

Thesis on

**Preschool Teachers' Practices of Play-Based Learning in English Medium
Schools of Dhaka**

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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Declaration:

It is hereby declared that:

1. The thesis submitted is written originally by me for the Degree purpose.
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 which 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: Preschool Teachers' Practices of Play-Based Learning in English Medium Schools of Dhaka.

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1. Source of population: Few Pre-school teachers of English Medium Schools of Dhaka 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 clearly informed about (yes or no)
 - a) Nature and purpose of the study (yes)
 - b) Procedures to be followed (yes)
 - c) Physical risk (n/a)
 - 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 (n/a)
 - 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

Play-based learning is a vital aspect of early education. It is considered an enjoyable and fun way of learning at an early age for children. The purpose of this study aims to explore teacher's practices of play-based learning in pre-schools in English Medium in Dhaka city. Our country is still struggling with the implementation of play-based learning in most of the schools. The findings of this research indicated the perception, implementation and the challenges faced by the teachers in pre-schools. The study and the findings further revealed all the possible ways of making the class interesting using play-based activities to make the learning process fun and enjoyable and the struggles of the teachers encountered during the implementation of play-based learning. It was also found how the teachers need different training and development for initiating play-based learning concepts in pre-school and the long term benefits it will have on the pre-school students.

Keywords: Play-based learning, English-Medium School, Bangladesh, Pre-school, Teachers

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Introduction and background

For young children, play is the fundamental form of learning. Children participate in many sorts of play from infancy to early childhood, including creative play, physical play, and social play. This play is an important component of their development since it promotes physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Children learn vital skills such as problem-solving, creativity, teamwork, and communication via play, that are necessary for better performance at school and in future.

Play-based learning is an educational strategy that uses play as a primary technique of teaching and learning. It understands that play is a natural and extremely successful approach for young children to explore, make sense of the environment, and acquire critical abilities. Play is an intentional and educational activity that provides the cornerstone of early childhood education in play-based learning.

Teacher's practices of play-based learning and approaches is shaped by the knowledge and comprehension of how play-based approaches help the children's learning. (Puteh & Ali, 2013). Teachers must comprehend the play and child-based learning in early childhood education as well as possess the necessary abilities to implement play-based learning. (UNICEF, 2018).

Pre-school is the gateway or known as the first path towards education for the children. Children who start their preschool should be able to embrace learning in such a way that they love learning and the ways of learning. They will enjoy learning if it matches their energy and styles through play. Learning through play will help the children understand and engage them for a long time. Play does a significant role in a child's early education and puts an ever-lasting impact on their childhood. Play is a tool through which children explore their physical world and their surroundings. They interact and develop physically, socially, emotionally through different play

activities. Play based learning engage and activate their moto skills and help them in the learning process. “Through play, children begin to gain a sense of control over what happens to them” (Bruce and Meggitt 2002). This is the reason why play-based education in pre-school is vital for children to begin with. The educators should have a notion and knowledge to incorporate and communicate the importance of play-based learning and the development of the children. (Miller & Almon, 2009)

To keep up with the constant changes and variations in educational sector, the policy makers and parents are putting enough academic stress on children which results in robbing the young minds of the joyous of the childhood (Bulunuz, 2013). Toys and playful materials are being replaced by scholarly literatures and huge information content books. Since the early mornings, they've been sprinting behind the school bus. In the afternoons, instead of playing in the park, youngsters participate in extracurricular activities. It also has an adverse effect on their mental and physical health.

According to George and Bennett (2005), two broad categories are evident in many western countries: the pre-primary tradition, which emphasizes cognitive goals and school readiness, and the social pedagogic tradition, which emphasizes children's play and socialization; the latter approach strengthens developmental goals, allowing staff to tailor ECE programs to local needs. Recognizing the immense potential of play as a vehicle for learning, play-based learning activities are a crucial part of early childhood education. It matches with young children's developmental needs and interests, providing a dynamic and engaging approach to education that lays the groundwork for future academic achievement and lifelong curiosity. This method believes that when children play, they learn, and when they learn via play, they thrive.

1.1 Statement of the problem:

Play-based learning helps children to grow holistically and build a sense of the world around them. It helps them to learn through discovery, engage in various activities and solve problem solving. Much of the pre-schools in Bangladesh is not having the necessary environment and materials for play-based learning opportunity in the classroom. Teachers face a lot of problems engaging young children and retain their attention and provide appropriate environment for play-based learning. This study research focused on the practices of teachers using play-based learning and how teachers create play-based learning environment and opportunities in the classroom based on their knowledge. In order to satisfy the needs of curriculum, standardized testing, and high academic standards, many schools have reduced or eliminated play time in preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

1.2 Purpose of the study:

Play-based learning is a crucial aspect of early childhood education, as it provides children with opportunities to develop social, cognitive, and emotional skills while having fun. Preschool teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating play-based learning experiences. The purpose of this research proposal aims to investigate the practices of preschool teachers in implementing play-based teaching-learning activities in their classrooms. Understanding these practices can lead to the improvement of early childhood education and the enhancement of children's overall development.

