

Teachers' Perception of Utilization of Play-Based Teaching Approach in Selected Elementary Schools in Zambales

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ABSTRACT

Play-based helps the children to develop their social skills, motivation to learn and language skills. Play is the most natural and meaningful way for children to build knowledge and understandings, practice skills, and naturally immerse themselves in a wide spectrum of literacy and numeracy and participate in constructive, intrinsically rewarding learning situations. The aim of this study is to determine the teacher's perceptions of the play-based teaching approach and whether they think that it is an effective way to develop the knowledge and social skills of the children or not. A total of 21 respondents were used with varied grade handles, educational attainment, year in service and school as the profile variables in the study to test the significant differences of their responses. The researcher used a quantitative approach for their research and a descriptive survey design was employed. The analysis of variance revealed that there were no significant differences in perceptions of the used of play-based teaching approach and its connection with cognitive and social-emotional development based on their sex, school, grade level handled, years in service, or highest educational attainment. The Researchers found out that play-based is effective and would support the student learning and enhance academic curriculum. Play-based is important to the development of cognitive and social-emotional children because it promotes discovery, exploration and interest. It is effective when the teacher guides the learners during play-based activities, and they believed that play-based would support the student learning and enhance academic curriculum. It is important to be utilized in the development of cognitive skills because it promotes discovery, exploration and stimulates interest in the subject matter. And it makes connections with others and develops friendship helps the children to share ideas, express feelings and develop their social-emotional skills.

Therefore, the researchers recommend the parents and teachers to support the learners in letting them build and discover learning through play especially in schools where it is less common to foster the effectiveness of teaching approach.

Keywords: Pay-based, Perceptions, Cognitive / Social-Emotional Development

BACKGROUND

Play-based is a teaching strategy in which we let children develop their ability to interact with each other at an early age. In this context, children can explore, experiment, discover and solve problems. Their mind will develop more because it forms the foundation of a child's learning (Robertson, 2018). Children make their own learning through play-based because of their interest and curiosity. Play-based helps children develop their social skills, motivation to learn, and language skills. At the same time, the academic program is teacher-led to develop the student's activity to distinguish the shape, letter, color, and sound. (Vogel, 2017). According to Jean Piaget, play reinforces the value of stimulating play conditions that allow children to pursue their own interests. Allowing children to investigate and explore through play allows them to build knowledge. It also provides opportunities for meaningful connections between peers and adults (Martin, 2021). The relevance of play in early childhood education has been a hot topic in early childhood education. Preschool is an essential part of early childhood development. They frequently believe that school-like learning should be the norm. Parents may be

unaware of the importance of play. When babies take books off the shelves, they may play as they experiment with gravity, height, and the books' characteristics. Both the sandbox and bath time are early science activities. Children can participate in experiments (Payne, 2013).

Teachers encourage pupils to explore and play in these many areas independently. Flexibility and creative thinking occur when children are allowed to be discoverers and explorers, and teachers function as facilitators, according to Friends' Central School. When children are encouraged to explore without a precise aim, they become problem solvers, build confidence, and learn how to work together. Furthermore, the concept of play is highly motivating for youngsters. Children might find joy in learning through playful discovery that they might not otherwise find in a regular educational context (Lubrano, 2019). This study aims to determine the teacher's perceptions of the play-based teaching approach and whether they think it is an effective way to develop the knowledge and social skills of the children or not.

METHODS

Research Design

The researchers used the descriptive quantitative method of research to determine the teacher's perception of using the play-based teaching approach in selected elementary schools in the Cabangan District.

Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston (2013) suggest that using the descriptive method, the researchers observed that a large mass of the target population made required conclusions about the variables. Using descriptive design enables the researchers to measure the results rather than explore the results. According to Smith, Devane, Begely & Clarke (2013), descriptive research design focuses on analyzing individuals' opinions, attitudes, behavior, and satisfaction levels. The method is used when the researcher has set specific research aims and objectives and generated specific research questions. In this method, the researcher generally uses close-ended questionnaires with specific options and categories to understand the ratings.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory serves as the major theoretical foundation for this study, which is structured around that theory. In 1962, Lev Vygotsky proposed the Zone of Proximal Development. He believes that if the youngsters help with a certain task, the assignment can be completed. Furthermore, according to Vygotsky, children's social, cognitive, and emotional development is aided by make-believe or imagined play. During the play age, there is a link between ZPD and developmental shifts. If we adopt Chaiklin's interpretation, we should consider how the system of higher mental processes develops during the 'play age,' which occurs between Vygotsky's two crisis periods 1 – the three-year crisis and the seven-year crisis. Vygotsky's only study of the relationship between play and development is in pretend play, which begins after the three-year crisis and declines after the seven-year crisis. The separation of the sense field 2 and the visual field from each other is the requirement for this option (Vygotsky, 1977). In general, Vygotsky utilizes the same criterion to separate stages in play development. Early childhood merging of visual and sense fields (Ernstspiel); pre-schooler separation of the external sense field and the visual field (pretend play); school child development of internal independent sense field coordinated with the external (athletic play); adolescent 'Ernstspiel' develops in consciousness (Vygotsky, 2005, p. 92).

In Vygotsky's method, the essential structural aspect of pretend play is the construction of hypothetical scenarios in which the "fulfilment of unrealizable tendencies and aspirations" is conceivable. He claims that the main characteristic of play is an imagined situation. The separation of visual and sense domains is used to create the imagined situation. Imagination is the neo-formation of the third-year crisis, allowing for illusory fulfilling of wants. Children's play, according to Vygotsky, is imagination in action (adolescent imagination is play without actions!). He highlighted that play is the fulfillment of wishes - not specific ones, but broad emotions. This indicates that the child is oblivious to his own motivations. He plays, but he has no idea what he's playing for.

For Vygotsky, a paradox of play is linked to the rules and joy of play. Subjugation to the rules reduces the joy of

action. Acting on immediate impulses is usually the best way to get the most enjoyment. However, if you play rule 3 and take action, you'll see a difference. 'Play gives the infant a new type of want, that is, teaches him to want, linking the desire to the fictional ego,' according to Vygotsky (2005, p. 91). (i.e., to his role in the play and its rules). Vygotsky discovered Spinoza's concept of volition and freedom in play. His conclusion was a paradox:

the youngster submits to the rules of his role while nevertheless getting the most enjoyment out of play.

Respondents and Location

The study was in selected elementary schools in Cabangan District, Cabangan, Zambales. Specifically, respondents were teachers from Grades 1-3 at selected schools from Cabangan Elementary School, Longos Elementary School, Anonang Elementary School, San Isidro Elementary School, and SapangBato Elementary School for Academic Year 2021-2022. A total of twenty-one (21) teacher-respondents were included in the study. Figure 2 shows the Map of the Cabangan District.

The researchers utilized cluster sampling to divide the entire population into groups or clusters. These clusters were used in full for the final analytic sample, which is drawn from a random sample that is drawn from these clusters (Wilson, 2010). For those researchers, cluster sampling is helpful because it saves time and money, with subjects dispersed across broad geographic areas (Davis, 2005).

Materials and Methods

The study utilized a questionnaire to gather the needed data. The researchers modified the questionnaire from Early Childhood Education Preservice Teacher's Perception on Play by Zhulamanova et al. (2019). The proponents of the researchers modified some of the questions included in the adopted instrument to make them relevant and applicable to the study.

