childhood education, there are different intriguing topics, play-based learning or play pedagogy is one of them (Walther, 2019). Playful learning involves active and engaging thinking that is meaningful, social, and includes learning through repetition. This approach enhances learning effectively (Zosh et al., 2018).

Several studies found that early learning functions as the developing architecture of the brain (Blakemore & Frith, 2005). Specifically, the initial years of life hold great significance as crucial development takes place across all domains (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Unfortunately, children in developing countries are vulnerable to various hazards, including poverty, malnutrition, inadequate health, and unhealthy home environments (Nath and Sylva, 2018). Being a developing country, considering all these benefits the position of early childhood education is increasing day by day in Bangladesh. As an essential component of Bangladesh educational system, pre-primary education has gained more respect and significance. While Bangladesh has made notable progress in various education domains, it has placed significant emphasis on Pre-Primary Schools particularly focusing on playful learning (Ranjan et al, 2014). According to the pre-primary curriculum (2011), National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), the main focus of pre-primary education is the

development of the children as well as to prepare the children for school. It also mentioned that, pre-primary education develops a strong foundation for physical, mental, intellectual, linguistic and social development for children. Pre-primary education stands as a noteworthy initiative undertaken by the Bangladesh government through the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE). This initiative is pivotal in fostering the comprehensive development of young children. According to the National Education Policy 2010, the significance of beginning pre-primary education as a phase of preparation for children entering primary education. It also states that, pre-primary education is the preparatory stage that ensures children's readiness for primary education while promoting their comprehensive development.

Teachers' perspectives on the utilization of play-based methods are influenced by their understanding, awareness, and interpretation of the ways in which such approaches contribute to children's educational development (Puteh & Ali, 2013). Teachers' viewpoints, encounters, and convictions regarding play-based learning as a fundamental aspect in the realm of early childhood education, holding the significance and applicability for various policy entities. This includes national policy influencers, educators, early childhood education practitioners, parents, and, notably the children themselves (Moan, Hjetland & Wollscheid, 2019).

In Bangladesh, most of the teachers' state play-based learning as "joyful learning" and "learning through play". It includes song, dance, drama etc. (Rashid & Jahan, 2021). Another study in Bangladesh found that, the word "play" evokes thoughts among teachers related to children's activities, playgrounds, and primarily the joy children derive from playing. Regarding the concept of play, a majority of teachers mentioned it as 'activity of the children' (Tuba, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, considerable attention has been given to the incorporation of play in the classroom. However, a question has been raised regarding the choice between implementing a playful curriculum and a traditional academic curriculum (Nicolopoulou, 2010, and Almon, 2003). According to Warner (2008) a huge number of practitioners and parents don't see the dynamic relation between a teaching-learning and play. One study conducted in Bangladesh states that teachers are not conscious about the importance of the role of play in early year's educational setting (Rahman et al, 2020). In the National Education policy (2010), the Bangladeshi government prioritizes pre-primary education for children aged five and above. Furthermore, there are plans to gradually incorporate 4-year-old children into pre-primary school. In pursuit of this purpose, the Bangladesh government has launched a pilot initiative to implement the 4+ curriculum in 3214 GPS schools. As of 2023, a two-year pre-primary curriculum has been piloted, beginning at the age of four. Teachers can motivate students to achieve play a pivotal role in classroom management. To attain this objective, teachers should enhance aspects of teaching, including instructional methods and their own attitudes (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008). Children have a natural tendency to mimic adults, underscoring the significance of adults engaging in lively and creative playful learning. This demonstration by adults, combined with children's inherent curiosity, forms the foundational basis for play (Edwards, 2017). In Bangladesh, there were 1,165,402 children enrolled in pre-primary education at government primary schools (GPS). There were 12,248 separate classrooms set aside for pre-primary schools to accommodate these children (APSC report, 2016). This depicts that a huge number of children enroll in the pre-primary education in the government system. So, it is important to address right pedagogy for this huge number of children. But according to the UNICEF assessment report (2016), teachers do not follow the specified class schedule, and there is a considerable lack of resources and materials in the

classroom. Consequently, children are frequently denied access to these resources. Despite receiving well-organized and high-quality pre-primary education training, some teachers fail to put their gained teaching abilities into practice (Das, Akter, & Chowdhury, 2021). In many instances, the overall school and classroom environments were not conducive to a child-friendly atmosphere. The school and classroom surroundings are not constructed with children's needs in mind, and many classrooms are not properly decorated with charts, photos, and children's artwork (APSC, 2017). As a result, pre-primary education is still relied on the traditional teaching approaches. Teachers often fail to actively engage children and frequently conduct the classes without adequate materials, limiting children's ability to learn. As a result, children do not actively participate in lessons and instead receive instruction from teachers without being encouraged to engage (CAMPE, 2013). According to the research findings conducted in Bangladesh to explore play-based pedagogy in pre-primary classroom it is found that almost all the teachers responded positively while providing their perception about play-based pedagogy, but their perception regarding play-based learning or pedagogy seemed to be abstruse in terms of the way they distinct play, the idea of applying play in their teaching-learning practices and their role in conducting play (Rashid & Jahan, 2021).

Purpose of the study

From the introduction, we have seen the importance of play pedagogy for the children of early years and teachers' perceptions in this regard are very crucial as their perceptions lead practices in the classroom. From the statement of the problem, we have seen that in Bangladesh, despite getting high-quality training, teachers cannot practice play pedagogy in pre-primary for various reasons.

It is crucial to investigate pre-primary teachers' perceptions and beliefs about play pedagogy as well as the helping and challenging factors of using play pedagogy in classroom practices

with pre-primary children in our country context. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to explore government pre-primary teachers' perception about play Pedagogy for pre-primary children.

Significance of the study

The significance of play has been extensively researched, with numerous scholars contributing valuable theories, ideas, and opinions on play and play-based learning or play-based pedagogy. Madray and Catalano's (2010) research suggests that play contributes to the improvement of children's physical, social, moral, creative, and motor skills. If the teacher can provide such learning environment. According to Mabry and Fucigna (2009), playful classrooms environments are crucial for learning, as children playing together helps them grow in independence, self-control, understanding symbols, confidence, communication, problem-solving, and awareness of cultural rules and social behavior. According to Howard, Jenvey, and Hill (2006) and Russ and Schafer (2006), the integration of play and learning is emphasized for children, particularly in their early year. Teachers' perspectives on play-based learning are evident in their classrooms, enabling children to develop crucial social, emotional, physical, and motor skills (Onditi, Otengah & Odongo, 2018).

Nahar Chowdhary and Corine Rivalland (2011) conducted research to explore the connection between play and pedagogy within the pre-primary educational setting of Bangladesh. The researchers noted that children actively and interactively engage in teaching-learning activities through enjoyable play experiences, such as working with learning tools, physical exercises, singing, acting, rhyming, games, outdoor play, and drawing. Another research findings shows that, most of the teachers in Bangladesh believe that playing is not required for child development (Tuba, 2021)

The government of Bangladesh has expanded pre-primary education from one year to two years, commencing at the age of 4. It is crucial that both the curriculum and teaching practices align with a play-based approach. The curriculum for 4+ is designed with a focus on play. Teachers have undergone training specific to the 4+ curriculum. If the perception of the teachers is not aligned with the play-pedagogy, the problem will remain the same in implementing play-pedagogy at the practice level. We have seen from the previous findings, both global and Bangladeshi context give importance on the perceptions of the teachers. This study would be another literature that would be helpful for educators, policymakers and implementers to understand what teachers perceive about play pedagogy. It is expected that this evident based study gives more insights to the policymakers, educators and implementers how play pedagogy can be brought at the practice level.

Research Questions

1. What are pre-primary teachers' understanding and beliefs regarding play-based pedagogy for pre-primary?
2. What are the practices pre-primary teachers do for pre-primary children in the pre-primary classroom?
3. What are the helping and challenging factors for pre-primary teachers to practice play pedagogy in their classrooms?

Operational Definition

Play pedagogy: Play pedagogy refers as a comprehensive strategy to promoting the well-being and development of young children in their early years (Eberle, 2014; Christie & Roskos, 2015).

Teacher's perception: Teachers' perceptions refer to the cognitive and affective understanding, beliefs, and attitudes that teachers hold regarding play-based pedagogy. According to Woolfolk (2019), teachers' perceptions play a significant role in shaping their instructional practices.