1.3 Justification of the study (Rationale)

Play-based learning in the early life of a child is very crucial to enjoy the learning. The school timing in a day have grown longer, and recess times have shortened, and young children are now

attending preschools and kindergartens that are more academically focused. Play-based learning is required so that the learners can retain their attention span during their learning period and participate enthusiastically. There is no relevant study or evidence of the scope of play-based learning practices that takes place in pre-primary classrooms in Bangladesh, hence this study is being taken place. There are more than 93,000 primary education institutions in Bangladesh offer pre-primary classes, but the concept of learning through play is still not available, (MoPME, 2015). It has been demonstrated that play-based learning improves children's academic and developmental outcomes. It can also assist your child in succeeding in the twenty-first century by teaching them valuable skills. (Robertson, Morrissey & Rouse, 2018).

1.5 Research questions:

1. What is the understanding of pre-school teachers on play-based practices in learning in their classroom?
2. What are the play-based practices the teachers integrate in their classroom?

2. Literature Review:

Theoretical Concept of play-based learning and its benefits for early childhood education:

One of the essential components of early childhood education is play based learning, since it promotes and supports children's development across multiple domains. (Bobrova & Leong, 2012). Child-centered learning, hands-on experiences, and open-ended inquiry are all components of play-based learning, which is generally recognized as a developmentally appropriate method (Moore et al., 2014). All children grow and learn via play in ways that cannot be taught as it is different for everyone. According to Miller and Almon (2009), play is children's job. Vygotsky (1966) discusses the importance of play in the formation of symbolic thinking as a foundation of

cognition. According to him play incorporates all developmental inclinations for example: cognitive, physical, social, and emotional and so generates a zone of proximal development that propels the child ahead. Play activities are critical throughout the preschool years because they promote development by encouraging abstract thinking, self-awareness, and self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1966). According to research, many schools have continued to minimize or remove the appearance of play in classrooms.

Children explore their environment through play, learn about different subjects like Science, English and Mathematics and have numerous opportunities to improve reading and language skills. Children learn to negotiate tough social circumstances and acquire problem-solving abilities via play. Children learn via play that they can be anything they want to be and that their imagination is a powerful tool. Play-based learning is especially useful for children from low-income families because it may help level the playing field by providing them with rich and engaging learning experiences (Christie & Roskos, 2013). Critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity are all encouraged via play-based learning. Children's fine and gross motor abilities develop when they manipulate things, construct buildings, and participate in physical play such as running, leaping, and climbing. Play-based learning piques children's interest and motivates them to ask questions, discover, and seek solutions. This inquisitiveness serves as the foundation for a lifetime love of learning. Pre-school teachers may design play-based activities to meet the requirements of individual students, allowing for differentiated education and individualized learning experiences. Children participate in activities that spark their imaginations, help them acquire early math and scientific ideas, and encourage logical reasoning. Engagement in play-based learning activities, helps the children to explore and experiment various ideas and concepts and create new possibilities (Bodrova & Leong, 2012). The definition of Play has lately been described as a

spectrum or continuum encompassing child-directed activity, as well as adult-guided and adult-directed activity, providing clarity to the responsibilities of the adult and child in enabling learning via play (Weisberg et al., 2013; Pyle and Danniels, 2016).

Types of Play-based learning at pre-school:

Play is an important part of early childhood development, and preschool classes frequently include several sorts of play to encourage cognitive and social development. Playful methods and play-based learning are popular to awaken motivation and interest, especially in early childhood education (Ferreira, 2021). Recent research shows that play has significant advantages for young children and should be regarded an essential classroom activity (Moore et al., 2014; Kangas et al., 2019; Ferreira, 2021). Play has several meanings, including child-centered free play, cooperatively developed play, and teacher-directed play that occurs with games and fun learning environments. 2021 (Marston).

Child-centered free play- In this kind of play, the teachers rather than instructing the children what to do as they play, this strategy demands that to replicate their actions and behaviors and remark on what they are doing, which supports their independence and aids in their learning.

Cooperative-development play- Cooperative play is a play that involves children playing collaboratively in the class to solve a problem or work on a project to achieve shared results. Pair-share is a typical approach used by teachers. Most schools may simply modify this by asking students to cooperate with a "elbow" partner or someone nearby. Students can debate an issue or topic before presenting it to the entire class.

Teacher-directed play- In teacher-directed play, the children is being involved in games and play activities that teachers plan as learning opportunities for their students. Teachers lay forth certain rules, which students must obey while participating in games and activities. Teacher-directed

techniques must be adaptable and sensitive to children's needs. A teacher, for example, may reduce an activity if she detects that the children require a mobility break. She may add materials if she notices that youngsters are not grasping a subject as she has given it.

In Bangladesh, the phenomenon of 'learning by play' is still a new notion in the field of ECD. There hasn't been much research or study on play and early childhood education in Bangladesh. It is expressly included in Bangladesh's Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education (2008, p. 8).

The role of teachers in play-based learning:

Teachers functions links and connector between the children and the learning process. Teachers can make sure that the surroundings are aligned with their learning and that the children are interacting and aware about the lessons. The role of teacher is facilitating the learner's learning through play activities and teacher's active participation which will encourage their involvement. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating play-based learning in early childhood education. Play-based learning is an approach that uses play as a means to promote children's holistic development and foster their natural curiosity and creativity. It is the responsibility of the teachers to create and design their classroom that is safe and risk free and environment friendly for learning through different play activities. Teachers closely observe children during play to gain insights into their interests, abilities, and developmental needs. Teachers plan their lessons and design a curriculum that incorporates play-based learning activities aligned with educational goals and standards. The teachers choose resources that encourage open-ended play and exploration, such as blocks, art supplies, and manipulative toys. The teachers offer guidance and support to children's play experiences. This may involve asking open-ended questions, providing additional materials, or demonstrating new possibilities. They scaffold children's learning by building on their current interests and abilities, helping them make connections between play and academic concepts.

