

THE ROLE OF PLAY IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL SETTING OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

Play does a significant role in early year's childhood and education. The study reports to explore 'the role of play in pre-primary educational setting of Bangladesh'. The study conducts a qualitative interview method for collecting data from pre-primary experienced teachers from Bangladesh. The study examines the findings of professional experiences of teachers about understanding, experiences and views of play in pre-primary class room. Therefore, the multiple aims of the study and the critical literature review of the study also gain an understanding about play with its social, emotional, intellectual, physical and pedagogical advantages, considering the barriers to play and review the policy content of Bangladesh curriculum in pre-primary educational setting in order to decide regarding play in pre-primary educational setting of Bangladesh. The findings indicate the differences in conception and practicing of play from the western views, such as actively participation with playful materials, classroom environment and different types of barriers to promote play. In spite of unfavorable educational environment and classroom management it confirms applying of play in appropriate way accelerates children's learning and academic skills as well as physical, mental and socio-emotional development.

Key Words: Pre-primary, Role, Play, Educational Setting.

INTRODUCTION

Usually it is said that teaching is a simple work. But actually, it is easy to say but difficult to do when it is done. Teachers always try to make the lesson more easily understandable, time savable, attractive, joyful, optimal learning and as well as holistic development of their students. But there is a question; is there any magic for doing it? As a practitioner of primary education in Bangladesh I conduct numerous types of training for our teachers' skill development and observe classroom teaching-learning activities and give necessary feedback. So, it is very important to know the answer of the question. What kind of technique or approach is optimal for children's learning? As I work with teachers and children in primary education of Bangladesh. In the field of primary education. I always hear that Play is child's work as a part of children lives and children always like do something for enjoyment, simply this is play. But play is not for only enjoyment, it has various advantages. It may also use as a pedagogical approach for early child education and it performs important role for social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of children.

According to visionary psychologist D.W. Winnicott (cited in Wilson 2009) play is a very much debated issue and it is significant for cognitive development and learning for a child. From my personal experience in the field of primary education, everybody hopefully believes that play has many purposes and advantages; play-based curriculum is the perfect practice for pre-primary educational setting. In my service experience, when I observe in pre-primary class room, I found that children prefer to learn through play. Therefore, if it is known what play is, what play is appropriate, what children like to participate in, what play-based curriculum is; then it will be accepted that play based curriculum is appropriate and it is needed.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

For this analytic review, the key purpose of the study is 'to explore the role of play in the pre-primary classroom environment'. For this purpose, the study has some aims to:

Firstly, to explore what is understood by play in a pre-primary educational setting?

Secondly, to consider the barriers to play in a Bangladesh pre-primary educational setting; and

Thirdly, to review the curriculum and policy content of Bangladesh curriculum in promoting plays.

Research question

What is the role of play in pre-primary educational setting of Bangladesh?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the last few years, there has been much idea about play which uses in the classroom. But there is a question has been arisen, whether to should apply the playful curriculum or firmly traditional/academic curriculum (Nicolopoulou, 2010 and Almon, 2003). According to Warner (2008) many practitioners and parents don't see the vital relation between a time of teaching-learning and time of play. According to Ashaibi (2007) in recent years' academic focus is more emphasized in early childhood setting. So, it is the opinion in the favor of academic focus, the major play-based curriculum should be emphasized in the early childhood program. But in this case, teachers are very unconscious about the importance of the role of play in early year's educational setting. Nicolopoulou (2010) and Englebright (1996) support that children learn and understand their surrounding world, exploration and imagination through play.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

I am working as an instructor in primary education of Bangladesh. In my professional life I have to conduct training for primary school's teachers and supervise teaching learning activities in the classroom situation for academic feedback to my teachers. As an educator, with fifteen years' experience in the primary education sector, my service experience suggests that every primary school has same problems of child's play in the pre-primary classroom. As an academic supervisor I suggest our teachers to apply play as an alternative approach for better understand and take-part in a group of children in the teaching-learning process. I believe effective playful approach increases child participation in teaching-learning activities in the classroom and accelerates learning of my students. So, I propose to follow my new findings of play. My found new knowledge of this study will be helpful for practitioners to better understand the child learning through play in the pre-primary classroom situation and how to promote child play policy across this curriculum.