Teachers' beliefs: According to Kader (2012) "teachers' beliefs" refer to a collection of ideas that originate from the teacher's psychological and cognitive framework and serve as a primary influence in directing their instructional actions.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Play pedagogy is a dynamic and evolving approach to early childhood education that has gained attention in recent years. Since the educators and practitioners worldwide recognize the pivotal role of early childhood education in forming a foundation for lifelong learning, understanding teachers' perceptions towards play pedagogy becomes crucial. This literature review will focus on teaches perception towards play pedagogy with pre-primary children globally and in Bangladesh, pre-primary education system in Bangladesh, play, and play pedagogy and importance of play pedagogy for the pre-primary children.

Teachers' perception on play pedagogy: According to Pyle, Prioletta, & Poliszczuk (2018), teachers' views on how play influences learning within the classroom will shape their utilization of play-based approaches. They also mentioned that, if a teacher believes that play can enhance and enrich academic learning, they are likely to be more committed to incorporating play into the classroom and employing diverse forms of play to develop various reading and writing skills.

Vogt et al. (2018) conducted a study focusing on the utilization of a playful teaching approach for numeracy in early years' classrooms in Switzerland. The findings of that study indicated that the playful approach was highly enjoyable, effective, and well-suited for children with diverse learning need. Historically in Bangladesh, there were beliefs that play played a crucial role in the lives of growing children (Akter & Chowdhury, 2020). But according to the findings of this study, teachers use play as a teaching strategy, fostering both an enjoyable learning experience and active student engagement. Students actively participate in their lessons, enabling them to better focus during and after play. The incorporation of play is seen as an integral aspect of education, contributing to the creation of a joyful learning environment which facilitates a more accessible, appealing, and memorable understanding of

lessons, ultimately expediting the learning process (Akter & Chowdhury, 2020). Another finding in Bangladesh shows the contradictory findings. The study stated that, the way play-based learning is perceived by teachers in Bangladesh contrasts with the perspectives in Western countries. In Bangladesh, the implementation of play-based learning differs significantly from practices observed in other nations (Chowdhury & Rivalland, 2011). Moreover, there is a viewpoint among some teachers that play and learning are separate concepts, making the incorporation of play-based learning to meet academic objectives challenging and adopting play-based learning might hinder play itself or, more detrimentally, the teaching process (Pyle & Danniels, 2017).

Though from the findings we have seen that, most of the educators and teachers believe the importance of play and play pedagogy, they cannot practice this strategy due to various factors. According to Sharifah Norhaidah et al. (2009) expressed challenges in incorporating play into the classroom, citing constraints such as time limitations, a shortage of play materials, and the challenge of managing children's behavior. Some teachers also mentioned a lack of creativity, spending excessive time thinking of suitable play activities that align with learning objectives. To cope with time constraints, some preschool teachers prefer more formal approaches, such as the 'chalk and talk' method, as a shortcut in class planning (Ashari & Hushairi, 2018).

We have seen from many findings that, teachers' perspectives play a pivotal role in influencing their instructional methods, classroom dynamics, and overall approach to fostering children's learning experiences. Understanding these perceptions is crucial as it provides insights into the alignment or misalignment between the concepts of play-based pedagogy, and practical application in the classroom setting. Exploring teachers' perception gives us a clear picture of where there might be differences between what we learn in theory and what really happens in classrooms. Knowing these differences is crucial to create

targeted plans to bridge the gap. Based on the gaps, necessary changes can be brought in the training as perception leads to practices.

Pre-primary education in Bangladesh: The primary requirement for an improved quality of life lies in education, which is considered a fundamental necessity for all human beings, also recognized as a fundamental right for every child (DPE, 2017; UNESCO, 2008). Global and national evidence strongly indicates that children who participate in Quality Pre-Primary Education experience enhanced prospects for a seamless transition to primary school, resulting in substantial improvements in school retention and reduced dropout rates (DPE, 2012). Educational institutions play a pivotal role in the holistic development of the modern era, and Pre-Primary Schooling serves as the initial phase of the educational journey. While various institutions may contribute to this endeavor, the creation of an equitable society hinges on the presence of a well-functioning educational system (Ray and H. Poonwassie, 2017). Teachers play a fundamental and vital role in the school environment, serving as key drivers for educational progress. It is widely acknowledged that the role of teachers is paramount in the establishment of child-friendly schools, and it is imperative to ensure their preparation, support, and training, making it a top priority (UNICEF, 2009).

In Bangladesh, the National Education policy was published in 2010. According to the policy, it is important to make children prepare before their formal schooling. That's why Pre-primary schooling is important. Keeping in mind in this objective, a one-year schooling must be introduced for 5+ children and later 4+ children will be included. The curriculum for this phase is designed to encompass the following elements:

1. Activities aimed at inspiring children to learn and to go to the school and cultivating their finer senses

2. Grooming them to be tolerant to others and to infuse in them the ideas about discipline necessary for their subsequent formal education.

Pre-primary curriculum is different from the formal schooling. As per the pre-primary education curriculum in Bangladesh, children acquire knowledge by actively engaging in activities and play; and play is identified as a pleasurable learning encounter (Pre-primary curriculum of Bangladesh, 2011). Playful activities in schools not only add vibrancy but also offer numerous benefits to children. They serve as a key avenue for knowledge acquisition and creativity, facilitating exploration of the world. Moreover, playing with peers enhances social skills, teaching children empathy, cooperation, and the ability to follow instructions attentively (Walsh, 2010). Play performances as a magnet for ensuring regular attendance, as young children eagerly attend school with the expectation of enjoying playful interactions with their peers and teachers (Cambridge Education, 2016).

For the improvement of the pre-primary education, the Ministry of Education has taken the recent initiative of appointing two additional teachers for every government primary school. One is an assistant teacher and a pre-primary teacher. The main objective of this recruitment is to have competent, innovative, dedicated, and empathetic teachers in the classroom who can perform various roles and tasks effectively, ultimately serving as a crucial element for improving the quality of primary education (DPE 2017, p. 30).

According to the Pre-primary Teacher's Training Manual in 2013, The pre-primary curriculum in Bangladesh incorporates two categories of play. The first type is non-instructional play followed by instructional play. Among these, there are approximately 20 specific instructional plays, where teacher provides necessary guidance and instructions to the children to facilitate the play. In contrast, non-instructional play allows children to engage in free and independent play, with the teacher serving a facilitative role. Both types of play can

take place indoors or outdoors. This play holds great importance for the learning and development of pre-primary children.

Understanding play and it's important: There is no specific and unique definition of play in educational settings. Play can be defined in various ways according to the culture and context. Many researchers and scholars have given their ideologies about play. Wilson (2009) proposed that play can be defined as a collection of voluntary, self-directed, and fundamentally intrinsic behaviors. Schwartz (2008) and Samuelson & Carlsson (2008) argue that, from their perspective, there is no distinct separation between play and work in the lives of children. According to them, both play and work are integral components of children's lives, and all children engage in these activities. Numerous advantages are associated with children's play. Play offers children the chance to explore and understand the world around them through engaging with classmates or peers of the same age that helps to enable children to learn social interaction, including how to relate to and show empathy toward others (Walsh, 2010).

Numerous research findings emphasize the significance of play as a crucial pedagogy in early childhood education. Scholars and theorists have contributed valuable insights on the correlation between play and learning. Play, being a self-initiated and voluntary pursuit, enhances a child's imagination, allowing them to explore numerous possibilities and bolster their creativity. Through collaborative play, children not only expand their social skills but also contribute to the development of academic abilities, including reading, writing, and mathematics (Hemphill, 2006). Children enhance their comprehension of English, language, and arts through imaginative play (Elkind, 2008). Moreover, pre-school children acquire vital social skills through play such as cooperation, competition, self-respect, mutual respect, and the formation of friendships (Elkind,2008). Furthermore, as stated in the 2013 NCTB

(National Curriculum and Textbook Board), guided and free play activities are crucial for promoting the growth and development of pre-primary children.

Play pedagogy and importance of it for pre-primary children: The utilization of a play-based approach in teaching and learning activities has a significant advantage, acknowledged for its effectiveness. A meta-analysis study on play-based pedagogy in preschool by Zakiah and Kamis (2017), identified four key components. These include: i) the appropriateness of resources and educational materials, ii) the stimulation of behavior, iii) the incorporation of enthusiasm, creativity, and motivation and, iv) the planning and execution of educational activities. The researchers suggested that teachers, particularly in pre-school settings, could utilize these components to implement play-based pedagogy activities.