The questionnaire consisted of four (4) parts. Part I aims to know the demographic profile of the respondents, such as sex, school, grade handled, year in service, and highest educational attainment. Part II aims to identify the teacher's perception of the use of the play-based teaching approach; it has ten (10) indicators related to the teacher's perception of using the play-based teaching approach. Part III aims to identify the teacher's perception of the use of the play-based teaching approach in connection with cognitive development; it has five (10) indicators related to the teacher's perception of the use of the play-based teaching approach. Part IV aims to identify the teacher's perception of using a play-based teaching approach in connection with social-emotional development; it has five (10) indicators related to the teacher's perception of using a play-based teaching approach.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Profile

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex		
Male	1	4.76
Female	20	95.24
Total	21	100

School		
Cabangan Elementary School	6	28.57
Anonang Elementary School	3	14.29
SapangBato Elementary School	5	23.81
Longos Elementary School	2	9.52
San Isidro Elementary School	5	23.81
Total	21	100
Grade Handled		
	1	6
	2	9
	3	6
Total	21	100
Years in Service		
1-10 years	13	61.9
11-20 years	5	23.81
21-30 years	2	9.52
31-40 years	1	4.76
Total	21	100
Mean	11.21 years	
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor Degree	18	85.71
Master's Degree	3	14.29
Doctoral Degree	0	0
Total	21	100

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the teacher-respondents profile according to their sex, school, grade handled, years in service, and educational attainment.

Out of 21 teacher-respondents, 20 or 95.24% were female, and 1 or 4.76% were identified as male teacher-respondents. This implied that most of the teacher-respondents in selected public elementary schools in the Cabangan District were females. The findings are in line with the sex profile data in the study of Ondinti (2019), which found that female teachers had a dominant position in pre-school education. School variable indicated that there were 6 or 28.57% of teacher-respondent from Cabangan Elementary School, followed by 5 or 23.81% from SapangBato Elementary School, the same with San Isidro Elementary School; 3 or 14.29% from Anonang

Elementary School; and 2 or 9.52 from Longos Elementary School. The result indicates that most of the Elementary teacher-respondents were from Cabangang Elementary School. The reason why there are more Elementary teacher-respondents in Cabangang because Cabangang Elementary School is the largest Elementary School in Cabangang District. Out of the 21 total teacher-respondents, 9 or 42.86% of teacher-respondents were in Grade 2; 6 or 28.57% were in Grade 1 and 3. The result indicates that most of the Elementary teacher-respondents are in Grade 2. According to Drew (2019) play-based is the dominant approach to early childhood education. It promotes children’s cognitive, social and emotional development. Years in service variable indicated that there were 13 or 61.90% have 1-10 years in service, followed by 5 or 23.81% of teachers who were at 11-20 years in service; 2 or 9.52%, 21-30 years in service; 1 or 4.76% who belongs to 31-40 years in service. The mean years in service were 11.21 or 11 years. According to Ondinti (2019) these results indicate that the majority of pre-school teachers are still working young and were able to participate in play-based activities as part of the preschool curriculum. Educational attainment indicates that 18 or 85.71% of teacher-respondents got a Bachelor’s Degree, followed by 3 or 14.29% who earned a Master’s Degree. The result indicates that most of the Elementary teacher-respondents obtained a Bachelor’s Degree. According to Bissonnette (2011) the findings indicate that graduate students and practicing teachers had a better knowledge of the developmental benefits of including play in the classroom and were more willing to embrace the "you can't say you can't play" guideline to encourage inclusive play and acceptance.

Table 2: Mean and Rating Scale on the Level of Perceptions of Teachers in Play-based Teaching Approach

Perception of Teachers in Play-based Teaching Approach	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Rating	Rank
1. I do believe the use of play in teaching would support student’s learning.	3.62	Strongly Agree	2.5
2. Integrating play in teaching will help my future students' learning.	3.57	Strongly Agree	5
3. Use of play promotes learning.	3.57	Strongly Agree	5
4. Can play-based curriculum be an effective way of learning for learners?	3.48	Strongly Agree	8.5
5. The teachers’ role is to guide learners during play-based activities.	3.67	Strongly Agree	1
6. The lecture method is more effective when using play-based teaching.	3.48	Strongly Agree	8.5
7. Play-activities help self-learning for students to develop their academic skills.	3.57	Strongly Agree	5
8. It is very easy to include play-based activities during the teaching and learning process.	3.43	Strongly Agree	10
9. Play enhances academic effective curriculum implementation.	3.62	Strongly Agree	2.5
10. It is easy to integrate play activities in curriculum implementation.	3.52	Strongly Agree	7
Overall Weighted Mean	3.55	Strongly Agree	