I analyzed the review of the study from the theoretical context of psychology and educational field. I selected this area because many psychologists and educational specialists who have wrote and made prosperous about children's development also as primary education in my professional field. I am trying to gain additional knowledge in this area in order to know how to do best work with the children and the teachers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pre-primary education in Bangladesh context & different perspective of play: Several studies suggest that early learning performs as the brain's developing architecture (Blakemore & Frith, 2005). Particularly the first years of life are very important because vital development occurs in all domains (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). But unfortunately, developing countries' children are vulnerable various dangers, such as poverty, malnutrition, poor health, and unhealthy home-based environments (Nath and Sylva, 2018). The poverty and malnutrition contribute to lack of development and cause of the intellectual, motor, and socio-emotional development of children (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2001; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Mistry et al., 2004). A large number of under-five aged children are not satisfying their developmental potential and these disadvantaged children are likely to do poorly in school and subsequently have low incomes, high fertility, and provide poor care for their children, thus contributing to the intergenerational broadcast of poverty (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). Consideration of all benefits of early learning, despite many obstacles and a developing country of Bangladesh, the position of early childhood education is enhancing day by day since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. "National Education Policy 2010" has emphasized the implementing of one-year pre-primary education system. This schooling system must be introduced for 4-5+ children. As a result, the consciousness of early childhood education has been increasing quickly and many government and non-government institutions of pre-primary are also promoting the early child education ECD 'Early Childhood Development' (Akter, m. 2013).

This foundation period of early child is very important for physical, social, emotional and mental health. Siraj-Blatchford (1999, 21, cited in Stephen, 2010) shows the effective provision of pre-school education and argues early years is just not preparation for school, it is learning in its own right. So, the emphasis should be on whether schools are for the children. Siraj-Blatchford (1999, 21, cited in Stephen, 2010) also suggests a child led playful curriculum that adults should be non-instructive and only assist learning as effective facilitators. As early years' children are new comer of school and new environment, it is very important to create interest,

attraction and joyful school for them. Therefore, purposeful play can be considered a good approach and may have a vital role. According to the curriculum of Bangladesh pre-primary education children learn through doing anything and playing; and playing is a joyful learning experience (Preprimary curriculum of Bangladesh, 2011). According to the importance of all types of play, pre-primary curriculum of Bangladesh follows these.

The literature expresses the different types and dimensions of play activities. Moyles (1989) attempts to categorize five types of plays aspect of children's development; such as physical play (e.g.: exercise, jumping, climbing, dancing, skipping, bike riding and ball play), play with objects (video, gardening, cultural, toys, technology), symbolic play (symbolic systems including spoken language, reading and writing, number, various visual, media, painting, drawing, collage, music), pretense/socio-dramatic play (play of real aggression, violence, socio-cultural problems), games with rules (while playing games with their friends, siblings and parents). Each type of play supports main developmental function or focuses aspects of physical, intellectual and social-emotional growth.

The curriculum of Queensland's Early Years Guidelines (Queensland Studies Authority, 2006) indicates some activities as educational play. Such as Socio-dramatic play (Children set up and run a flower shop; Fantasy play (Children forming props for space ventures); Exploratory play (Discovering the assets of new manipulative or creation things; observing through magnifier/ lenses to see how they work and the result they have); Manipulative play (understanding puzzles, manufacturing necklaces or buildings); Physical play (Running, skipping, hopping, climbing, touching through problem courses); Games with rules (Playing sheet and card competitions; outdoor competitions; child created sports).

The Bangladeshi pre-primary curriculum has involved two types of play. Such as, Non-instructional and instructional play. There are some specific instructional plays (near about 20) where the teacher guides their students and gives them instructions for playing. Non-instructional play where the students play freely and independently, teacher only facilitates them. All types of play may occur indoors or outdoors. This play is very significant for children's learning and development as well as the practitioners. (Pre-primary teacher's training manual, 2013).

