

TEACHING LITERACY THROUGH PLAY: INDONESIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS PRESPECTIVE

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Abstract: *In Early childhood education, play is considered as the heart of instruction and learning prepare. Play moreover critical in obtaining children language and literacy ability, person with higher level of proficiency have higher opportunity in their life success. This is a qualitative research study analysing teacher's conceptualization of play in the literacy teaching and learning process. An interpretative and descriptive qualitative research is the design of this study. A qualitative study was undertaken because this technique allows researchers with ways and means considering different views of the research subject therefore producing rich, in-depth and elaborate data. This, small research has been conducted in Indonesian settings on the utilize of play in educating proficiency in early childhood instruction classrooms. Information was obtained through one-on-one, one-hour in-depth interviews from a few teachers in five early childhood education institutions. Examination of the information uncovered those early education teachers agree on utilizing play as an instrument in educating literacy concepts.*

Keyword: *Children Early Literacy, Children Play*

Abstrak: Pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Bermain merupakan bagian utama dalam pembelajaran. Bermain juga menjadi bagian yang sangat penting dalam dalam menstimulasi perkembangan Bahasa dan literasi awal anak. Sebagaimana diketahui bahwa orang dengan kemampuan literasi yang lebih tinggi, cenderung mampu menggapai apa yang diinginkannya. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif yang menganalisis konseptualisasi guru tentang permainan dalam proses belajar mengajar literasi. Desain penelitian kualitatif interpretatif dan deskriptif adalah desain penelitian ini. Sebuah studi kualitatif dilakukan karena teknik ini memungkinkan peneliti dengan cara dan sarana untuk mempertimbangkan pandangan yang berbeda dari subjek penelitian sehingga menghasilkan data yang kaya, mendalam dan rumit. Bagaimanapun, penelitian ini telah dilakukan di lingkungan Indonesia tentang pemanfaatan permainan dalam mendidik kecakapan di ruang kelas pengajaran anak usia dini. Informasi diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam satu lawan satu selama satu jam dari beberapa guru di beberapa lembaga pendidikan anak usia dini. Pemeriksaan informasi mengungkapkan bahwa guru PAUD sepakat untuk memanfaatkan bermain sebagai instrumen dalam mendidik konsep literasi.

Kata Kunci: Literasi Awal Anak, Bermain pada Anak

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INTRODUCTION

Pre-primary education is targeted at children from three years old to official school entry age. In many countries, education in this group is not compulsory, nevertheless its educational attributes have been characterized as including "...interaction with peers and educators and play based activities can be used as learning opportunities to promote social interactions with peers and to develop skills, autonomy and school readiness" (UNESCO-UIS, 2012)

In early childhood instruction setting, the part of play is considered basic to children learning. It is the implies by which children investigate their world and procure information. Some studies show that play could help in children's learning improvement. Play also affirm as a primary means for the expressions of ideas, feelings and believe in children program (Phelps 2008).

Play in childhood program also very crucial in acquiring language and literacy skill. Individual with higher levels of literacy have better opportunity for social and economic successes (Saracho, 2001). A few have contended that free play, which is depicted as completely child coordinated, is the foremost successful shape of play since it gives children with openings for self-expression, imagination and self-motivation without grown-up mediation (McInnes et al. 2013; Moller 2015). Adult can effectively offer unique opportunities especially for children language and development during play as long as adult understand how to scaffold children learning and not direct children's play. This is a critical distinction about role of adult in children's play. This critical distinction about the role of adults in children play and the potential impact of adult/teacher can have on children ability in literacy and language

Due to that reason, Indonesian government by Perpu no,137/2014 about national standard of Early Childhood

Education, make play as the staple in Early Education learning method. Therefore, there has been a small investigate attempted in presenting education in ECE in Indonesia. Based on this setting, we propose in understanding how Indonesian early childhood teachers see play, literacy and combine those in children's learning as critical aspect. The consider needs to burrow more profound Indonesian teachers' thoughts in utilizing diverse kind of play in their classroom and how they see play as critical or insignificant in learning education. To achieve this, we talk about almost early childhood instruction in Indonesia, then discuss a few writings within the field of play and early proficiency and display the investigate conducted and information created