Numerous research studies emphasize the importance of play as a crucial pedagogy in early childhood education. Scholars and theorists have provided valuable insights into the relationship between play and learning. Nor and Abdullah (2009) support the substantial impact of play-based activities on aiding children's development. These activities contribute not only to the enhancement of skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic but also play a crucial role in shaping children's personality and behavior. It also mentioned that, providing children with opportunities for play enables them to integrate experiences, knowledge, and a comprehension of prior learning, fostering the creation of new concepts in their educational journey. The Australian Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) places a significant emphasis on play-based pedagogy, defining it as a learning context wherein children actively engage with people, objects, and representations to organize and comprehend their social worlds. According to Weston (2000) and Saracho (2010), the inception of the first kindergarten by Froebel in 1839 marked the introduction of play as a method in the educational process. Within the classroom, various materials and activities were employed to stimulate ideas and facilitate comprehension (Platz & Arellano, 2011).

Engaging children in play-based activities facilitated by adults, provides a valuable opportunity for fostering the learning and developmental processes (Broadhead, 2004).

Nahar Chowdhary and Corine Rivalland (2011) conducted a study on the role of play as pedagogy within the Bangladeshi context. The research revealed that play is acknowledged as an integral component of pedagogy in the operational framework for pre-primary education established in 2008. Also, according to the pre-primary curriculum (2011), Bangladesh recognizes play as a crucial tool for accelerating the learning and development of young children.

The proficiency of teachers engaged in early childhood education in a playful manner is influenced by factors such as their prior educational background and their interactions during training. Positive outcomes for children are not solely dependent on their educators' education but also on various other contributing factors (Early et al., 2007). Primary school teachers who have undergone early childhood teacher training demonstrate enhanced classroom practices (UNESCO, 2007). Training does change the performances of the teachers in the teaching-learning process in the classroom (Das, Akter, & Chowdhury, 2021). Also, another finding in Bangladesh reveal that, most of the teachers in our country are aware about play-based learning and understand what it is, but still they are believe that playing is not required for development and play has no impact on physical development (Tuba, 2021). The implementation of a learning-through-play approach faces challenges due to various constraints encountered by teachers. These challenges include difficulties in managing preschoolers in the classroom, time limitations, a shortage of play materials, a lack of creativity and ideas, and the absence of a systematic approach to implementing learning through play (Ashari & Hushairi, 2018).

Pedagogical play entails incorporating play into early childhood education as a means to enhance the learning experiences of young children (Wood, 2010). A relevant study suggests that the roles of teachers and children in play are interrelated and mutually dependent. The more teachers guide or lead the play activity directly, there will be the less opportunities for children to actively participate (Hyvonen, 2011). The main responsibility of a teacher is to ensure that students acquire knowledge, and they have the authority to manage their classes. However, it is at the discretion of the teachers to determine their readiness to execute this responsibility. Teachers shouldn't assume that students will remain seated throughout the day and participate in every class (Tuba, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to explore teachers' perception regarding play-based pedagogy in pre-primary education.

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Approach and Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach of research design to explore pre-primary teachers' perceptions towards play pedagogy, and the helping and challenging factors to use play pedagogy with pre-primary children in pre-primary classroom. To explore the basic phenomena, the use of qualitative research becomes essential, as Creswell (2012) claims that qualitative research is the best way to investigate the issue in order to acquire an in-depth understanding of a central phenomenon. According to L.R. Gay (2012), qualitative research involves gathering, examining, and understanding extensive narrative and visual data, which are nonnumerical in nature. The objective is to gain a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon or subject of interest.

Research Site

The study conducted in pre-primary educational settings in government primary schools in Dhaka and Narayanganj city.

Research Participants

The participants of the study were the pre-primary teachers of pre-primary class from selected government primary schools.

Sampling Procedure/Participants Selection Procedure

For this study, five government primary schools were purposively selected in urban and semi-urban areas within Dhaka and Narayanganj cities. One pre-primary teacher from each school had been selected. The researcher did not have any choice in selecting the teachers as they are already working in the government primary schools as pre-primary teachers.

Data Collection Tool

This study focuses on three different phenomena or research question. An interview is a widely used method for posing open-ended, general questions to participants, collecting data, and documenting their responses (Creswell, 2012, p. 217). According to Cohen et al. (2013), In-depth interviews offer increased flexibility in organizing questions and enable participants to articulate their own experiences. A pilot interview guide will be used, and it will be reviewed and developed to ensure accuracy and effectiveness of the guideline.

Data Collection Method and Procedure

The data collection procedure was included In-depth/semi-structured interview guidelines to explore pre-primary teachers' perceptions towards play-based pedagogy. An interview is a widely used method for posing open-ended, general questions to participants, collecting data, and documenting their responses (Creswell, 2012, p. 217). This approach is classified as semi-structured because the general questions or the investigation topics were predetermined, yet the questions elicited comprehensive and detailed responses from the teachers. According to Cohen et al. (2013), semi-structured interviews offer increased flexibility in organizing questions and enable participants to articulate their own experiences. A pilot interview guideline was used with one pre-primary teacher. The interview was recorded with the consent of the participants. At first, the researcher-built rapport with the participants. Then the formal in-depth interview guideline was followed. Researcher gave thank the participants after the interview. The duration of the IDI was about 40-60 minutes.

Data Management and Analysis

Content analysis was followed for data analysis. A method for conducting qualitative analysis involves three recurring steps: initially understanding the data and identifying potential themes through reading and note-taking, then investigating deeply into the data to create

comprehensive descriptions of the setting, participants, and activities, and finally, categorizing and coding data fragments and organizing them into themes (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). In this study qualitative data analysis process was used to the data acquired through in-depth/ semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis approach was used for the data analysis method. The recorded interview data was transcribed at first to ensure accuracy and clarity, transforming spoken words into written text. This also included reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain a detailed understanding of the nuances and themes present in the responses. After familiarization with the data, the process of coding was used to determine the data's initial themes and patterns. All the data were methodically segmented and coded to represent relevant concepts or ideas. Categorized code helped to develop the themes. Finally, the broader themes were developed by the categorized data.

Validity & Reliability

Validity and reliability are terms to assess the quality of research, indicate how well a method or technique measures something (Middleton, 2020). To ensure the validity and reliability, experts from BRAC Institute of Educational Development were reviewed the in-depth-interview guideline before the data collection. Following their approval, the questionnaires were revised to incorporate the feedback. Additionally, piloting of the data collection tools was conducted to ensure validity, reliability and consistency. Post-piloting, certain adjustments were necessary and some changes in the questionnaires were brought accordingly.

Ethical Issues

The study followed ethical considerations from the guidelines (no physical, social, or psychological risk, confidentiality maintained, consent taken from the participants, etc.) of the World Health Organization and BRAC University's Ethical Review Committee.

According to Kumar (2005), when we speak to ethical issues in this research setting, it means that all acts were carried out impartially and every result was reached to the best of the researcher's ability, free of any personal agenda or vested interests. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview to participants before taking the interview. Participation was voluntary, and there was no pressure or force applied by the researcher. Pre-primary teachers were be approached with a consent letter for the interview. Verbal consent was taken from the participant for recording the conversation. The researcher ensured the participants that the real name and identity will not be elicited and participants were treated respectfully. During the data collection and data analysis process, no data was altered.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the teacher's unwillingness, two in-depth-interviews with pre-primary teachers had to conducted over the phone.

Chapter IV

Results/Findings & Discussion

This chapter presents the findings and discussions that appeared from the data collected from the in-depth-interviews with the pre-primary teachers from government primary schools on their perceptions regarding play-based pedagogy for pre-primary. The findings were formed in thematic approaches identifying and analyzing various themes and sub-themes. The demographic profiles of the participants are presented at the beginning of this chapter. There are three main themes and several sub themes underneath, categorized based on the research questions of the study.

Results

The study revealed findings based on three in-depth interviews with five pre-primary teachers. The study focuses on three research questions: pre-primary teachers' understanding and beliefs regarding play-based pedagogy for pre-primary, how do they practices play pedagogy pre- in the pre-primary classroom and the helping and challenging factors for pre-primary teachers to practice play pedagogy in their classrooms. Thematic analysis was used to uncover themes based on the issues that emerged during the study. In the following sections, the results are presented under different thematic headings.