However, while children involve with different types of play, they can understand around the world and are able to develop their self-confidence and regulation. So, integration of play method in teaching –learning activities and implementation in practice is very important for success of play.

Understanding of play: There is no unique and specific universal definition of play in educational setting. It is very difficult to define play as like trying to define love (Gordon Sturrock cited by Wilson, 2009). According to Johnson, Christie and Wardle (2005) it is difficult to define play for its unclear and inconsistent characteristics. Many scholars have given their different ideologies about play. Wilson (2009) also thinks play is a set of freely chosen, personally directed and essentially irritated behaviors. Winter (2009) uses a very important quote for play "Play is the SPICE of life"- here SIPCE means children's Social, Physical, Intellectual, Cultural and Emotional development. According to Play Scotland (1998) play is a natural and intentional doing for all; children and adults are benefited through engaging it. Recently Hedges and Cooper (2017) representation as play is an intrinsically motivational activity which involves some creativity and imagination as a result child earn a significant outcome through it.

Moreover, Curtis (1994) & Wardle (1987) define play as self-directed, enjoyable and not pragmatic activities. Armstrong (2011) refers to play is a multisensory, interactive, innovative, imaginative and always changeable self-motivated process. According to Schwartz (2008) and Samuelson & Carlsson (2008) viewpoint of play, there is no specific difference between play and work for children, it is an essential part of their lives and all children participate in it. Almon (2003) stated though cultural and language differences country to country, worldwide play is universal language, unites children and understandable. Xu (2010) stated play is a pleasurable practice as well as a vital approach for children learning; it builds social affiliation and understandings.

Sutton-Smith (1997) explained the nature of play is wide, complex and meaningless. Similarly, Englebright (1996) and Xu (2010) stated that though the nature of play is wide and complex, it is significant for enhancing learning and development for a child as well as recognized by early childhood teachers. Ceglowski (1977), Scarlett, Naudeau, Salnius-Pasernak and Ponte (2005) agreed and said that play help to develop social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth of children. Johnson, Christie and Wardle (2005) show the historical relationship between play and education from the enlightenment period of the nineteenth century. They concluded that it has positive effect on children's learning and development and it is a crucial performs for early year's education.

Luntly (2018) points out that, play prepares the human child to learn behaviors as well as it enhances imagination and inspiration to permit the child to co-construct and extend information and understanding their environment.

So, it is said that worldwide play is effective tools of early year's education. A study was conducted by Nahar Chowdhary and Corine Rivalland (2011) about play as pedagogy in the context of Bangladesh. The study has found that play is recognized as a part of pedagogy in the operational framework for Pre-primary education of

2008, also pre-primary curriculum developed in 2011 in Bangladesh and important tools to accelerate learning and development of early childhood.

The role of play: The role of play is well researched. Many researchers work on play and give valuable theories, ideas and opinion about play. It is undoubtedly proven that play has many advantages. Here are reviewed some advantages.

Play has many academic advantages. Ceglowski (1997) mentioned play is a child's work. Wanner (2000) proved positive the relation between play and academic success. According to Mastrangelo (2009) children achieve knowledge about their surrounding world by questioning and quiring ideas.

Elkind (2008) states that play means doing some activity which children help to identify color, shape, tests and sound the building blocks of reality. They use play to learn love and social connection such as, friendship, cooperation, competition and mutual respect.

The research conducted by Madray & Catalanolo (2010) indicated play enhances physical, social, moral, creative and motor skills of children, if the teacher ensures the proper environment. They found that curriculum materials can accelerate learning through play, such as water play, block play, cards game, musical chairs, groups game, hide and seek, board games help to teach math concepts; Basic scientific instruments and game help to learn natural world and science and occur playful learning, such as sample of rocks and minerals, shells, all types thermometers, microscope, telescope, block game, water game, board and electronic game etc. Role play, guided music, board game, model, electronic game, toys can effective method for world cultures, social study, history, geography, economics, criminal justice, and psychology, physical and special education teaching; paper games/books (bingo) are helpful for foreign language teaching. They also comment proper choosing and assessing of games and toys to use in the classroom can be stimulated and excited children for learning.