Teachers in play-based learning environments act as facilitators, guides, and observers, helping children explore, learn, and grow through play. Their role is to create a rich and supportive learning environment while respecting the child's autonomy and interests. Teachers provide an environment in which students feel safe taking chances, trying new things, and learning from their failures. They value the process of learning over the ultimate result.

Teachers require a certain set of skills and tactics in order to effectively integrate play-based learning in a preschool or early childhood education environment. Play-based learning necessitates a refined strategy that effortlessly integrates education and play. Some skills and strategies are as follows:

Understanding child development:

Teachers must have a thorough awareness of child development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical milestones for the age group with whom they deal. This information enables them to adjust activities to the developmental levels of youngsters.

Observation and Communication skills:

Teachers who are effective are keen observers. They are also good listeners, they listen to children while they play, taking note of their interests, needs, and developmental progress. Observation helps to influence lesson design and individual support. Teachers must have great communication skills in order to engage children in meaningful play conversations, build a rapport, enhance their vocabulary, and support language development.

Summarizing the role of teachers, effective play-based learning requires a delicate balance of enabling children to explore, discover, and lead their own learning while still providing the necessary supervision and structure to ensure educational goals are accomplished. The teachers

need to provide skilled instructors within an environment in which learning is pleasurable and engaging experience for young children.

Concept of English Medium Schools in Bangladesh:

Education system is divided into several parts: Pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education, higher education. The education system in Bangladesh is further divided into types, English Medium being one of it. English Medium education in Bangladesh follows curriculum of Edexcel, Cambridge of UK and curriculum of other countries like IB curriculum.

Bangladesh Perspective: Bangladesh currently being a developing country has been making many educational improvements in the last few decades. However, not all the sectors are developing equally, the early childhood education is substantially lacking school infrastructure and play-based learning is not widely integrated in Bangladeshi ECE yet (Das et al., 2021). One of the primary reasons for lack of play-based learning in Bangladesh is the unavailability of trained and qualified teachers to teach children through play-based learning (HarjuLuukkainen & Kangas, 2021). The main challenges in play-based learning in Bangladesh are the ignorance of parents, lack of trained teachers, lack of governance, insufficient equipment and lack of pre-school facilities. As several sorts of positive and constructive play practices have been catenated in the approach to enhance children's engagement in learning and welfare, the playful strategy is unquestionably an ideal practice for pre-primary schools in Bangladesh. (MoPME 2008) The process of producing pre-primary curriculum for every primary school in Bangladesh is a model as well as a joint venture for public-private partnership of government organization and NGO collaboration. Aktar (2013, np) writes “Almost all of the curriculum established and implemented by different GO and NGOs in Bangladesh are studied together with curriculum of 11 other countries from South Asia, East Asia, Africa, Europe and America before producing pre-

primary curriculum.’ There are few private and government schools available with play-based learning features in Bangladesh. However, because of being ignorant of play-based learning in ECE, Bangladeshi parents do not feel comfortable sending their children to private preschools; instead, they enroll them in mainstream government institutions that provide ECE facilities (Alam et al., 2022).

3. Methodology:

3.1 Research design:

The data was collected by qualitative approach, since in-depth interview (IDI) was conducted for this research to get a thorough information about the research topic. This approach has been chosen in order to find what the pre-school teachers’ practices they use to have play-based learning in their classroom and how can it benefit the learners and the importance of it. Therefore, instead of generalizing the results to a wider population, the qualitative research design provided a detailed view and the main practices of the selected sample group about the study.

3.2 Research Participants

The study group of the research consisted of 8 preschool teachers (n= 8 female teachers) from different English medium pre-schools. Teachers were selected from each school for in-depth interview. Participants were selected based on their different work experience.

3.3 Research site:

For this research purpose the proposed study was carried out in Dhaka city- In Uttara, Baridhara and Gulshan in different English medium Schools.

3.4 Participant selection procedure

For conducting this study, a sample of 8 schoolteachers from different English-Medium schools were taken for the survey. Teachers who teach in pre-school, students from age (3-6) were considered. Teachers were selected randomly based on their work experience and educational background (the minimum requirement was Bachelor's degree) from different English Medium Schools. The selection was done from different settings so that there was a mixed view on the play-based learning with different classroom settings.

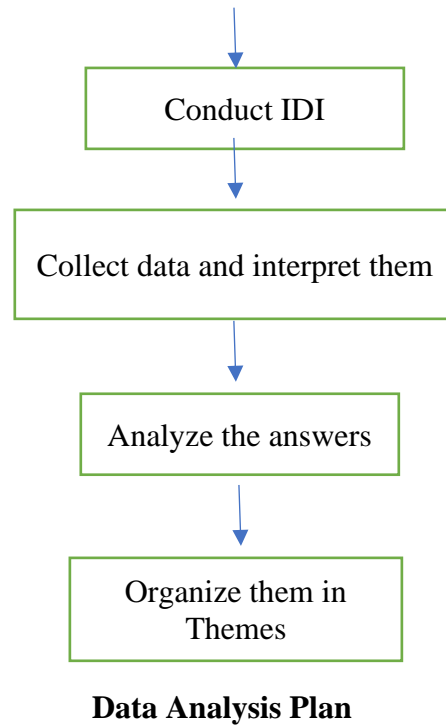
3.5 Data collection method:

For the data collection process, interview (IDI) was done to get an insight of the scenario of classroom where the teachers were questioned about how they utilize play as the learning process and the adaptability of the students. The (IDI) interview was conducted face to face with time frame of 30 min -1 hour time to get an overview of the knowledge about the learning process and the teaching process of the teachers. Questionnaire was prepared and reviewed and checked by expert faculties of BRAC IED to ensure the validity of it.