Demographic Information

A total of five (N=5) in-depth interviews were carried out to learn more about the perspectives of pre-primary teachers regarding play-based pedagogy. All the teachers are from Government primary schools. Two schools are from Dhaka city and three schools are from Narayanganj city to focus on urban and semi-urban areas. The teachers' educational backgrounds ranged widely including Higher Secondary School Certificate to Master's

degrees, and a variety of teaching experiences from one year to nine years. Two teachers out of five got pre-primary training and one teacher received DPED training. The rest of the three teachers didn't receive any kind of training yet. The interviews explored various dimensions, such as training experiences, play pedagogy, classroom management strategies, reflections on the effectiveness of play-based learning methods and challenging and motivating factors to implement play pedagogy in the classroom. The collected data offers nuanced insights into the complex realm of pre-primary education, shedding light on how teachers with diverse backgrounds perceive and implement play-based pedagogy in their classroom practices.

Teacher's knowledge about play-pedagogy

From the in-depth-interview, it is found that almost all the teachers could provide insights about play-based pedagogy and shared why play is important for pre-primary children. All the pre-primary teachers emphasize that the goal of the pre-primary education is to make children feel happy and comfortable when they transition into the formal schooling. Pre-primary stage is to prepare the children for formal schooling. Almost all the teachers express a preference for teaching through laughter and play for pre-primary children. Most of the teachers emphasized expressions like "joyful learning" and "engaging in learning through play, songs, dance, and drama etc."

One of the teachers admits that formal play-pedagogy is unfamiliar to her, but she has gained an understanding of it through interacting with children in everyday situations. The teacher emphasizes that children naturally learn through play, which is aligned with the principles of play-based learning. While providing them a specific activity from Teachers' Guide and ask how they interpret the activity in terms of play, most of the teachers emphasized on using play materials in the activity. One of the teachers stated that,

“While teaching small and big concepts to the children, the focus is on play-based learning. I use readily available items like dolls or classroom materials or sometimes I collect some materials and ask them which one is big or which one is small. Some teachers provide example with the children for instance see he is big or tall and he/she is small/short. But I don’t do that. Children could be upset or felt shy in this regard” (IDI#1, 19.11.2023)

All the teachers admit that play is important for learning as well as to develop children’s value and skills. The results of play-based learning include reading, writing, attention, bonding with teachers and peer groups, socializing skills, creativity, empathy, cognitive skills, coping mechanism and cultural understanding. The teachers notes that play is an integral part of children's overall development.

One teacher stated that, *“play helps to develop innovation skills of children and it’s important for engaging children into the activity. For instance, If I write $1+1= 2$ and ask children to copy in their note, they will lose their attention. Rather I could provide two balls to one child and ask other children to keep another 2 balls with them. This would be helpful for them and also grew attention and helps to stay focused.” (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)*

Preferred teaching methods for pre-primary

The findings from the interview indicates that almost all the teachers agree that learning through play is the most effective teaching strategy for pre-primary children. Few of the teachers also mentioned activity-based learning. Teachers emphasize the necessity of fostering a cheerful and laughter-filled learning atmosphere while avoiding bullying and harsh tactics. Practical activities, plays, and real-life examples are seen to be beneficial in teaching pre-primary children because they make the learning process more interesting and relevant to their daily lives. Furthermore, adding rhymes, poetry, and songs within the

curriculum is emphasized as a useful strategy to retaining children's attention and participation in the learning process.

One teacher stated, *“children at this age learn best through play, activity and real-life example. through practical. If I hold them and tell them to write, then they don't pay attention to it, they don't feel happy about it. If you start something through play and fun, you will get to know them in a real way. I wrote something on the board and they learned that it is not the proper way to teach. Pre-primary is all about play. In classroom they have four corners. Children are always roaming around the imagination corner.”* (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

Teachers' belief about play-pedagogy

All the teachers said that they believe that play is essential for developing children before primary school. All of them are agreed that traditional teaching approaches shouldn't be the only ones used with children of this age due to limited attention span of the young children. They believe that play helps the children to stay focused. Play is said to be essential for a child's holistic development, which encompasses social skills, writing, sharing, and education. They believe that joyful play should be the first step towards education, giving young children a stress-free and interesting learning environment.

One participant stated, *“If I say by myself that leaves are lighter than pen, and pen is heavier, they will not understand. If I allow them to collect the leaves from the school garden and provide opportunity for hands on activity, they will understand by themselves. It actually helps a child's development.”* (IDI#2, 22.11.2023)

Almost all the teachers mentioned the necessity of incorporating play activity into the curriculum. They view play as more than just a break, but as a valuable educational tool, claiming that activities like rhyming songs, short stories, and play activities are critical components of the learning process. One teacher mentioned that, *“Children at this age (pre-*

primary children) don't want to sit with books or kept reading. But our curriculum has some content to teach. If I teach them through fun and joy, they will learn very quickly." (IDI#1, 19.11.2023)

Almost all the teachers expressed that children of this age are not appropriate for traditional learning methods. They emphasize that learning through play. One of the teachers mentioned that, *"the key factor is that children love to play when they are young, they don't want to sit with books all day, don't listen to their teacher continuously or learn from books. But when they learn through play and joy, they learn very attentively."* (IDI#5, 01.12.2023)

Teachers' perception about teachers training

All the teachers emphasized the importance on the need of training, particularly in terms of play-based pedagogy for pre-primary teaching. They believe that such training would have been extremely beneficial in the initial stages of teaching, providing systematic advice and improving their skills. One teacher mentioned, *"When I joined as a fresher, I didn't know how to take the classes or conduct play activity. We understood only after receiving the training. Any play-based training would also be very beneficial. And now the new curriculum is coming and there will be training on it. Otherwise, it will be difficult for us to understand and incorporate accordingly."* (IDI#1, 19.11.2023)

One of the teachers who didn't receive any training yet emphasizes the challenges of learning on the job without formal training. She stated that, *"It took eleven months to understand how the play activities should be conducted with the children through my experiences. If I had received training in the initial two months, the experience would have been much smoother. Sometimes I've gleaned insights from the Teachers' Guide but I believe this is not enough."* (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

They also emphasized that training is more than just teaching knowledge. It is also about motivation. They feel that trainers play an important role in inspiring and encouraging teachers, especially teaching the patience essential for pre-primary instruction.

Some of the teachers identified some issues in pre-primary education, such as classroom noise, class size and the need for specific tactics to properly engage and manage young children. They argue that teachers should be knowledgeable about the distinctive dynamics of pre-primary schools. One teacher mentioned that, *“sometimes I used to see clips on Facebook or YouTube of what a pre-primary class should be like when I was new. Trainers know how much noise there is in a pre-primary class. So, they are aware how to maintain children. Pre-primary teaching requires lots of patience. In training, maybe they could motivate us how to maintain patience. Because I think, trainers not only teach but also motivate.”* (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

Some of the teacher mentioned the importance of subject based training to develop themselves as well as to implement play pedagogy properly in classroom. One of the teachers stated, *“Subject wise training will also be very useful. When I go to take a class, sometimes I feel like If I could have learnt more about the specific subject through training. Though I learn a lot of things from ATEOs and Instructors while they visit our school.”* (IDI#1, 19.11.2023)

Implementation of play pedagogy in pre-primary classroom

Interviews with pre-primary teachers demonstrate a diverse understanding of how to incorporate play-based learning in the classroom. All the teachers stated that they actively support play pedagogy, recognizing its potential to improve the educational experience of young children. One teacher mentioned, *“If we talk about the play I did in classroom, we have some toys in our classroom for instance, giraffes, fish, elephants, tigers, lions, etc.*

These toys are given to the children regularly. If I say who got the elephant? And Who got the giraffe? And then ask Tell me which one is fatter? That's how I play and teach them the concept fat and thin. I can't tell them directly which one is fatter and which one is thinner. I have to introduce the game first.” (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

In terms of taking preparation, most of the teachers mentioned that they took preparation before going to the classes. Preparing for play-based learning entails following a set schedule, developing a practical plan for the day's activities, and occasionally incorporating new resources or ideas. The teachers also discuss the importance of their own presentation style, acknowledging the influence of their writing on children's imitation and learning. Some of them are mentioned occasionally changing procedures to fit with external guidelines or to incorporate new components of fun, such as song tune changes. One teacher stated, “*We have to take classes according to the routine we have. I have to prepare for the materials according to the Teachers' Guide. We have some songs in our curriculum. Sometimes I set my own tune so that children can enjoy. Sometimes PTI trainers come to our school for practice teaching, then they do the song differently and I can see children get more fun from that. Then sometimes I change my tune and practice accordingly.” (IDI#1. 19.11.2022)*

The teachers emphasize the need of selecting appropriate play, taking into account the spatial limits of smaller classrooms and choosing activities that can be completed easily while seated. One teacher mentioned that, “*there are some plays, in which everyone has to make a lot of moves which result a little messy. Our classrooms are small compared to the huge number of children. Play activities that can be played sitting down are more useful for instance, Mirror play. Children also like to play such games.” (IDI#1, 19.11.2023)*

They argue for the appropriateness of play activities including imaginative play, for instance mirror play and emphasizing the importance of engaging children through humor and

creativity. The use of materials such as cards, which have vowels, consonants, and associated visuals, is an efficient strategy for reinforcement learning.