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Childhood Education in Indonesia

The foremost critical issue on the Early Childhood Instruction and Care (ECCE) improvement in Indonesia is foundations of National Grand Design (NGD). The NGD appears that the government has put a noteworthy consideration for the advancement ECCE and the enhancement of government recognition of ECCE. The government has been aware that putting more consideration and finance to ECCE is really a venture that can bring a significant alter to the longer term and human capital is the key to the betterment of Indonesia. The NGD covers long terms methodologies for ECCE advancement. It is set to be able to accommodate the needs of its development from 2011 to 2045.

The national standard of ECCE centre in Indonesia, currently there are 5 models of ECCE, classified into non-formal, informal and formal model of institution. The models are Kindergarten, Playgroup, children Day-care, family based ECCE and *Satuan PAUD sejenis* (similar form of ECCE). Each of models

differentiated based on age of children, service, and how its conducted. All models are obliged to follow national standard which covers standard of developmental goals, standard of ECCE teachers and professionals, standard of content, process and assessment and standard of infrastructure, facilities, management and finance.

With this all enhancement in ECCE, the government coordinates kindergarten as portion of the existing basic instruction. Encourages, the government states that the arrangement of obligatory kindergarten instruction ought to advance the advancement of children over all perspectives, in planning for formal basic instruction of the existing rudimentary instruction framework.

According to the National ECE curriculum, the aim of kindergarten education is to develop children in all domains of learning development, cognitive, physical, emotional and social, preparing them for the high demands of formal education at school. In other words that the focus of kindergarten learning is school readiness. In this context, where school readiness is considered key to early childhood education, space for children to play can be overlooked in the everyday work of the classroom. In the following section we note some of the research about the importance of play for literacy learning in the early years.

Play and Literacy in Early Years Classroom

Learning through play is a common teaching and learning approach in early childhood settings (Bodrova 2008; Frost et al. 2001). Play may be a common and sound action that children are included in every day. Combining learning and play could be a smart strategy to energize children to memorize in a straightforward, quick, and curiously way. Hyvonen (2011) expressed that play may be a profitable and critical instrument in early childhood instruction, and proposed

that all pre-service instructor preparing programs ought to incorporate, in their instruction programs, techniques to design compelling perky learning forms and to make an agreeable learning environment.

Moon and Reifel (2008) confirm the findings of previous studies regarding the importance of play and creating appropriate play environments to enhance literacy learning among children. The authors demonstrate that using different types of play improves literacy learning among children from different language backgrounds. Providing appropriate literacy materials in play environments has also been shown to promote literacy learning.

Utilizing proficiency toys in the middle of play time, particularly amid emotional play, makes a difference to extend children's understanding of the forms of perusing and composing. Myck-Wayne (2010) found that the emotional and square play zones give numerous benefits to improve the communications and social intuitive between young children. Make-believe acts and part play are angles of sensational play that improve learning, particularly of verbal dialect, since children are persuaded to create express and keen dialect for their play.

Conflict resolution, cooperative work, accepting of others' viewpoints, and recognizing real and pretend differences are play aspects that the young children learn during play centre. The adults should ensure that the relationship between play and literacy has a meaningful connection by directing, observing, and participating with children during play time. Scaffolding dramatic play can positively affect the improvement of the early academic skills.

There is a large body of literature, much of it Western, considering the relationship between play and literacy learning, (Genishi, 2014) for example, talks of a reading/playing nexus (p. 332, original emphasis). More broadly, language learning is considered one of the

most critical areas of development during the early years of childhood education. Play in language and language in the play, the Nexus, can result in growth of language construction and acquisition (Prior and Gerard, 2004)

An example of this is sociodramatic or pretend play. During this kind of play, children have the opportunity to plan out scenes or episodes, make bargains, negotiate and carry out the roles assigned to them. In this way, the use of language is practiced and honed as the children interact with each other during the play episode. A considerable level of language understanding, including intonation, facial expression and another non-verbal language such as gestures and postures is needed to enter such a play episode is kind of play includes discussions and conversations that often require complex and elaborate language interaction and metacognition processes (Prior and Gerard, 2004) Taking on and acting a specific role in play elicits considerable linguistic abilities and literacy skills in young children. These skills, linguistic abilities and expounded vocabulary serve as the foundation of literacy in the primary years of education. While in play, the children may practice narrative conversations as they talk about specific details of their play episode, for example, the story settings, characters, plot, action, and problems. These elements significantly contribute to language acquisition, reading and writing comprehension that is essential in the educational process and school success.