Play is a spontaneous and voluntary activity, it enriches the child's imagination, as a result they are able to explore many possibilities and strengthen their creativity. Children's collaboration helps to expand social and academic skills, such as reading, writing and math (Hamphill, 2006). For example, children strengthen their understanding about English, Language and Arts through their fantasizing and play (Elkind, 2008), playing with Logos, board games, or cards are associated with reinforcing the Math skills Madray & Catalano, 2010). Children increase their vocabulary, develop sentences and become critical thinkers through using of blocks, water play and manipulative (Mastrangelo, 2009).

Above these studies show different academic advantages of play. However, the study of Nahar Chowdhary and Corine Rivalland (2011) in the context of Bangladesh indicates some playful activities in pre-primary classroom; such as working with learning apparatus (rejected pens, beads, bamboo sticks, stones, leaves, bangles or clay-made shape for teaching shape of triangle/circles/ squares); Rhymes regards in curriculum and text book; Curriculum prescribed physical exercises, games, song and acting, stories, drawing, some outdoor plays, instructed sports. They comment that all playful activities were aimed for developing children's specific socio-emotional, cognitive and physical aspects according to their age and these activities to accelerate their numeracy and literacy learning. These teaching-learning techniques are also helpful for teacher as an effective pedagogy.

Play has many social advantages: Taylor, Samuelson and Rogers (2008) commented that the children who are empowered through play can be coping skillfully with everyday life. Mabry and Fucigna (2009) stated classroom are the most important place for learning, where children play with each other, that expand their self-direction and self-control, a symbolic representation understanding capacity, confidence and communication, problem-solving capacities, and thoughtful cultural rule and social behavior. Goldstein (2012) points out the social benefits of play; such as play increases empathy, compassion, and sharing; creates options and choices; models relationships based on inclusion rather than exclusion; improves nonverbal skills; increases attention and attachment.

Play has many advantages for physical and mental health. Burdette (2006) examined that play reduce anxiety, depression, aggression and sleep problems and improves aspects of emotional well-being. Power (2000) stated play may be a solution of obesity problem by reducing excess calories. O'Connor (2011), Pelligrini (1997), Panksepp (2003) show play reduces disruptive and hyperactivity disorder. Goldstein, J (2012) argues play nourishes the development of child. He mentions some physical health's benefits of play; such as positive emotions increase the efficiency of immune, endocrine, and cardiovascular systems; decreases stress, fatigue, injury, and depression; increases range of motion, agility, coordination, balance, flexibility, and fine and gross motor exploration.

Goldstein (2012) also identifies the mental health's benefits of play; such as it reduces fear, anxiety, stress, irritability; creates joy, intimacy, self-esteem and mastery not based on other's loss of esteem; improves emotional flexibility and openness; increases calmness, resilience and adaptability and ability to deal with surprise and change; play can heal emotional pain.

Psychologist Peter Gray (2011) comments that play promote the mental health of children and mention some psychopathological contribution of play; such as play develops intrinsic interests and competencies of children. They learn how to make decisions, solve problems, exert self-control, follow rules and regulate their emotions through play; make friends and learn to get along with others as equals and experience of joy.

Wilson (2009) comments the biological aspect of play. According to Wilson play is a very important factor for relaxation, it removes excessive pressure of work and responsibility, gives the opportunity to take rest, enjoyment nourishment us.

Above these studies shows different advantages of play in physical mental health. However, generally Bangladesh context there is no specific reference to the advantages of play to the policy thus identifying a gap the required to be explored further.