3.6 Data Analysis:

Through interview an organized data was collected with the selected group of interviewees to get an elicit of their views and opinions and their experiences about the play-based learning environment and process they follow at different schools. The answers were organized in different themes in depth based on the open-ended questions that were asked. Answers were recorded both on recorder and in written form with the consent of the individuals.

Prepare
questionnaire



3.7 Research tool:

In-depth face-to-face interview was utilized to collect data such as instructors' experiences, views ideas and their recent practices on play-based learning, their perspectives on the benefits of play-based learning in the classroom through different types of plays and what obstacles they face in utilizing play activities.

Questionnaire: Questionnaire were prepared based on mostly open-ended instructions. There were more general questions and flowed from specific questions to detailed ones.

4. Ethics

Consent of all the individuals during this interview were taken and respected. BRAC University assessed and authorized this study, which included all individuals (teachers). All volunteers (teachers) in this research project were so willingly, without coercion or illegitimate power, and their rights, and dignity were respected and suitably protected. The participants were given accurate information regarding the study technique, objectives, anonymization, and data storage

in a clear and non-threatening way. Participants were given the authority to remove their replies from the study at any time. The participants' personal information were kept totally confidential, and they should be ensured that no information would be disclosed.

5. Limitations of the study:

Limitation of the study helps us to identify and discuss the accurate interpretation of the research findings.

- The main limitation of the study might be the small sample size of the preschool teachers which can affect the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. The study's sample may not be entirely representative of all preschool teachers or schools, potentially leading to bias in the results.
- Limited time can impact the breadth and depth of data collection and analysis.
- Lastly, ethical considerations and privacy concerns can limit the depth of information that can be obtained, particularly when involving young children and their families.

6. Findings and discussions:

In this chapter findings of IDI conducted will be described into two parts one is the findings and the other is discussions. Findings will include the details description of IDI conducted on 8 participants from various schools. The second part will be the discussion which will include some suggestions that has been found during the findings.

6.1 Findings

In this section, finding is presented and segregated in themes and sub-themes based on the objectives and the findings are explained based on the IDI done on different English medium schools.

Demographics:

In total 8 participants from age 25-45 were being interviewed. All the participants were female belonging to different areas of educational experiences and years of experience in their institutes.

The demographic information is demonstrated below:

No. of participant	Date of interview	Age	Years of experience	Educational qualifications	Institute
IDI -1	11.12.23	29	5	Masters in Bangla	School A
IDI -2	15.12.23	34	6	M.Ed	School B
IDI -3	18.12.23	28	5	ACCA	School A
IDI -4	19.12.23	39	9	Masters in English	School B
IDI -5	20.12.23	28	4	Master’s in social science	School C
IDI -6	20.12.23	39	9.3	MBA	School C
IDI -7	22.12.23	30	3	BBA	School D
IDI -8	23.12.23	29	2.5	BBA	School D

Theme 1: Understanding and knowledge of play-based learning

In this section, the first objective which is the understanding of the teachers about play-based learning in pre-school will be explained in detail. The findings will be described in many subsections which includes teacher’s understanding about play, importance of play at preschool, play-based learning, opinion about play-based learning at preschool and the approaches and different play-based learning styles that can be used at preschool for better learning.

Teacher's understanding about play

It has been found from the interview that most of the participants have a clear concept and understanding about play. Most of the participants have a positive attitude towards play and supports it in early life of children. In one of the interviewees explained that *“Play is recreation and activities that children engage in for fun and learning. It is also enjoyment and relaxation that helps their mind engage in a positive way to see the world”* (IDI-4. 19.12.23)

All the participants agreed that play helps develop children's brain and physical development. One of the participants also stated about what play is that it is *“Game or outdoor games or playing with toys”* (IDI-5, 20.12.23)

Importance of play at pre-school

The importance of play was described by different participants differently. Though most of the participants agreed that play is essential and vital as it helps the children with their development but few participants disagreed on it. According to them early age should be more focused more on reading and writing and learning rather than play.

One of the interviewees mentioned play as *“It is fundamental because children learn a lot through play, and it helps them to grow physically and mentally”* (IDI-3. 18.12.23)

Another participant responded by saying that

“Play is important, but it has to be outdoor or indoor exploring with physical activities and not using electronics and gadgets to play, only then a child can develop their gross motor skills and be socially interactive and healthy” (IDI-4, 19.12.23)

Therefore, these data reveals that play is important for young children at preschool because it not only develops them physically, but the overall holistic development is being established through play which makes children active and unable them to be creative and independent, as agreed by Bodrova & Leong when they mentioned that children learn better and acquire new information by engaging in play-based activities, they develop problem-solving skills, have social interactions with their peers and develop a positive sense of self. (Bodrova & Leong, 2012; Lillard et al., 2013)

Play-based learning

Through the interview it has been found that not everyone has the idea or knowledge of the term “Play-based learning” although some might incorporate play-based learning in their lessons or use it by themselves while teaching in their classrooms. But the concept is yet to be used widely at different schools.