This study examined teachers' conceptualizations of the importance of play in the literacy teaching-learning process in early childhood education settings in the Philippines. Specifically, this study investigated on the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of early childhood educators in regard to the use of play as a medium of delivering instruction to advance literacy?

2. What kinds of play do teachers think are suitable and advance?

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research study analysing teacher's conceptualization of play in the literacy teaching and learning process. It investigates some components of play as a learning tool that teachers consider in their everyday teaching. A qualitative research methodology was adopted because of its mission to achieve "trustworthiness" of conclusion and interpretation yielded from the collected data and this can be achieved through a qualitative research method.

Research Design

An interpretative and descriptive qualitative research is the design of this study. A qualitative study was undertaken because this technique allows researchers to consider different views of the research subject therefore producing rich, in-depth and elaborate data. This study of the teacher's conceptualization of the use of play in literacy teaching and learning in their classroom would give the avenue for the teachers to speak out their ideas and opinion on their respective teaching styles.

Participants of The Study

All of the participants hold a university qualification, three of them hold a bachelor degree in early childhood education (Teachers 1, 2, and 3) and two of them holds a diploma education degree (Teacher 4 and 5). All participants have experience as professional teacher, having each taught for between 7-10 years. All teachers were teaching in Nursery or Kindergarten settings in the Indonesia, at the time of the interviews. Children in these classes are four to six years old.

Source of Data

In response to the teacher's conceptualization on the role of play in teaching and learning, the researcher was

the primary agent for data gathering and data analysis. An in-depth interview method was used because it allowed the researcher the chance to gather original and first-hand information from the respondents, observe the different body language and expression of the respondents and do follow up questions and inquiry of their given statement. A semi structured interview strategy opted as it gave the researcher the opportunity to make follow up question and ask for further explanation on the respondent's statement. Though an interview protocol was set and, the follow-up questions mentioned are for purposes of clarification or further explanation. As such it will also be advantageous in gaining additional data needed.

Procedure

Each teacher took part in a single one-to-one interview lasting between 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and then reviewed and approved by the teachers. The researcher also took written notes during the interviews. Teachers were asked about the children's play in their classroom, the views of the teachers regarding the effect of this play on children's literacy, and the teacher's perception on the use of playing in literacy teaching.

Data Analysis

The interviews were analysed through extensive reading for emerging themes; the themes were then coded and further analysed to make sense of the data. A key theme emerging from the interview data addressed the kinds of play the teachers used and valued in their teaching of early literacy

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The use of play to promote literacy learning

Teachers used dominant developmental discourses to explain the social, emotional, physical and

intellectual benefits of play, particularly in terms of children's literacy learning. As a form or instrument for teaching and learning literacy, they used various styles of play. These different kinds of play were described and categorized by the teachers as: active play, exploratory, manipulative or construction play, music play and dramatic play, or cooperative play, and literacy in active play.

Based on the respondent's answer and examples provided in the interviews, it is noted that for teachers in this study active play was understood as a structured, teacher-directed play or play, rather than any kind of free-flowing or child-directed play. Active play has been used by teachers to integrate the introduction of literacy and numeracy concepts by incorporating these concepts into the act.

Teacher 1 gave an example of directed active play in teaching literacy, *...another one that I once – I told them a story about Bunny or Rabbit ... I let the children pay attention about the story, the rabbit looks, rabbit eats etc, then at the end, I let the children to look for some letter begin with B, so this time you are all going to pick up all the letter B that you can find on the floor and put it inside the basket.*

Teachers viewed the manipulation of letter blocks of different sizes as supporting a child in learning to spell their name, while also developing fine motor skills. For example, by collecting some words, children able to memorizing the words and sound of the word. Activities such as these are specifically linked to the learning competency set for the day as per the Pre-School Handbook and the National Kindergarten Curriculum Guide for Teachers, targeting children's achievement of the subject matter according to their own pace in their development literacy in exploratory, manipulative or construction play.