Pedagogical advantages/ Play-based approach in teaching-learning activities: Play-based approach in teaching-learning activities is a great advantage of play. It is well-known that teaching through play is an effective approach. There are many research evidences which focuses play may be used important pedagogy in early child education. Many scholars and theorists give their valuable opinions about relationship between play and learning. According to Weston (2000) and Saracho (2010) the first kindergarten was begun by Froebel in 1839 and there, play was implemented as a method of educational process. Various materials and activities were used for in the classroom for gaining ideas and meaning to understand (Platz & Arellano, 2011). Weston (2000) concluded that the childhood experiences play a vital role for child's education. Similarly, Fraser (2006) showed that play is an essential component of early childhood classroom and it gives freedom to express students. Russ (2003); Christie and Roskos, (2006); Smith and Pellegrini (2008); Meyers and Berk, (2014); Wager and Parks (2014) conduct some researches about the importance of play and comment that play is the important factor for children's learning. Froebel (1840), Montessori (1936), Piaget (1951), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1957), Gardner (1983) provides early years' community's frameworks to explore and discuss pedagogy and methodology in relation with play and shows a strong relation between children's learning through play in the early years and its impact in future life. These theories of frameworks can broaden thinking and help to ensure that research impacts on practice through creating play environments that are meaningful and appropriate to children's development.

Wood & Hedges (2016) identifies the dominating impact of play opportunities and developmental psychology in early child education. Brooker, Mlaise & Edwards (2014) mentions an important conception; there are recognized complex relation between play, learning, curriculum and outcomes. Vygotsky (1978) points out the play has pedagogical relationship with teachers, and emphasizes the interactions and conversations support activities such as play. Bodrova and Leong (2001) emphasize the importance of choice and appropriate use of the right resources and teaching-learning aids. For the benefit of literacy skills should be reinforced to play with books, writing and physical materials; such as sand and water are very helpful for developing elementary mathematic skills and the ideas of map-making.

Dunkin & Hanna, 2001 identify the different roles of teachers in the teaching-learning activities. They comment teachers can create motivating, engaging, stress free and enjoyable early year's class room environment at play and task time. For this purpose, teachers can play his role as a co-player/play partner, co-learner/co-explorer, facilitator, listener/decoder, co-planner and positive commentator. These playful activities may be challenging and inspiring, but teachers should organize both child led and adult led classroom activities otherwise learning cannot be happened automatically.

In a recent study Robinson, Smith, Segal & Shubin (2018) have collected data from a Child Development Institute and found that not only children adults also benefited through play and effective role of play in learning. Play helps to improve brain function, relieve from stress, stimulate the mind, cure emotional wounds, increase creativity, develop social skills, keep energetic and keep relationships to others. The study also suggests some tips and playful activities, for example different types of sports, computer and card games, watching television, socializing with friends, learning how to operate a new electronic device, such as mobile phone. The study shows, play may be important tools for teaching and learning the most and it can bring closer teacher and learners.

In another recent study was conducted by Vogt et al. (2018) about the use of a playful approach for teaching numeracy in the early year's classroom in Switzerland. They found that the playful approach was very much enjoyable, effective and appropriate for children learning with various needs.

Nahar Chowdhary and Corine Rivalland (2011) conducted a study to find out the relation between play and pedagogy in the context of Bangladesh pre-primary educational setting. They collected data from teachers and parents of Pre-primary education in. The study examined the understanding, including and implementing of play in the pre-primary educational context of Bangladesh. The study found the significant role of play as pedagogy. They comment children participate active and interactively in teaching learning activities through enjoyable playful activities. For example, working with learning apparatuses, physical exercises, singing, acting, rhyming, games, outdoor plays and drawing. The findings of this study reinforced that the concept of play and how it is understood and manifests depends on the cultural context. Play as it is defined in the western world appears to be different within the context of Bangladesh. So, it would be difficult to apply these universal definitions and strategies – there is a need to explore play contexts in Bangladesh further. Educator's perception of play in this study is quite different with a focus on 'active' tasks that define play. They emphasize that if the activity is

deemed to be joyful then it is regarded as a 'play' activity. The broader and wider ideological position of play is not fully understood.

All findings in this section are relevant with this study. All researchers found that the play-based approach is enjoyable, effective, time and labor savable and suitable for children learning with diverse needs. Despite play as pedagogy, play has also many advantages of physical, intellectual and social-emotional growth.

The barriers to play and Bangladesh pre-primary educational setting: The implementation and promotion of children's play is the overarching objective now. White bread (2012) states the major barrier of children's play is lack of understanding about the importance of play. White bread also suggests freely chosen and self-determined play programs need to be time and space where children can access independently, such as schools, public libraries, community centers, play parks, children's hospitals, etc. Unsupervised free plays have many risk opportunities.