One of the participants responded *“Play-based learning often incorporates real-world contexts and scenarios, making learning more meaningful and relevant to children's lives” (IDI- 3, 18.12.23)*

Another participant mentioned *“I have heard this term for the first time, I didn't have the idea of the term until you mentioned” (IDI-7, 22.12.23)*

Opinion about play-based learning in pre-school

Most of the participants gave a positive opinion and impression about play-based learning. According to most of the participants they said that play and learn goes hand-in-hand.

One of the respondent play-based learning s effective in preschool because “ *It retains children’s attention and keeps them engaged in the process of learning, it develops their brain development and contributes to their cognitive development*” (IDI-2, 15.12.23) . some also mentioned that “*Of course play-based learning in effective in preschool, it triggers cognitive skills and helps a child to think out of the box*” (IDI-3, 18.12.23)

While one of the participants mentioned that “*Maybe it is not effective, but I think in preschool, one should focus more on learning and not on play, because they have time to play at home*” (IDI-5, 20.12.23)

Best approaches of learning through play

To facilitate proper learning through play, it has certain requirements like creating environment, providing space that promote exploration and discoveries and proper learning.

Most of the participants gave many ideas about their best approaches, one of them mentioned,

“*The best approaches I think to make the children learn is by having appropriate play environment with sufficient number of age-based materials, having trained facilitator and integrate educational concepts into play activities*”.

While another participant mentioned that “*Best approaches are when you bring creativity in learning process through play, for example: counting objects during a building activity, incorporating letters into art projects, or using playdough to shape letters and numbers, etc*” (IDI-4, 19.12.23)

The participants who didn't agree with the learning through play mentioned that "*Play is a distraction in the learning process*" (IDI-8, 23.12.23)

Different play-based learning style

According to the findings, few of the participants use different play-based learning styles 'those who are aware of the learners' learning styles, mostly they use the same style for all of the students in their class and they don't have the support nor the resources to match everyone's learning styles.

One of the participants mentioned that "*The different learning styles depends on catering to the diverse needs and preferences of students. Free-play, guided-play, sensory-lay, games and puzzles, outdoor play, exploration, role-play etc. Adapting play-based learning styles to match individual learning preferences and developmental stages can maximize the effectiveness of the approach*" (IDI-2, 15.12.23)

Few participants didn't even know what the different learning styles are required for the students in play-based learning because of their traditional teaching method. As one of the participant mentioned "*I don't have much idea about learning styles, but I think it is something that children will be interested and curious about*" (IDI-8, 23.12.23)

Theme 2- Teachers' role in play-based learning practices in classroom

After getting a concept about teacher's understanding about play-based learning in preschool, this segment represents the role on teachers in incorporating play-based learning activities in their lessons, and how they help integrate them in the curriculum, how much their institute support paly-

based learning and what are the different challenges they faced or institute faced for involving play-based learning in their curriculum.

Awareness about play based learning activities

Most of the participants are aware about the activities but they don't use the term as play-based learning activities. Some are totally clueless about what play-based learning are, while others use them frequently in their classrooms. One of the participants mentioned '*I think not much of the teachers are aware about play-based learning, most of the English version schools are still into traditional teaching method*' (IDI-5, 20.12.23).

While another participant mentioned that "*I think those who are following the IB curriculum or student-centric learning they are aware of it, based on the focus of the benefits of children, most of the teachers are aware about paly-based learning activities*" (IDI-2, 15.12.23)

Curriculum support from schools

When it comes to curriculum, most of the participants mentioned that their institute doesn't support play-based learning, except the institute that follows IB curriculum, however, they incorporate few activities in their lessons as per the demand of the subject and topics. One of the participant mentioned "*Yes our institute follows play-based curriculum, it does, our school is well-equipped with play-based learning resources and stations. We follow theme-based learning which allows the learners to explore through different activities. It is not only pen and paper, rather more kinesthetic where learners are allowed to ask questions, be curious and explore their answers through play and learn*" (IDI-4, 19.12.23)

Whereas another participant mentioned *“No, it is a huge school with 35-40 students in a class, it is not possible to have play-based learning. In addition to that we don’t have the environment and space and the materials required for play-based learning. Moreover, our management is more into following the traditional learning.”* (IDI-5, 20.12.23)

Types of play-based activities and play-based resources

Play-based learning activities are used to promote different aspects of children's development, including their cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical skills. There are different play-based activities that teachers can use to make their class interesting, interactive, engaging and effective which will help students learn better. In case of play-based activities, most of the participants are into storytelling, using flash cards, art and craft materials. There are many play-based practices that the participants uses in their classrooms to help learning to be more interesting. Some of the participants mentioned that they are not provided with sufficient materials or resources to perform play-based activities in their classroom. One of the participant mentioned her play-based activities that she follows *“Collaborate play, project works, role play, exploration games, treasure hunts games, etc”*, she also mentioned resources and materials she used, which are *“Play foam, Textured fabrics and surfaces, LEGOS, Art supplies, Craft materials (paper, glue, scissors), Age-appropriate books covering various genres and themes, Paints, brushes, and canvases etc”*, in addition to that she mentioned *“I think set up a well-organized space with a variety of materials, including toys, books, art supplies, and sensory items, is necessary, and to create an outdoor play area with age-appropriate equipment and opportunities for exploration are best ways to engage children through play-based learning. Teachers can encourage collaborative building projects that involve teamwork and communication among learners”* (IDI-4, 19.12.23)

Teacher's role in making play-based learning

Teachers have a big role to play when it comes to implementing play-based learning in the classroom and make it successful, and to make it happen, teachers need lots of resources and activities to incorporate. One of the participants mentioned that *“By incorporating different activities in lessons and making the students engaged by using those, the most important part is that the teacher needs to be knowledgeable on how to keep the students engaged”* (IDI-1, 11.12.13).