Blocks and other manipulatives have been described by all teachers as common materials used in their

classrooms. It is evident that their classrooms provide some, if not all, of these learning materials, and that teachers make them available to children through a variety of educational centers. A range of manipulatives was described by the teachers such as various blocks, beads, toys, puzzles, and clay or dough, all of which come in different colours, sizes and shapes. As Teacher 2 explained, *“we have sorting of beads with different colours and shapes, we have to identify numbers and number object using loose part.*

Another form of exploratory play described by teachers was art or fine motoric coordination. Teachers 3, 4 and 5 suggest that fine motoric activities allow the children to practice their fine motor skills leading to the correct *“finger grips”* in holding pencils, considered as essential in early writing by the teachers. Teacher 3 explains, sequencing newspaper into balls, is a good exercise for fingertip motor in holding pencil properly. it’s preparing them on how to hold the pencil.

Four of the five teachers linked the term “free play” with explorative and manipulative play. Most of the time spent by children in their classrooms doing exploratory and manipulative activities is specifically scheduled at the time of the day when children are free to choose their preferred learning centres and are able to choose any manipulatives, such as blocks, toys or puzzles.

For Teacher 2, The choice of their own manipulations by the children encourages each child to express their thoughts freely, children will have to choose toys they want, so that they can express what they want, for example, they get certain toy and then they are free to say something about that one, so you encourage the children to talk about it.

Teacher 4, also suggests that this level of choice allows the children to be comfortable within the classroom environment. Most of the time, we spend our time by playing like sitting down on the floor, employing a tangle and there’s

one corner in our classroom with toys, we let our children to be more at ease and select the toy that they want to play. If they like to play with those blocks, with those puzzles so children are free to choose whatever toys that they want to play during that day. For them to be comfortable.

Teachers 3 and 5, both depicted the manipulative play as a time-filler, utilized whereas holding up for other children to reach within the mornings. They encourage communicated that utilizing these manipulatives, as a shape of play, gives children the opportunity to investigate either on their possess or with peers, so the children can fair get the toys that they like and they can bring it to the tangle range where they can play either by themselves or with another kid around the room whereas they wait for other classmates or other children to come.

Having an extra time or extended time for play which is built into daily routine of kindergarten classroom is important for children to maintain play activity. Typically, an hour in the morning or afternoon session of predicted and structured manipulative or role play time is needed for young children to be engaged in independent activity with their friends. the table bellow will give you a certain description

Table 1: Environment interventions to support children language and literacy development during the centre time

Increase/ maintain classroom roleplay or sociodrama play time at least an hour in AM/PM time
Minimize the number of roleplay centre available at a time (have 2-3 centres a day), play centres, restricted number of centres that encourage solitary play
Provide focused centres with enhanced reading and writing materials
Bring the cultural aspects within each activity in every centre
Make sure that your property in teaching and the environment closely resemble real life

scenario. Children familiarity with themes and props are very significant
Provide uninterrupted blocks of time during play. At least 10-20 minutes

Literacy in Music Play and Dramatic Play

Music-play was a well-known as reaction from all the instructors, as singing is common in numerous classroom settings. In any case, the instructors did not do conversation at length almost all the time. The music play might serve to progress education, particularly the new story and communication abilities of the children.

Teacher 1 appeared her information of the advancement of early phonics as a result of singing melodies, *“we play with tunes, and that’s when they are able to listen sounds which is really phonics and really starting perusing aptitudes and so kids to memorize in reading”*. Early education teachers detailed those children move to the beat of any music; they play and sing along to melodies and come up with their claim words and tunes concurring to melodies they regularly listen. Interests, the emotional play was not raised in any profundity by any of the instructors.