According to Heinemann and Hewitt (2010) Classroom environment and space arrangements are very significant factors to promote children's play in the classroom. A study was conducted by Nahar Chowdhary and Corine Rivalland (2011) in the context of Bangladesh pre-primary educational setting. They collected data from teachers and parents of Pre-primary education in Bangladesh through semi-structured interview and photographs. They found some following barriers, such as

Classroom context- lack of infrastructure and logistic support in the pre-primary class room the studied schools. Usually, some pre-primary classes were conducted under the open sky without facilities of facilities, such as black board, bench-table or sheds to protect from rain and heat of the sun. Some schools have changed the place because no fixed class room and class arrange outside. Some schools have available classroom but it was conducted in unfavorable classroom environment.

Play materials and access- Inadequate access to play and nonappearance or insufficient play materials and resources at home and public schools of Bangladesh for the children to explore.

Teacher's role- Due to over enrollment (30 per class 5 years old) in most of the school's playful curriculum cannot be implemented.

However, these barriers are challenging problem to implement pre-primary education in Bangladesh. This study also tries to find out the barriers to play from field level investigation. These barriers will help to policy makers, teachers, educators with new understanding on how play implement by families and early childhood educators in Bangladesh pre-primary education.

Policy Review and Recommendations of Play: International Play Association (IPA), Play Board NI and the International Toy Library Association (ITLA) emphasize the need of public awareness programs for children's play. Similarly, Ludemos (2005) argues for implementing constitutional policy to change the perceptions of children's play for ensuring playful opportunities in every early school.

Consideration of the significant of play on 12 May 2011, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Early Years Learning in the European Union, which noted that the early years of childhood are critical for children's development and highlighted that 'in addition to education, all children have the right to rest, leisure and play'.

Consideration of the role of play in education UNCRC firmly embedded that play is a fundamental right for all children. Scotland has contributed the first national play strategy and the right to play based on the Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). All children and young people should have play experiences as part of their daily lives which supports the key concept of "Getting it Right for Every Child" approach (Gov. scot, 2018).

It is controversial issue the time of play and which play is healthy, gives positive emotions, and promotes long-term health. Goldstein, J (2012) emphasizes the time of play, regularly two hours' active play in a day is helpful for reducing attention deficiencies and hyper activity. Goldstein believes that children are always benefited from free play. So, their plays, toys and instruments should be suitable for them.

It is very important to use variety of toys for implementing of play, such as electronic and digital toys, the blocks, ball, mailbox, puppy etc. Goldstein (2004, 2011); Plowman (2004) emphasizes to use of toy for play. They state toy is not only fun to play; it reflects the most modern developments in science and technology. "Technology of toys can support children with severe physical impairments" (Fabregat, 2004 cited in Goldstein, 2011).

Fisher (2011) argues that adults have vital role for implementing play. They can help the children to supply play materials, such as books, pencils, paper, art materials, and costumes. They can also involve promoting play in the form of questions, comments, suggestions, inspirations and supervision.

Brown (2004) shows the equity issues in a research that children chose their playmates and play activities biological (gender), society and culture basis, but children develop their identity through their interaction with each other. In these cases, practitioner can help the children to explore new roles, different ways and alternative solutions. Hyder (2005) suggests to do not involve children uncritical adoption.

Lee (2010) recommends that play has positive impact or outlook for learning, so curriculum needs to be designed include play as an essential part. This report focuses on the value of children's play in curriculum and

supports this study for including play as an essential part in pre-primary curriculum of Bangladesh and necessity the adaptation of policy about play.

Whitbread (2012) argue the physical, emotional and cognitive benefits of play are well recognized, so parents, community, teachers, educational and other policy makers should give every opportunity and crucial importance of playful activities for children's emotional, linguistic, meta-cognitive development and self-regulatory ability (academic achievement, creativity and problem-solving).

European play organizations suggest for promoting quality for play, as well as safety and well-being. They also suggest to use of natural materials in playground designs and establish funding agencies that promote play and play research.