Rank 1 was indicator 5, “the teachers’ role is to guide learners during play-based activities”, perceived as Strongly Agree (WM=3.67). The teacher-respondents find it effective when the role of teachers is to guide the learners during play-based activities. This result is consistent with findings of Waldorf (2019) that the teacher encourages children’s learning and inquiry through interactions that aim to stretch their thinking to higher levels. Teachers take an active role in guiding children’s interactions in the play. Children are supported in developing social skills such as cooperation, sharing and responding to ideas, negotiating, and resolving conflicts. Play also promotes favorable learning attitudes. Pyle (2019) many studies have revealed that when the instructor, or an adult, is there to promote and scaffold learning, play-based learning is most effective. Rank 2.5 was indicator 1 and 9, “I do believe the use of play in teaching would support student’s learning” and “Play enhances academic

effective curriculum implementation”, perceived as Strongly Agree (WM= 3.62). The teacher-respondents perceived that play would support the student’s learning and play enhances academic effective curriculum implementation. According to Ondinti (2019) Preschool teachers had a wide range of attitudes regarding play-based activities in the implementation of preschool curriculum, with some having a strong positive attitude and others having a weak positive attitude. It was discovered that many preschool teachers believed that play-based learning was harmful. Because it allows children to develop social, emotional, physical and motor abilities that are vital in life, activities are crucial. However, despite the fact that many of the preschool teachers believed they were doing a good job, had received appropriate training on how to employ play-based activities in teaching and learning, while some of them believed they had received inadequate training on how to integrate play into teaching and learning. The Overall Weighted Mean of Perceived Perceptions of Teachers in Play-based Teaching Approach was 3.55 with the qualitative equivalent of Strongly Agree.

Table 3: Mean and Rating Scale on the Level of Perception on the Utilization of Play-based Teaching Approach for Cognitive Development

Cognitive Development	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Rating	Rank
1. Play is important to the development of cognitive skills in children.	3.71	Strongly Agree	2.5
2. Using play stimulates interest in subject matter.	3.71	Strongly Agree	2.5
3. Play helps children to learn effectively.	3.62	Strongly Agree	8
4. Play is creative process and imaginative.	3.62	Strongly Agree	8
5. Play promotes discovery and exploration.	3.71	Strongly Agree	2.5
6. Play creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning.	3.62	Strongly Agree	8
7. Play experiences are more likely to have well-development skills.	3.57	Strongly Agree	10
8. Play inspires children to pretend, create, and imagine.	3.67	Strongly Agree	5.5
9. Young children learn how things fit together through play.	3.67	Strongly Agree	5.5
10. Kids want to learn how things work and they learn best through play.	3.71	Strongly Agree	2.5
Overall Weighted Mean	3.66	Strongly Agree	
4o			

Rank 2.5 was indicator 1, 2, 5 and 10, “Play is important to the development of cognitive skills in children.”, “Using play stimulates interest in subject matter.”, “Play promotes discovery and exploration.”, and “Kids want to learn how things work, and they learn best through play.”, perceived as Strongly Agree (WM=3.71). The teacher-respondents perceived that play is important to the development of cognitive skills in children, using play stimulates interest in subject matter, play promotes discovery and exploration and kids want to learn how things work, and they learn best through play. Thelen (2012) believed that more particular research on cognitive development in children is also needed; it would be advantageous to have kindergarten-aged children. Many of the studies analyzed gave basic information and were able to identify some direct cognitive development skills, but more particular cognitive abilities gained through pretend play may be useful for research. In young children, pretend play contributes to academic performance. In the study of (Zapata, 2020) “Play teaches young children how things work together. It stimulates exploration and curiosity while also allowing them to engage their senses, which are the foundations of intellectual development and cognitive processing. Play also enables children to pretend, create, and fantasize. Children can imagine, explore, and practice critical thinking skills through creative, open-ended play. According to Drew (2019) the advantage of a play-based curriculum is that