As it where two of the five teachers said their utilize of sensational play in their instructing learning exercises. Teacher 1, for case, briefly included emotional play onto her dialog of perky learning exercises for educating, *“...and after that we too have an emotional play”*. Teacher 3 explained a small assist depicting why she joins sensational play in her classroom, *...at that point emotional play so they cherish to show, demonstrate individuals like particularly instructors, they truly, in case they go domestic, they will act like you.*

Teacher 3 discussed the importance of providing an environment close to real-life in some detail, for example, a living room, dining room or bedroom. Teacher 3 also discussed how

these lessons "retain to them" when children are given this style of the learning environment.

In other words, Teacher 3 believed the children retained their learning more effectively in these dramatic play contexts. She went on to suggest that children take on different roles according to the presented play setting. A home setting, for example, consists of many family members. As the children have previous knowledge of characters such as members of the family (e.g. mother, father, brother, sister), they are able to act out and modify these roles in association with their peers

The five Indonesian early childhood teachers in this consider have depicted their understanding on relation between play and the proficiency teaching-learning handle as they talked. Associating play with learning may be a steady hone within the field of early childhood instruction and instructors in this field ought to get it the connecting of play with the learning handle. The sorts of play instructors talked about shifted, extending over dynamic play, sensational play, exploratory and manipulative play, valuable play, agreeable play, and music play. These diverse sorts of play give young children encounters that permit them to think typically, building the establishment for afterward learning. the teachers emphasized the significance of cognitive advancement and they recognized signs of emanant proficiency in children, empowering them to plan play programs pointed at building a run of proficiency abilities which will be picked up through play. The dynamic play was raised by all the instructors. Based on the responses and encounters given within the interviews, it is famous that dynamic play was considered to be a shape of organized play and recreations coordinated by the instructors.

These activities were taught by the teachers to introduce number and letter concepts through incorporating these

concepts into active physical play or games such as running, crawling or pretending to be *Rabbit*. This active play was also considered to contribute to the development of both fine and gross motor skills. For example, teachers suggested that manipulating letter blocks of different sizes while assisting the child to spell their name was important not only for building fine motor skills but also pre-literacy skills.

Active play, physical games or activities were considered to create a positive learning experience resulting in positive affect, thus learning in this context is thought to be fun for the children. As suggests positive emotions, such as joyfulness and happiness, may emerge during this kind of active play. Blocks play and other manipulative play was discussed by all the teachers as being common in their classrooms.

Distinctive with manipulative plays were famous by the teachers or educators such as pieces, dots, toys, confuses, and clay, all of which come completely different sorts, sizes and shapes. It is obvious that their classrooms hold a few, in the event that not all, these learning materials and for the most part the instructors presented them to the children through different learning canters in their classrooms found that the consideration of education objects such as these manipulatives empowered the children to hone education practices such as perusing, composing, taking care of and naming objects and utilizing their rising education abilities in their play exercises. It is obvious in most kindergarten classroom settings that tunes are being utilized in circle time and other lesson exercises, frequently utilized as a move from one movement to another or utilized as inspiration and opening exercises.

Music play was a prevalent reaction from all the Indonesian instructors. Be that as it may, whereas the instructors recognized the significance of tunes and music play, they were not able

to examine in any profundity the part this sort of play has in progressing education, particularly for the emanant story and communication aptitudes of the children. Interests, as it were two of the five instructors specified sensational play, and as it were one examined it in any profundity. Given the far-reaching accentuation on sensational or sociodramatic play within the overall play writing, this can be or maybe shocking. Once more, it can be that whereas the instructors recognized the significance of sensational play, they did not have a proficient dialect to precise this information

CONCLUSION

Play in early childhood education is very crucial. Children able to optimize their potential by using play. The five Indonesian instructors met in this study were able to talk about their knowledge and understanding of the significance and esteem of play in proficiency teaching and learning process. They use play as one of their key instruments for teaching education concepts. The five teachers examined their classroom practices in connecting play with proficiency educating and learning exercises. This study shows that the teachers see play as a valuable thing. They need an assistant to develop and improve their ability in using play as educational instruction.

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