Bangladesh has taken a goal of primary education- 'to ensure the quality education for all children'. So, 100% enrollment and completion of primary education of all school going children must be ensured. Bangladesh has to take step or preparation for fulfillment of the purpose that's why policy should be adopted. Bangladesh already has announced "the National Education Policy 2010". Bangladesh has taken many initiatives for developing and implementing pre-primary education through PEDP-2 & 3 programs of primary education and included it in School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) (Bangladesh pre-primary education & School Level Improvement Plan, published by UNESCO, 2015). Bangladeshi primary schools arrange yearly annual sports and cultural program by the Governments instructions and pre-primary education includes some plays in the class room basis. However, there is no specific strategy or policy for play based learning in school level. All the research findings further emphasize on importance the policy of play, thus identifying a gap the required to be explored further.

In the past in Bangladesh there was conceptions that play held a significant role in children lives as they grow and develop. More recently, play has been acknowledged as an approach to influence learning within an educational setting. In the review of literature there are different theoretical viewpoints, but all practitioners are agreed play has the vital role for development of physical, social, emotional and mental health as well as holistic development of a child on the other hand that helps to achieve optimal educational goal by providing quality education for all children (Xu, 2010). I believe that, though there are many researchers have been conducted about play in pre-primary educational setting, it is still need for further additional study to explore the both the understanding and perceptions held by educators in Bangladesh. Despite this new awareness of play, them appears to be a very different understanding of play in the pre-primary education which still follows a teacher led approach which is in direct contrast to learning through play where children initiate their learning experiences. From the literature reviewed, the universally held understandings of play and pedagogy are quite different from the perceptions of educators in Bangladesh. There needs to be an ideological shift in which play is viewed as an interactive approach to teaching rather than a didactic teacher led approach which is currently practiced in Bangladesh. Although their existing barriers to adopting a play-based pedagogy generally, within the context of Early Learning in Bangladesh the barriers are more complex. Despite the environment, resources and teacher reluctance there is a need for further development of educators understanding of play but this needs to be supported through the wider policy guidance which recognizes the need for appropriate training and resources to help promote the principles of play as understood universally.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Data collection tool

The study used a semi-structured interview approached for data collection.

Sample

The study conducted a semi-structured interview and it wanted to gather the practitioners' perceptions about the role of play in pre-primary educational settings. So, the study decided to apply a simple random sample technique. the population of each unit has an equal chance to be selected by a simple random sample. There are 73 primary schools in my working area of Charghat Upazila and it is divided by Unions. Each school has one pre-primary teacher. I took the approach that I will interview from seven pre-primary school teachers among them. From each union one teacher will participate in the interview. The head teacher, other assistant teachers, parents are also beneficiary but wanted to take interview from only the pre-primary school's teacher because they are only trained up and experienced in the related field.

The study used a sample of seven pre-primary school teachers in my working Upazila. Every school has a pre-primary teacher who is recruited by Government. In this purpose at first, I had to make a list of all the pre-primary school's teacher of the seventy-three primary schools. Then I prepared a set of numbers against each school. Then the participants were selected based on the number allocated to them randomly one pre-primary teacher from each union. This way I selected seven pre-primary school teachers for this study. After that I informed them through email to participate the interview and I conducted semi-structured interview approach through online conversation.

Data analysis

I have done the analysis of themes. According to the permission respondents, the interviews were recorded. Then each interview was transcribed. Each transcript was read through many times to familiarize with the data. Then research question and aims relating key points were high-lighted. The points were categorized into themes. A clear conception was gathered through categorization. Explanation of data concerned the respondents' experiences and perceptions. The relevant responses in favor of the research question were selected; some attractive data was rejected in favor of irrelevant responses. In questions respondents had to give their experiences or perceptions by statement which were done more detailed analysis.

The methodological approach and implementation have been described in this chapter. It has outlined the approach of data collection and the process of data analysis of the research. Then briefly strategy of methodology, ethical considerations, validity and reliability of the study have been also discussed. Now, findings and analysis of the study are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the finding of the qualitative data analysis through 7 online interviews of pre-primary teachers.

As per discussion of the previous chapter, a semi-structured questionnaire interview schedule was conducted to explore the perceptions of respondents about role of play. This interview schedule contained verbal open-ended questions of qualitative data. Findings are discussed below.