children learn by discovery rather than being “told” facts. Enhanced, contextualized learning allows children to understand not just what is true, but also why it is true. Play can boost motivation, engagement, and focus during learning for children. Unintentional learning takes place during play; the knowledge target of a task is sometimes only possible with the help of teamwork and group work. Lead Children love play because it increases motivation, engagement, and focus during learning. A task’s knowledge target may only be achieved through collaboration and group work, resulting in both cognitive and social learning. A play-based curriculum uses this drive to learn through play. Children can experiment, discover, and solve difficulties in this context. Play-based learning is child-initiated and teacher-supported. The teacher stimulates learning and inquiry by stretching children’s thinking. Teachers guide kids’ play interactions. Children learn social skills like cooperating, sharing ideas, negotiating, and resolving disagreements. Play encourages learning. Imagination, curiosity, excitement, and perseverance. Play-based learning cannot be recreated through rote learning, which emphasizes information recall. The early childhood teacher encourages the child’s creativity and imagination by providing infinite opportunities for discovery and play. Play helps kids develop social, emotional, physical, and artistic skills. A proper balance between work and play prepares the child for success in kindergarten, first grade, and beyond. They provide people with the tools to go beyond a competitive society and make beneficial changes (Waldorf, 2019).The overall weighted mean of perceived use of the play-based teaching approach for cognitive development was 3.66, with the qualitative equivalent of Strongly Agree.

Table 4: Mean and Rating Scale on the Level of Perception on the Utilization of Play-based Teaching Approach for Social-Emotional Development

Social-Emotional Development	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Rating	Rank
1. Play is important to the development of social-emotional skills in children.	3.62	Strongly Agree	3
2. Play is socially interactive.	3.57	Strongly Agree	5.5
3. Play helps children to share ideas and express feelings.	3.62	Strongly Agree	3
4. Learning happens best when students engage in play rather than direct instruction.	3.48	Strongly Agree	9.5
5. Through play-based student’s experiences are essential to build understanding.	3.52	Strongly Agree	7.5
6. Play-based as a context for learning through which children organized and make sense of their social worlds.	3.48	Strongly Agree	9.5
7. Learning as they engage with people, objects, and representation.	3.52	Strongly Agree	7.5
8. Play allows them to explore, identify, negotiate, take risk, and create meaning.	3.62	Strongly Agree	3
9. Play regulates and negotiates their behavior.	3.57	Strongly Agree	5.5
10. Play makes connection with others and develops friendship.	3.76	Strongly Agree	1
Overall Weighted Mean	3.58	Strongly Agree	

Indicator 10, “Play makes connections with others and develops friendship.” (WM= 3.76, rank 1), perceived as Strongly Agree. The teacher-respondents perceived that play makes connections with others and develops friendships. In the study Waldorf (2019), children with higher social skills perform better in school, employment, and life. To build social skills, children’s directed play and modelling of helping behaviours are critical. They should be prioritized in early education. We agree with research that suggests that all educational experiences for children from preschool to elementary school should aim to develop social skills. A better community is built by getting along with people, being helpful and cooperative and displaying empathy. Furthermore, a child’s early talents in forming meaningful interactions with peers and adults are linked to excellent overall life outcomes.