Another participant mentioned *“Teachers can make the lessons interesting; teachers can be an active participant while teaching, teachers can use different materials while teaching to keep the attention and very important is giving each student opportunity to involve in the learning process using the resources.”* (IDI-6, 20.12.23)

Teachers' Training

When it comes to training the teachers, most of the institutes take them for granted and doesn't pay attention in upgrading their teachers in professional development. Unlike most of the participants mentioned that it is necessary that the teachers need training from times to time which they don't receive, one of the teachers mentioned that *“Teachers' certificate-based course, workshops. I am happy to share that our institute always organizes in-house training for their teachers every month which helps us to reinforce our job responsibilities and be updated.* (IDI-1, 11.12.13)

Another teacher mentioned *“Teachers should be provided with workshops and training for the upgradation of the learning process and to stay in pace with the educational system that is widely used, but unfortunately we don't receive any such trainings”* (IDI-5, 20.12.23)

Theme 3: Challenges faced to implement play-based learning

Play-based learning is not in common practice in our country, thus implementing it in different schools brings a lot of challenges. There can be many components of barriers that will hinder the implementation of play-based learning in schools.

Most of the teachers mentioned that the main challenge is that the management and the school authorities need to bring in the mindset of play-based learning and customize their institute accordingly, and the train teachers who can provide effective play-based learning and create an awareness among the parents about the importance of play-based learning, only then play-based learning will be implemented.

One of the participants mentioned *“Well, most of our parents are aware of our educational curriculum and the management is very supportive, yet there are some parents and educators that hold traditional beliefs about learning and view play as unrelated to academic achievement. Insufficient funding or resources may hinder the upgradation and be of one the challenges too”* (IDI-4, 19.12.23)

6.2 Discussions:

In this part of the chapter, study results based on the research questions will be interpreted. The discussion will provide the analysis of the findings done out of the in-depth interview done. The discussion is being presented into many parts based on the different themes.

Teacher’s Understanding of Play-Based Learning in Pre-School

From the findings of the in-depth interviews that were taken from eight participants, the word play refers to fun and enjoyment for all the teachers. They all believe that play is fundamental at the young age, and they should be allowed to play as it helps them to develop mentally and physically. However, to what most of them did not agree is that play should be included in preschool. Because

their notion of schooling or pre-schooling is that the children should be introduced to core learning. According to them children will play anyways, therefore pre-school should be the beginning of their basic studies. While many agreed that learning through play is a better tool since it not only brings interest in learning, but their gross motor skills and cognitive skills are also developed. Play is the leading source of development in the pre-school years. (Vygotsky, L.S.,1967). Most of the teachers encouraged that play-based learning should be included in the curriculum, as play-based learning enhances learning abilities and helps build better concept of any topic.

According to the research, most of the participants disagreed play to be a part of the educational curriculum, which depicts that they lack comprehensive knowledge of play-based learning and optimal development. Other participants however, had a different perspective where they mentioned that play should be part of pre-school curriculum which will help a child increase their imagination, critical thinking ability and help be more focused in the learning process. Play is not only enjoyable but rather it is the child's stimulator and motivational agent to creative thinking and cultural engagement. (Fleer, M,2008).

Some of the participants also agreed that play-based learning can be an effective way to learn at school. Several studies have shown that the incorporation of play and movement activities into the teaching of academic subjects is positively perceived by both students and teachers, with high levels of enjoyment and satisfaction noted. (Ashiabi, G.S, 2007). One of the respondents described that play-based learning helps with the learning in a more intensive manner as the child will be focused on the activities, now a days, less children are bookish, and more into exploration, curiosity and learning. Most of the participants agreed upon play-based learning as being essential strategy to enhance children's socioemotional skills, cognitive skills and interpersonal skills which will help them participate in class and perform better in long run. Some of them also mentioned

that the best approaches for play-based learning can be when you bring creativity in learning process through play, for example: counting objects during a building activity, incorporating letters into art projects, or using playdough to shape letters and numbers etc. However, there were few participants who disagreed with the concept, and focused more into conventional learning through books or colorful books.

Some of the findings of the study reveals that the children learns well if the teacher knows the students well and what different learning style can help them learn through play-based learning. Some of the respondents even mentioned children engage creativity learning through play in imaginative scenarios, some involves building and creating with materials like blocks, Legos, or other construction toys, some plays with puzzles thus enhancing their critical thinking skills. The findings thus support then concept that learning through play makes children active learners and this finding is supported by Pyle and Daniel's' (2017) where it is mentioned that playing more of formal and informal, children must be more socialized, competitive and competent and they can serve for themselves and for the nation.

Play-Based Learning Practices and Teacher's Role

The second theme is about the analysis of the awareness of the teachers about play-based learning. The findings demonstrated that most of the teachers are aware about play-based learning, even though they don't use the term directly. They understand the importance of learning and how it is well done through playful and interactive activities. They use different types of play-based learning activities in their classroom, based on the availability of the resources in their institute. Some of the institute supports play-based learning and incorporates it in their curriculum.