Regarding managing the learning process during play activity, most of the teachers use a combination of explanation and active participation to guide the learning process during play activities. They provide students clear directions, assuring comprehension. If a child struggles or becomes disengaged from an activity, teachers step in to offer help and guidance, fostering a more effective and inclusive learning environment. One teacher mentioned, *“Sometimes I play a game with children to make children focused called ‘stand up and sit down’. I don't really do it to teach anything. When they get distracted, this game brings them back to attention.”* (IDI#4, 30.11.2023)

Integration of play activities with content

All the teachers agreed they integrate play with the contents and provide different examples how they do that. One pre-primary teacher mentioned that while teaching letters, she uses letter cards in the play activity. Students are urged to be involved by presenting letter cards, which are then sorted. This participatory approach guarantees that the learning process flows easily into play. Furthermore, when teaching rhymes or poetry, the teacher employs an approach in which students not only memorize but also act and recite the material. Play is further integrated into the learning process through activities such as pairing children based on a number rhyme scheme.

One teacher stated, “When we used to learn rhymes and poems, we used to memorize them. Now what happens is that they have to act and recite rhymes and they learn very easily. If you tell a story and show pictures, you remember it easily.” (IDI# 2, 22.11.2023)

One teacher mentioned about an activity. When explaining concepts like size or weight, the teacher takes a hands-on approach. For example, to demonstrate the difference between light

and heavy, the teacher presents materials of differing weights, allowing students to grasp the concept both visually and physically. Students are then invited to actively participate by bringing their belongings and displaying their knowledge of the subjects. Most of the teachers stated that they modify the activity to promote continual learning and application of new knowledge, creating a dynamic and interactive environment.

Few teachers creatively incorporate plays with learning by utilizing common classroom items. For example, using class chalk, the teacher begins an exercise in which children are challenged to write a small circle. This not only entertains children, but it also acts as a platform for evaluating individual growth and inspiring friendly rivalry. Teacher stated, *“sometimes I put a round mark and then I ask them see if you can write with it or what can be written with it. Some tried to write a letter with it. Some children are little less advanced and some are little more advanced. Some are inspired by the fact that he is writing that. They feel valued.”* (IDI#5, 01.12.2023)

Assessment of play-based learning

Very few teachers expressed that they adopted a holistic approach to evaluating the efficacy of play-based learning, emphasizing social and participatory evaluation. They emphasized the need of attentive observation by actively monitoring children's participation and sociability skills during play activities. The assessment includes assessing understanding through active engagement, with responsive measures implemented for children who face difficulties.

One of the teachers also mentioned that she paid close attention to the participation level of the child, recognizing indicators of distress or discomfort during activities such as slipper riding or material-based games. Their responsibilities include providing advice on appropriate behavior and fostering an overall supportive learning environment. One teacher stated, *“In class, I can assess a child's speaking and comprehension abilities through*

observation. By closely observing, we can identify each child's capabilities, recognizing their strengths and areas where they may need assistance. We make note of the children who excel in particular areas.” (IDI#5,01.12.2023)

However, some of the teachers only mentioned observation as an assessment tool to assess play-based learning. One teacher mentioned, *“I observe children if they participate properly or not. I can understand by seeing their expressions if they understand my instruction or not. Then I repeat my instruction. That’s how I assess themselves.” (IDI#2, 22.11.2023)*

Material conducive for implementing play pedagogy

Almost all the teachers mentioned some materials which are helpful to implement play-pedagogy in pre-primary classroom. Toys like horses, slippers, and balls are known for their ability to entertain children, especially those from lower-income families. One teacher mentioned, *“Toys, horses, free play materials, slippers, colors are very useful. Children enjoy it a lot. Many children are not financially well off. They cannot afford these types of materials at home.” (IDI#1, 19.11.2023)*

Besides that, some teachers mentioned letter and number cards as crucial teaching aids that contribute to engaging and enjoyable learning experiences. Unconventional materials, such as stones and jute sticks, are recognized for their role in breaking down typical assumptions of formal education by providing a practical and hands-on approach to teaching letters and numbers. The layout of classrooms into four corners, with strategically placed playthings, depicts a structured and accessible learning environment.

One teacher stated, *“we have some clay fruits, fish, or paper boats, it is just to recognize an object. But we can use these materials to teach letters or numbers. Also, jute sticks are very useful materials for learning letters and numbers.” (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)*

Enabling factors to implement play pedagogy

Almost all the interviewed pre-primary teachers emphasized on real enthusiasm for the teaching profession, enjoying engaging children through play-based strategies such as dancing, rhyming, and entertaining activities. Their motivation arises from seeing beneficial outcomes, such as better writing and pronunciation skills in children, as well as the intrinsic satisfaction that comes from spending time with pre-primary children, who are affectionate and softer. One teacher expressed a mixed feeling about teaching. She stated, *“My feelings about teaching profession are mixed. I sometimes enjoy it, but sometimes I feel annoyed particularly when children no longer have control. Despite giving instructions, they seem out of control, and the small class size makes it challenging to keep them focused.”* (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

Despite problems such as judgmental behavior, almost all the teachers mentioned that they need training on how to properly address difficult situations. Teachers are driven by a sense of responsibility and a desire to be ideal teachers. Building relationships with children and acknowledging play as an effective strategy is critical for successful play pedagogy in pre-primary classes. Few teachers reveal that, they themselves are also enjoying working with children and they love their profession. One teacher mentioned, *“I really love the teaching profession as I have been with the children for a long time. Sharing knowledge with children not only enriches them but also helps in their enlightenment. This seems to be the main purpose of education. It’s a noble profession because when I give a good education to a child, that child will be enlightened and become a good citizen, saying that my teacher taught me this. It can be seen that we will not live or exist for a long time, but the things I teach to my students will remain in the world”* (IDI#5, 01.12.2023)

Few of the teachers are mentioned some challenges such as frequent disruptions in classes, uncontrollable behavior of the children, teachers recognize the need of training in dealing with such issues. They indicate a desire for training to provide advice and motivation,

highlighting the importance of competent class management. One teacher mentioned, *“one of the main challenges with the children is disruption of the class and complaining about others. If I get the training, I would have the expertise to handle the situation effectively. But I think the key way to handle is to provide constructive feedback while maintaining a constant motivation, assuring them that it's alright, they're doing well, and reinforcing positive behavior.”* (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

Challenging factors to implement play pedagogy

All the pre-primary teachers identified various challenges related with implementing play-based learning in their classrooms. Most of the teachers mentioned that big challenge is managing a large number of children, particularly when dealing with more energetic or slightly active students, which can disturb the learning atmosphere. One teacher stated, *“one big challenge lies in the high number of students and the limited size of the classroom, making it challenging to ensure everyone is easily understood due to the large student population.”* (IDI#2, 22.11.2023)

Another significant difficulty faced by most of the teachers is the lack of time, particularly in assigning enough time for language-related activities and some certain activities, such as instructional play and storytelling. Teachers expressed a preference for longer sessions to accommodate varied learning activities successfully. One teacher mentioned, *“I'm not sure whether I should check every child's paper, but I still do it. It takes a lot of time. If I don't check everyone's paper, the children get sad. I would have known if I got the training. Completing activities, papers checking and handling a huge number of children, these chores is difficult to be done in 25 minutes.”* (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

Also, some teachers mentioned difficulties in bringing children at the initial stages. But according to them, Over the time children adjust in the school environment. One teacher

stated, *“Teaching young children is tough. Even if they're excited and into play, adjusting to school can be hard. It takes a few months, and sometimes they get nervous and cry. Right now, I have children as young as four in a classroom, although formal education usually starts at five. They're used to playing, so being in a class with a teacher is a bit different for them.”* (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