Indicator 1, 3, and 8, “Play is important to the development of social-emotional skills in children”, “Play helps children to share ideas and express feelings”, and “Play allows them to explore, identify, negotiate, take risk, and create meaning”. (WM= 3.62 rank 2.5) perceived as Strongly Agree. The teacher-respondents believed that play is important and helped the children to share ideas and express feelings and develop their social-emotional skills. According to UNICEF (2018) Essential social and emotional knowledge and abilities are built on the foundation of the play. Children learn to create connections with people, share, negotiate, and resolve disagreements, as well as self-advocacy abilities, through play. Play also teaches children leadership and group dynamics. Play is also a natural tool that youngsters can utilize to develop their skills. In order to negotiate relationships, deal with social problems, and fight their fears, individuals must learn to build resilience and coping skills. The Overall Weighted Mean of Perceived Perception on the Utilization of Play-based Teaching Approach for Social-Emotional Development was 3.58, with the qualitative equivalent of Strongly Agree.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance on the Difference in the Perception of Teachers in Play-Based Teaching Approach of Students When Grouped According to Profile

Source of Variation	SEX	SCHOOL	GRADE HANDLED	YEARS IN SERVICE	EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
Perception of Teachers in Play-based Teaching Approach					
Between groups					
Sig.	0.73	0.87	0.62	0.41	0.07
Interpretation	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho
Significance	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Within groups					
Total					
Utilization of Play-based Teaching Approach in Connection					
with Cognitive Development					
Between groups					
Sig.	0.38	0.48	0.32	0.06	0.13
Interpretation	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho
Significance	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Within groups					
Total					
Utilization of Play-based Teaching Approach in Connection					

with Social-Emotional Development					
Between groups					
Sig.	0.52	0.34	0.18	0.14	0.27
Interpretation	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho	Do not reject Ho
Significance	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Within groups					
Total					
4o					

Perception of Teachers in Play-based Teaching Approach: The computed significant values for sex (0.73), school (0.87), grade handled (0.62), year in service (0.41), and educational attainment (0.07) were higher than the (0.05) alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference in the perceived perception of teachers in the play-based teaching approach when grouped according to the teachers’ profile.

Utilization of Play-based Teaching Approach in Connection with Cognitive Development: The computed significant values for sex (0.38), school (0.48), grade handled (0.32), year in service (0.06), and educational attainment (0.13) were higher than the (0.05) alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference in the perceived utilization of the play-based teaching approach in connection with cognitive development when grouped according to the teachers’ profile.

Utilization of Play-based Teaching Approach in Connection with Social-Emotional Development: The computed significant values for sex (0.52), school (0.34), grade handled (0.18), year in service (0.14), and educational attainment (0.27) were higher than the (0.05) alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference in the perceived utilization of the play-based teaching approach in connection with social-emotional development when grouped according to the teachers’ profile.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that most teacher-respondents were females who obtained bachelor’s degrees and are teaching in Cabangan Elementary School, handling Grade 2 pupils with 11 years in service. The teacher-respondents perceived that play-based is effective when the teacher guides the learners during play-based activities, and they believed that play-based would support the student learning and enhance academic curriculum. The teacher-respondents perceived that play-based is important to be utilized in the development of cognitive skills because it promotes discovery, exploration and stimulates interest in the subject matter. The teacher-respondents perceived that play makes connections with others and develops friendship helps the children to share ideas, express feelings and develop their social-emotional skills. There were no significant differences in teachers’ perceptions of the use of the play-based teaching approach and its connection with Cognitive and Social-Emotional Development based on their sex, school, grade level handled, years in service, or highest educational attainment. Therefore, based on the findings cited by the researchers, the following recommendations were made; since teacher-respondents believed that using play-based helps to develop learners’ cognitive and social-emotional skills. We suggest that it may continue or extend its implementation, especially in schools where it is less common. To foster the effectiveness of play-based learning, we suggest that teachers and parents may support the learner by letting them discover and build their academic learning and connections with others through play. The teachers who don’t use play-based learning shall attend seminars to gain better understanding of the approach that will be equipped with enough understanding to facilitate play-based learning.

Future researchers conduct a follow-up study in another school that would focus on the teacher-respondents in intermediate grades to know if play-based is still applicable and effective.

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