Some of the respondents mentioned that they use the play-based learning methods in their classroom and making play-based learning activities a part of the lesson is mandatory in the curriculum of their institute. Teachers find it interesting how children are motivated by play-based activities and their learning patterns increase due to their involvement in the learning process. This is supported by Martin, R.; Murtagh, E (2017) when he mentioned “Teachers reported enhanced student motivation for learning and increased engagement with academic content following the adoption of playful and movement-based teachings”. The findings have shown that the respondents who already follow the play-based learning have identified maximum potential from their children. The attendance is high, they willingly participate, they are always enthusiastic and curious to learn more., and the activities they use are: age-level physical resources, ensuring personal safety of the children, necessary measures could be taken while using perishable items as resources (acknowledgement of the parents).

Most of the respondents grieved about not having play-based learning inclusive in their curriculum and they still follow the conservative learning, which makes the learning dull. However, they try to emphasize different approaches to keep their learners engaged in the learning through activities like storytelling, singing, movements and gestures with hands. They also sometimes use colorful pictures and flashcards to improve the quality of learning. Play through learning has many benefits, both indoor and outdoor play is important for the mental and physical development of the children as agreed by Lynch (2015).

According to the findings of the study many teachers wish they had some professional development training for the improvement of their development in teachings. Improvement of the educational system is closely associated with appropriate and professional development of teachers as similar narration by Avalos, B (2011) in his article “Teacher professional development in

teaching and teacher education over ten years”. Most of the respondents understands the value of improvement and desires to have regular training and workshops either in-house or paid training for their development. Almost all participants were highly motivated to learn more about the application of play-based learning if they would like to engage in proper training and workshops for the knowledge of play learning and all responded positively.

Some of the teachers have no knowledge or clean strategies for play-based learning, which may explain why this approach is not utilized in their teaching practices. Many participants said that they used their own resources and materials to make their lessons and class engaged and when shared with the authorities and management about it, they showed to interest to finance or encourage activities because of their policies.

Challenges to Implement Play-Based Learning in Preschool

This part of the findings is about the challenges that are faced to implement play-based learning in preschool. At first it is crucial to understand that preschool is the foundation of the educational life. The amount of investment and efforts given in preschool is vital. As far as play-based learning is concerned, first all of it is important for teachers, management and authorities to understand the long-term benefits of play-based learning. Based on the findings, it was identified that the concept of play-based learning is yet to be a part of education system in Bangladesh. Once the introduction is done, it is important to highlight the ratio of students in each class. As per the study, in Bangladesh the teacher student ratio should be such that all students are attainable.

According to the respondents, understanding of parents can also be challenging. Parents are still in the mindset of traditional learning and cannot yet accept and acknowledge the importance of play-based learning. According to them it is a waste of time, where children will be diverted in playing only and not studying.

Furthermore, the findings also represents that many teachers are willing to go for the play-based learning if they are given the proper training and provided with proper facilities and empowerment to make learning through play incorporated in their lessons, and that is only possible if the authority's perspective towards play-based learning is open.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation:

7.1. Conclusion

In this study, it is found that the teacher's understanding and incorporation of play-based learning practices in preschool is highly affected by the lack of knowledge and skills in learning through play. Both play and time are necessary for children because they provide relaxation, creative energy, and the ability to connect with others stated by Baines and Slutsky (2009). Teachers, school authorities, parents should be aware about the long-term benefits of including play-based learning in their curriculum. Moreover, proper developmental training along with incorporation of age-appropriate resources and materials that are required for better implementation of play-based learning in classrooms. Teachers professional training and educational developmental programs should be included by the management of institutes in their policies to incorporate updated play-based learning activities in their lessons.

The respondent teachers claimed that they need outdoor space for the children to play, they need well-decorated furniture and classrooms to support play-based learning. This finding concurs with the findings of Aktar (2013) that pre-schools need an age-appropriate curriculum, adequate teaching-learning materials, playful activities and joyful teaching-learning environment to ensure quality pre-primary education.

In conclusion, we can quote that, “We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing”, as mentioned by George Bernard Shaw. Play is doing something for fun; play is essential for teachers as pedagogy; play is required for children to be ideal humans; practitioners should enable relevant play so that learning comes naturally via it.

7.2. Recommendation:

Based on the IDI and the findings, there are many recommendations to be incorporated.

Recommendation 1: Adequate amount of play supplies, materials and resources should be ensured in every pre-school to enhance and improve children’s holistic development. The cooperation of Bangladesh Education system to include play-based learning environment, install equipment and provide space for learning is recommended. Some of the govt. run pre-primary school with the help of NGOs like BRAC are taking steps to incorporate play-based learning and play-labs in different areas of Bangladesh. These activities can be extended countrywide by enhancing the curriculum.

Recommendation 2: Funds and budgets are expected to be allocated by education planners, authorities, policy makers and other stake holders to ensure better play-based learning.

Recommendation 3: Teachers should be provided with quarterly training and professional development session and workshops for the betterment of learning and productive outcomes in the classroom. Teachers should also be provided with latest articles, books, textbooks and e-books related to play-based learning.

Recommendation 4: Children learn better by playing, so they should be given the time and taught in a playful and effective manner with play so that it makes sense to them and they develop well (Bruce and Meggitt, 2002). Activities should be incorporated in the curriculum that supports more

outdoor activities, project-based learning, real life learning, which requires less screen time and more purpose based learning for their overall development.