Regarding materials, some of the teachers identified sand and water as a challenging material, due to space limits. Concerns were raised about the possible mess and the need for controlled material management. Teachers emphasized the necessity of establishing a setting that provides for a wide range of sensory experiences while acknowledging the practical limitations of their physical surroundings. Some teachers also mentioned small classroom size as a challenge because play requires more space with the huge number of students. One of the respondents stated, *“Handling materials such as sand and water is difficult. These things are tiny and prone to splashing, causing a mess in the room, especially when space is limited. This gets very difficult when engaging 50 children together.”* (IDI#1, 19.11.2023)

Most of the teachers mentioned that they didn't face any cultural challenges. A few teachers mentioned some words are different in their area than the formal words. So, they have to translate those words into local languages to make students understand. In terms of engaging parents, most of the teachers noted initial difficulty in engaging parents with the concept of play-based learning. Some parents first questioned the educational value of play in comparison to more traditional techniques. Parents gradually grew more supportive as teachers effectively explained the benefits and consequences of play-based learning. One teacher stated, *“Initially, I faced many challenges since parents thought we were simply playing rather than teaching. I stated that after building familiarity, we switched from rote learning to a more interactive, play-based method. This created some initial dissatisfaction*

However, their perspective has altered over time, and they now offer support rather than criticism.” (IDI#2, 22.11.2023)

One teacher mentioned, *“Parents are frequently preoccupied with work, sending their children to school with little opportunity to assess their activities. Occasionally, two guardians may inquire about their child's status. This position gives me a lot of leeway in organizing the classroom.” (IDI#5, 01.11.2023)*

How to overcome the challenges

Interviews with pre-primary teachers demonstrate successful techniques for overcoming obstacles in introducing play-based learning. Most of the teachers manage bigger class sizes by intentionally seating slightly more active students closer to them, resulting in a quieter setting. One teacher mentioned, *“Previously, there were 85 children and a shortage of teachers. I'm not the only teacher in the classroom. I address the more active ones by having them sit near me. This results in a brief period of silence as the children understand I am intently observing their actions.” (IDI#1, 19.11.2023)*

Some of them are focused for smaller class sizes to maximize engagement and personalize learning. Flexible class routine is recommended to facilitate a variety of play activities within the allotted time. Teachers are prompted to stress structured material management due to material limits, such as limited space for sand or water. While early parental skepticism is acknowledged, over time, as they effectively communicated the benefits and outcomes of play-based pedagogy, parents became more supportive. According to them effective communication and showcasing the benefits of play-based pedagogy gradually led to increased parental support.

One teacher mentioned. *“We prioritize the children's enjoyment. If their game is set for 25 minutes and only 5 minutes remain, I increase their playtime by 5 minutes. This helps to*

avoid disappointment if they are unable to complete the game within the original timetable. I sincerely hope to avoid causing any distress, as our efforts are designed for their beneficial purposes.” (IDI#5,01.12.2023)

Another teacher stated, “Some parents wonder why I focus on songs every day, claiming that more should be taught to the children. They question why I don't cover more numbers in one day or encourage them to write in notebooks. Another major worry was why I do not display anger at the children. But gradually they have understood. I think effective communication with parents could be one solution.” (IDI#3, 29.11.2023)

Discussion

This segment presents the study findings in the context of the research questions, the researcher's reflections, and includes an analysis of the results supported by relevant evidence from existing literature. The discussion is organized into various themes.

Teachers’ understanding and belief about play-based pedagogy

Interviews with pre-primary teachers indicate a strong understanding of play-based learning. Most of the teachers emphasize the value of play in preparing children for formal education, motivated for enjoyable learning experiences through activities such as songs, dance, and drama. According to them, this approach promotes children's happiness and participation, promoting holistic development in early education.

It is interesting that most the teachers when asked from a particular activity from the Teachers’ Guide about how they conduct or convert that activity into play, they emphasized on using play materials during the activity time with the children. Also, they gave emphasis on an education for children where children feel happy and comfortable. Play pedagogy should include joyful learning. A very few of the teachers could not articulate play pedagogy well but one important point came from them is children learn through play which eventually

help them to develop skills of reading, writing. Other than that, they mentioned about other skills that develop through play e.g. empathy, coping mechanism, cognitive skills, attention and social skills etc.

The findings show that all the teachers agree on the effectiveness of learning through play as the major teaching technique for pre-primary children. Activity-based learning is also considered advantageous. Teachers emphasize the need of providing a playful and good learning environment while avoiding negative strategies such as bullying. Practical exercises, plays, and real-life examples are preferred because they engage children and make learning more meaningful and pleasant. It is also found that most of the teachers emphasized that integrating rhymes, stories and songs into the curriculum is a strategy for increasing attention and involvement.

Most of the teachers believe that intentional integration of play into the curriculum is critical, and that activities such as rhyming songs, short stories, and play-based exercises are important components of the learning process that is similar with another research findings of Walsh and Gardner's research (2006). Furthermore, most of the teachers are agreed that traditional teaching approaches are inappropriate for pre-primary children due to their short attention spans. They promote joyful play as the first step toward education, resulting in a stress-free and engaging learning environment. These responses were consistent with Ananda Majumdar's paper "Role of Play in Child Development" (2020). They think that children's physical, mental, and social development occurs as they play.

It is also found that all the teachers indicate great agreement on the importance of training, particularly in play-based pedagogy for pre-primary teaching. Lack of formal training is noted as a difficulty, with teachers emphasizing the significance of obtaining organized direction from the start to improve their efficiency in delivering play activities and managing

classroom dynamics. They emphasize the need of trainers not only in providing knowledge, but also in encouraging and inspiring teachers, particularly in developing the patience essential for pre-primary education. Additionally, instructors acknowledge the necessity of subject-based training to further enhance their abilities and effectively integrate play pedagogy in the classroom, recommending a comprehensive approach to professional development.

In terms of teacher perceptions of training, most of the teachers agreed the necessity of training particularly in play-based pedagogy for pre-primary teaching. The teachers believe that such training would have been extremely valuable in the early stages of their careers, providing methodical advice and improving their skills. Some teachers even emphasize the motivational side of training, highlighting trainers' roles in inspiring and encouraging teachers, particularly in building the patience necessary for pre-primary education. While all the teachers strongly believe in the need for training in play-based pedagogy, there is a significant gap in the amount of formal training obtained. Some teachers admit they had to learn by their own and getting training in the initial stages would have been helpful which is also relevant with the UNESCO report findings. UNESCO (2007) found that primary school teachers with early childhood teacher training perform better in the classroom. According to Akhter (2012), early childhood teacher training promotes holistic student development.

Practices pre-primary teachers do for pre-primary children in classroom

The data acquired from the in-depth-interviews with pre-primary teachers sheds light on the many strategies used in the classroom to conduct play-based learning. All the teachers demonstrate a wide range of perspectives on how to effectively incorporate play into the educational experiences.

All the teachers highlight the need for preparation before lessons, emphasizing the necessity for a fixed timetable, practical planning for everyday tasks, and the occasional introduction of new resources or ideas. Some of the teachers also recognize the impact of their own delivery style on children's imitation and learning. The ability to adjust techniques, such as changing song tunes to make learning more fun, exemplifies a dynamic approach to play-based teaching. The classroom offers education, but also fosters social education such as friendship, teamwork, and appropriate behavior. According to Lee (2006), only teachers have the ability to attract children by creating an engaging learning environment.

Most of the teachers emphasized the necessity of selecting activities that are appropriate for the classroom size and promote a less chaotic learning environment. The findings reveal that, while teachers emphasize the importance of selecting appropriate games, there may be a gap in examining the variety of play activities. Few teachers emphasize the necessity of play that may be conducted while seated, given the space constraints of smaller classrooms. However, there could be more opportunities to explore a wider range of play experiences that demand a diverse learning styles and preferences. While providing examples, most of the teachers emphasized indoor play activities, with no mention of outdoor activities or utilizing the playground for such activities. According to Kernan (2007), children between the ages of 5 and 6 prefer more free time, spontaneity, and outdoor activities during school hours.

While asking about teachers' role during play activity, most of the teachers use a combination of explanation and active engagement to guide children's learning during play activities. Clear instructions are offered to ensure comprehension, and teachers intervene when a student struggles or becomes disengaged. The use of play activities such as "stand up and sit down" as a tactic to refocus children's attention demonstrates a proactive approach to controlling learning during play activities. The majority of teachers offer examples that involve teacher-directed activities rather than focusing on activities centered around the child.

This conclusion aligns with a study on play-based pedagogy in Bangladesh, where teachers mostly engaged in teacher-directed activities with limited choice for children (Chowdhary & Rivalland, 2011).

While asking about how they integrate play activities with the content, almost all the teachers agree on the importance of integrating play and content, and they provide concrete examples of how they do it. This includes using toys to teach concepts such as fat and thin, introducing letter cards into play activities to teach letters, and incorporating rhymes and poems through acting and reciting. Few teachers focus on basic classroom items, like chalk, to engage children in learning activities, exhibiting a practical and resourceful attitude. However, the data does not provide a complete analysis of the numerous ways in which play is smoothly integrated with educational content. This is supported by another research findings. According to Martlew, Stephen and Ellis (2011), Teachers are not aware what exactly to do for play based learning.

Very few teachers use a variety of assessment methods, with some taking a comprehensive approach that incorporates social and participatory evaluation. Observing children's engagement and sociability skills during play activities is emphasized as a critical component of evaluation. While some teachers take a holistic view to assess, some teachers only rely on observation as their primary assessment strategy, measuring children's knowledge through active participation. This gap underscores the potential need for a more standardized and thorough approach to evaluate the success of play-based learning, which would provide a more accurate representation of children's comprehension and involvement.

Helping and challenging factors to practice play pedagogy

Almost all the pre-primary teachers mentioned some of the materials while asking them some conducive and challenging materials for the pre-primary. Most of the teachers emphasized

the importance of play materials such as toys, slippers, balls, letter and number cards, clay fruits, and unusual items like stones and jute sticks. These materials not only interest children, but they also function as effective teaching tools, encouraging hands-on learning experiences. While most of the teachers indicated play materials to be beneficial, they are also mentioned some challenging materials. Space constraints provide difficulties when using materials such as sand and water. Managing these things in smaller classrooms becomes difficult, and some of them highlighted the importance of controlled material management to avoid potential disruptions and mess. This actually indicate that, while play materials are highly appreciated for their effectiveness in engaging pre-primary children in learning, problems such as space limits require careful management for ensuring an ideal learning environment.

Most of the teachers expressed a positive enthusiasm for teaching profession. Some of the teachers report genuine excitement in engaging students with play pedagogy such as dancing, rhyming, and entertaining activities. Teachers derive intrinsic satisfaction from witnessing positive outcomes, such as improved writing and pronunciation skills in children. This intrinsic motivation is essential for fostering a positive and enjoyable learning environment. Similar findings were discovered in Hegde and Cassidy's (2009) article regarding enjoying a profession. However, some pre-primary teachers recognize the difficulties children experience when transitioning to a regular school atmosphere. The change from play to a more structured learning setting is difficult for children to adjust to, and it takes several months. This initial step is critical and requires considerable attention for a smooth transition.

While asking about the challenges they face while implementing play pedagogy in pre-primary, the most common challenge is managing a big number of children, especially those who are more energetic. Few of the teachers mentioned some strategies such as keeping restless students closer to maintain a quieter learning environment. Relevant research findings

reveled similar types of findings. Rogers' study report said that without a good student-to-teacher ratio, it is difficult to manage the classroom with play-based learning (2010).

Some of the teachers express concerns about time constraints, particularly assigning enough time for language-related activities, instructional play, and storytelling. The requirement for lengthier sessions to allow a variety of learning activities suggests that the pre-primary curriculum should have longer time frames. These findings also similar with another research findings. Teachers face challenges such as having more students than teachers, a lack of teaching materials, and limited time to conduct classroom activities (Rahman et al., 2020). While some of the teachers indicated a longer time frame, very few teachers stated that the existing time frame will be enough if the number of students is appropriate.

While stating about the parental involvement, some of the teachers mentioned initially they struggle to engage parents in the concept of play-based learning. Parental mistrust is rooted in traditional educational expectations. While some of them mentioned facing some challenges from the parents, few of them were stated that they did not face any challenges from them. Rather parents were eager to help them to manage the children and they really supported them.

Almost all the teachers expressed some effective strategies regarding addressing the challenges they have mentioned. About managing bigger class sizes, most of the teachers purposefully seat more restless students closer to them, resulting in a quieter environment. Teachers advocate a flexible class routine that allows for a variety of play activities within the allotted time. This versatility enables a more dynamic and engaging learning experience that meets the different requirements and preferences of pre-primary children.

Teachers focused on effective communication for overcoming parental uncertainty. Most of the teachers effectively overcome initial reservations by demonstrating the benefits of play-

based learning and progressively obtaining parental support. Open communication channels help to bridge the gap between traditional expectations and innovative teaching approaches. Surprisingly, it is discovered in some other works, such as Pui-Wah and Stimpson's (2004) study, where their findings are similar to this finding.

Conclusion

Play is one of the vital components for early childhood development. It influences numerous areas of development that cannot be accomplished by any other way, giving children opportunity to explore aspects of themselves, comprehend others, and interact with their surroundings (Catron & Allen, 2003). Incorporating play as a foundation for learning benefits preschool students' cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development (Arrow, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to explore pre-primary teachers' perception about play pedagogy, their classroom practices and helping and challenging factors to implement play pedagogy. This study highlights a notable understanding among all teachers of the importance of play-based pedagogy for pre-primary children, identifying it as a very effective medium critical for child development. The researchers of child development also recognized play as an important instructional tool for children's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development (Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness, Trew, & Ingram, 2010). Despite having a deep understanding about play pedagogy, teachers face various challenges that hinder the utilization of their knowledge in classroom. These challenges include large number of participants, time constraints, limited classroom space and material limitations.

The findings indicate that intensive participatory training in play pedagogy is crucial for empowering teachers to overcome these challenges. By addressing these issues through targeted training, educators can better transfer their theoretical knowledge into practical application, creating an atmosphere conducive to play-based learning and, eventually,

enhancing pre-primary children's overall development. Aligning teachers' capacity development can lead to changes in their knowledge, understanding, behavior, and practices, enabling them to easily adopt play-based pedagogy in the classroom. The emphasis should now be on improving teachers' professional development so that they can promote child-centered, play-based education. Play-based learning has the potential to help children adjust to school, improve their learning readiness, provide opportunities for practicing basic social skills, foster self-awareness, and facilitate the acquisition of friendship-building skills (Anderson-McNamee, 2010).

Recommendations

Following recommendation are proposed on the basis of the findings of this study.

- Allocate adequate resources for a variety of play materials, taking into account the socioeconomic backgrounds of students
- Collaborate with educational institutions and experienced instructors to build specialized training that meets the various issues of pre-primary education
- Implement intensive participatory training for pre-primary teachers that emphasize play-based pedagogy, classroom management, and effective communication
- Organize regular parent-teacher interaction to highlight children's progress through play and explore the significance of play in cognitive and social development
- Include observation as a data collection technique to get the real scenario or implementation of play pedagogy in classroom
- More extensive research is required to gain a national perspective.

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Annex 1: In-Depth Interview Questionnaire- English

Research Tools

In-Depth Interview Guideline

Research Topic: Exploring Government Pre-Primary Teachers' Perception of Play Pedagogy for Pre-primary

Date of the interview:

Start time:

End time:

Section A: Demographic information

- a. Name of the interviewee
- b. Age
- c. Sex
- d. Educational qualification
- e. Years of pre-primary teaching experience
- f. Training received
- g. Number of students in pre-primary class
- h. Name of the school

Section B: What are pre-primary teachers' understanding and beliefs regarding play-based pedagogy for pre-primary children?

1. What do you understand about pre-primary education?
2. What are the objectives of pre-primary education?
3. What do you think, which learning method/strategy would be best for the preprimary children and why?
4. What comes to your mind when you hear about the word 'play'?
5. Do you think playing is important for a child? If yes, why?
6. What values or skills do you believe children acquire through play-based activities?
7. What is your understanding about play-based pedagogy?

8. In your opinion do you think play pedagogy is important for pre-primary children? If yes, why? If not, why?
9. First activity (small and big concepts) from the pre-mathematics chapter in the 5+ Teachers Guide. How do you interpret this activity in terms of play pedagogy?
10. Have you received any training related to play pedagogy?
11. Do you think the training helps to develop enough knowledge about play-based pedagogy for pre-primary children in pre-primary classrooms? If yes, how?

Section C: What are the practices pre-primary teachers do for pre-primary children in the pre-primary classroom?