6. Timeline of the study:

	October				November				December				January				February
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1
Topic Selection																	
First draft thesis Proposal																	
Final draft submission																	
Advanced seminar																	
Preparation of questionnaire																	
Data collection																	

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IDI- In-Depth Interview Questionnaire

Topic: Preschool teachers' practices of play-based learning in English Medium Schools of Dhaka

Section A- Demographic Information

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Educational Qualifications:

Years of teaching experience:

Institute name:

Address:

Section B- Knowledge about play-based learning

1. When you hear the word “Play” what comes to your mind?
2. To what extent do you think play is important for a child in his/her early years?
3. Do you think play is important for children?
4. Do you think play should be incorporated in pre-school?
5. Have you heard about “play-based learning”?
6. According to you is play-based learning an effective way to learn at school?
7. What is your view/opinion of what play-based approaches in teaching and learning?
8. What are the best approaches and ways to help children to learn through play?
9. What are the different play-based learning styles that can help students learn best?

Section C- Teacher’s role in Play-based learning

1. To what extent pre-school teachers are aware about play-based learning activities?
2. Does your present curriculum which you are using for the class support the play-based learning?
3. What are the different types of play-based activities that teachers can incorporate in their lessons?

4. How can teachers play an active role in making play-based learning interesting and engaging?
5. What are the best ways to engage the pre-school children in play-based learning?
6. In your opinion what are the materials, resources and facilities do you think are necessary for effective play-based learning?
7. Do you think your institute has the required environment, space and facilities available required for play-based learning? (If yes, list them, if no, then what are the initiatives that are needed to be taken?)
8. What types of preparation and training do teachers need to implement play-based learning in their classrooms? Please share your opinion
9. In your opinion what can be the challenges the institute can face or that can hinder the implementation for effective play-based learning in preschool?

IDI- In-Depth Interview Questionnaire- Guideline Bangla

Section B: খেলা ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা সম্পর্কে জ্ঞান

1. আপনি যখন "প্লে" শব্দটি শুনবেন তখন আপনার মনে কী আসে?
2. শিশুর প্রারম্ভিক বয়সে খেলা কতটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
- 3.
4. আপনি কি মনে করেন শিশুদের জন্য খেলা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?
5. আপনি কি মনে করেন যে খেলাকে প্রাক বিদ্যালয়ে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা উচিত?
6. আপনি কি "খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা" সম্পর্কে শুনেছেন?
7. আপনার মতে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শেখা কি স্কুলে শেখার একটি কার্যকর উপায়?
8. শেখানো এবং শেখার ক্ষেত্রে কোন খেলা-ভিত্তিক পদ্ধতির বিষয়ে আপনার দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি/মতামত কী?

9. খেলার মাধ্যমে শিশুদের শেখার জন্য সাহায্য করার সর্বোত্তম পন্থা এবং উপায়গুলি কী কী?
10. বিভিন্ন খেলা-ভিত্তিক শেখার শৈলী কী যা শিক্ষার্থীদের সর্বোত্তমভাবে শিখতে সাহায্য করতে পারে?

Section C: প্লে-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষায় শিক্ষকের ভূমিকা

1. প্রাক-বিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষকরা খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা কার্যক্রম সম্পর্কে কী পরিমাণ সচেতন?
2. আপনার বর্তমান পাঠ্যক্রম যা আপনি ক্লাসের জন্য ব্যবহার করছেন তা কি খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাকে সমর্থন করে?
3. বিভিন্ন ধরনের খেলা-ভিত্তিক ক্রিয়াকলাপ কী কী যা শিক্ষকরা তাদের পাঠে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করতে পারেন?
4. খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাকে আকর্ষণীয় এবং আকর্ষক করতে শিক্ষকরা কীভাবে সক্রিয় ভূমিকা পালন করতে পারেন?
5. খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষায় প্রাক-স্কুল শিশুদের জড়িত করার সর্বোত্তম উপায়গুলি কী কী?
6. আপনার মতে কার্যকর খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় উপকরণ, সংস্থান এবং সুবিধাগুলি কী কী?
7. আপনি কি মনে করেন যে আপনার ইনস্টিটিউটে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় পরিবেশ, স্থান এবং সুযোগ-সুবিধা উপলব্ধ আছে? (যদি হ্যাঁ, তাদের তালিকা করুন, যদি না হয়, তাহলে কী কী উদ্যোগ নেওয়া দরকার?)
8. তাদের শ্রেণীকক্ষে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা বাস্তবায়নের জন্য শিক্ষকদের কি ধরনের প্রস্তুতি ও প্রশিক্ষণ প্রয়োজন? আপনার মতামত শেয়ার করুন
9. আপনার মতে ইনস্টিটিউট কোন কোন চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হতে পারে বা প্রি-স্কুলে কার্যকর প্লে-ভিত্তিক বোর্ডের জন্য বাস্তবায়নকে বাধাগ্রস্ত করতে পারে?

Consent form

I _____ hereby give the permission to interviewer, Tahira Zaman to allow me to respond to questionnaire and quote my responses in a scholarly research paper.

I understand that the research title is “**Pre-school teacher’s practice of play-based learning in English Medium Schools of Dhaka**” is for academic purpose.

I also understand that these researchers, hereby named Tahira Zaman, will maintain my anonymity regarding my responses to the questionnaire items.

I hereby give my permission in the form of my signature below:

Signature: _____

Date: _____