1. Do you apply play-based pedagogy with the pre-primary children in the classroom? If yes, share an example.
2. What types of preparations usually do you take to implement play pedagogy with the children?
3. How do you integrate play pedagogy into subject-specific lessons? Provide an example.
4. Which types of play activities do you find effective for pre-primary children?
5. How do you facilitate learning as a teacher during play-based activities?
6. Do you use any specific indicators or observations to assess the effectiveness of play pedagogy with pre-primary children? If yes, please explain.
7. In your opinion, what types of training would be helpful to implement play-based pedagogy in classrooms?

Section D: What are the helping and challenging factors for pre-primary teachers to practice play pedagogy in their classrooms for pre-primary children?

1. What resources or materials do you find most helpful in facilitating play pedagogy with pre-primary children?
2. What factors encourage you to implement play pedagogy with the pre-primary children in the classroom?
3. Do you love teaching/ facilitating pre-primary classrooms?
4. Do you face any challenges in implementing play pedagogy with pre-primary children? If yes, what are those?
5. How do you overcome those challenges?
6. Do you find the class size is suitable to implement play pedagogy effectively?

7. Do you face any time constraints to facilitate play activities with the children?
8. What materials or resources do you find challenging in facilitating play pedagogy with pre-primary children?
9. Are there any cultural factors that play a role in implementing play pedagogy with the children in pre-primary classrooms? If yes, how do you address those cultural factors?
10. Did you experience any support or difficulties from parents in successfully implementing play pedagogy with the pre-primary children?

Annex 2: In-Depth Interview Questionnaire- Bangla

ক) জনমিতিক তথ্য

- ক) ইন্টারভিউ প্রদানকারীর নাম
- খ) লিঙ্গ
- গ) শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা
- ঘ) প্রাক-প্রাথমিকে শিক্ষক হিসেবে অভিজ্ঞতার সময়কাল
- ঙ) প্রাপ্ত প্রশিক্ষণের সংখ্যা
- চ) শ্রেণিকক্ষে শিক্ষার্থীর সংখ্যা
- ছ) বিদ্যালয়ের নাম

খ) প্লে- পেডাগোজি/ খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা সম্পর্কে প্রাক প্রাথমিক শিক্ষকের ধারণা ও বিশ্বাস

- ১) প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা বলতে আপনার কী মনে হয়?
- ২) প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষার উদ্দেশ্য কী?
- ৩) প্রাক-প্রাথমিকের শিশুদের জন্য কোন ধরনের শিক্ষণ পদ্ধতি সবচেয়ে উপযোগী বলে আপনার মনে হয়?
- ৪) খেলা শব্দটি শুনলে আপনার মনে সর্বপ্রথম কোন ভাবনাটি আসে?
- ৫) আপনার মতে খেলা শিশুদের জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কিনা? যদি হ্যাঁ হয় তাহলে কেন?
- ৬) খেলার মাধ্যমে শিশুর কোন কোন মূল্যবোধ ও দক্ষতা গড়ে উঠে বলে আপনি বিশ্বাস করেন?
- ৭) খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা এই শিক্ষাবিজ্ঞান সম্পর্কে কী আপনার ধারণা আছে? যদি থাকে বর্ণনা করুন।
- ৮) খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা এই শিক্ষাবিজ্ঞান পদ্ধতিটি প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিশুর শিখনে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে- আপনার কী মনে হয়? উত্তর যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে কেন? উত্তর না হলে, কেন?
- ৯) প্রাক প্রাথমিকের ৫+ শিক্ষক সহায়কার প্রাক গনিতের ধারণার (অধ্যায়ঃ ছোট- বড়) প্রথম এক্টিভিটিকে আপনি প্লে- পেডাগোজি/ খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষার আলোকে কিভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করবেন?
- ১০) আপনি কি প্লে- পেডাগোজি/ খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা সম্পর্কিত কোন প্রশিক্ষণ গ্রহণ করেছেন?
- ১১) প্রশিক্ষণ প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষকদের প্লে-পেডাগোজি/ খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা সম্পর্কিত পর্যাপ্ত জ্ঞান বৃদ্ধিতে সহায়ক- আপনার কী মনে হয়? উত্তর যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে কেন?

গ) শ্রেণিকক্ষে প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিশুদের সাথে শিক্ষকরা কী কী অনুশীলন করেন?

১. আপনি কি শ্রেণিকক্ষে প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিশুদের সাথে প্লে-পেডাগোজি/ খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতিটি প্রয়োগ করেন? উত্তর যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে একটি উদাহরণ দিন।
২. শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের জন্য আপনি কী ধরনের প্রস্তুতি গ্রহণ করেন?

৩. আপনি খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষাকে কিভাবে বিষয়বস্তুর সাথে সামঞ্জস্য করেন? উদাহরণের আলোকে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।
৪. কোন ধরনের খেলা আপনি প্রাক-প্রাথমিকের শিশুদের জন্য সবচেয়ে উপযোগী বলে মনে করেন?
৫. যেকোন খেলার সময় আপনি কিভাবে শিখন কার্যক্রমকে পরিচালনা করে থাকেন?
৬. আপনি কী খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি শিশুদের জন্য কতটুকু কার্যকর হচ্ছে তা শ্রেণিকক্ষে মূল্যায়ন করে থাকেন? উত্তর হ্যাঁ হলে কিভাবে?
৭. আপনার মতে, কোন ধরনের প্রশিক্ষণ শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে উপযোগী?

ঘ) শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে সহায়ক ও চ্যালেঞ্জিং কারণসমূহ কী কী?

১. শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কোন ধরনের উপকরণ আপনার কাছে সহায়ক মনে হয়?
২. কোন কোন কারণে আপনি শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগে আরও উৎসাহিত হন?
৩. আপনি কি শিক্ষকতা পেশাকে পছন্দ করেন? যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে কেন?
৪. আপনি শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কী কী চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হন?
৫. আপনি কিভাবে চ্যালেঞ্জগুলো মোকাবেলা করেন?
৬. আপনার মতে, শিক্ষার্থীদের সংখ্যা কী খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে উপযোগী?
৭. আপনি কি খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কোন সময় সল্পতার সম্মুখীন হয়ে থাকেন?
৮. শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কোন ধরনের উপকরণ আপনার কাছে চ্যালেঞ্জিং মনে হয়?
৯. শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কি সাংস্কৃতিক কোন চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হয়ে থাকেন? আপনি কিভাবে এই সাংস্কৃতিক চ্যালেঞ্জগুলো মোকাবেলা করেন?
১০. খেলার মাধ্যমে শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কি শিশুর পিতামাতার পক্ষ থেকে কোন ধরনের সাহায্য বা চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হয়ে থাকেন?

Annex 3: Consent form for Teachers

Title of the Research: Exploring Government Pre-Primary Teachers' Perception about Play Pedagogy for Pre-primary Children

Researcher: Sharmin Islam

Purpose of the research

I am conducting this research as a part of my Master's Degree requirement from BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. The aim of my study is to explore Government Pre-Primary Teachers' Perception about Play Pedagogy for Pre-primary Children

Expectation from you

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to take part in an in-depth interview where we will discuss your experiences, perception towards play pedagogy, how you apply play pedagogy in your classroom and what are the helping and challenging factors you face while implementing play pedagogy with the pre-primary children.

This consent form is necessary for me to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced
- The transcript of the interview will be analyzed by Shamin Islam
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to Sharmin Islam, Ms. Areefa Zafar, and academic faculties and researchers with whom there is collaboration as part of the research process

- Any summary interview content or direct quotations from the interview that are used will be anonymous so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- The actual recording will be deleted after the analysis and transcription.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. The potential benefits include contributing valuable insights to the understanding of play pedagogy in pre-primary education. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. Your information will be kept confidential.

Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

All information collected from you will remain strictly confidential. I would be happy to answer any of your queries about the study and you are welcome to contact me.

Consent for audio recording

Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

Future use of information

Some of the information collected from this study may be kept for future use. However, in such cases, information and data supplied to other researchers, will not conflict with or violate the maintenance of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of information identifying participants in any way.

Right not to participate and withdraw

Your and your child’s participation in the study is voluntary, and you are the sole authority to decide for and against your participation in this study. Refusal to take part in the study will involve no penalty.

If you agree to my proposal to participate in my study, please indicate that by putting your signature in the specified space below.

Name of the teacher

Name of the researcher

Signature of the teacher

Signature of the researcher