Understanding of play

From the fieldwork investigation, question no 2 of contextual information of the provided qualitative data about play in early years setting to respondents with specific focus on understanding on play. Most of the respondents have revealed nearly common responses about the theme, for example

"Play is a co-curriculum activity, it gives the opportunity for Physical and mental development." (Respondent 1), *"Play is a physical activity for fulfillment of mental and an emotional demand; but it is helpful for children's physical and mental development. Child play and adult play is different, child play is according to their physical and mental capacity. It is a part of education."* (Respondent 2), *"Play is a physical exercise for physical and mental development"*. (Respondent 3), *"Play is a medium of pleasure and recreation"*. (Respondent 4), *"Play is a medium of pleasure and recreation, not only that it may be also a medium of learning"*. (Respondent 5), *"Play is an entertainment activity"*. (Respondent 6), *"Play is an entertainment activity and medium of learning"*. (Respondent 7)

Respondent 1, 2, 3 emphasize on physical and mental development through play and respondent 1 also mention additional comment that it's a co-curriculum activity. This view seems to suggest that play is regarded as add on and further reinforces the view that the principles of play being embedded within and across all learning is not fully understood. All respondent comment and agree that play gives pleasure, respondent 5 give additional comments that play may help to occur learning. All respondent agree that play is a joyful activity which gives pleasure and helpful for learning. Again, this would suggest that play gives pleasure and is 'helpful' for children to learn but fails to recognize that it is indeed a vehicle to encourage and explore learning which includes the voices of young children.

Deferent benefits of play

This theme is divided in three sub themes; these are discussed below;

Physical and mental health benefits

Most of all respondents stated the physical and mental health wellbeing of play, for example of physical health *"Play is helpful for Physical development. It gives the opportunity for Physical development."* (Respondent 1) *"Play is helpful for children's physical development through physical activity. At the 4-7 years old stage there are some changes children's motor movement and physical."* (Respondent 2), *"Children can be energized physically through physical exercise play. It makes body healthy and flexible."* (Respondent 3)

Similarly, all participants commented on mental benefits of play, for example

"Play is helpful for mental development. It gives the opportunity for mental development". (Respondent 1), *"It is helpful for children's mental development through fulfillment of mental demand. At the stage increasing their understanding capacity, they move known to unknown field and play can help them at the stage."* (Respondent 2), *Children can be energized mentally through play. Remove brothering, Laziness and make them refresh.* (Respondent 3), *"It gives pleasure."* (Respondent 4), *"Play is a medium of pleasure and recreation."* (Respondent 5), *"Children's creativity and visual power increases through play."* (Respondent 7)

So, respondent 1, 2 & 3 out of 7 respondents mentioned importance of play on physical health. All respondent agreed childhood is the time of developing and playful activities can help them for energizing and be healthy physically. Most of all respondent has emphasized the role of play on mental health. They commented play remove brothering and make the refresh. In addition, respondent 2 & 7 said play help children to increase them understand capacity and creativity power.

Most of them agree that play increases the endocrine and cardiovascular function, improves emotional and mental flexibility; play enhances problem solving capacity, children can take rest and pleasure through play. This evident proved the similarity between the published studies and the fieldwork investigation – the educators in this study all acknowledge and show an appropriate understanding of the importance of play in developing physical and mental skills. However, despite recognizing this emphasis seems to be on ‘recreation’, ‘refresh’ ‘removes laziness’ which relate to more the physical wellbeing than the mental. Respondent 3 appears to show some appreciation by saying ‘energized mentally through play’ which would indicate interactive approach but then goes on to say ‘remove laziness’ which would bring the focus back to the physical which does not give recognition to the play strategies that can be adopted to stimulate mental activity.

Social benefits

The social benefits of play and all are agreed about its positive impact on children lives. Obviously, the findings of field investigation of the study are very high similar with published studies. Respondents exposed the most accurate decisions. For example, respondent 1 claims:

“Play creates democratic and co-operative mind”.

Similarly, respondent 5 asserts a valuable opinion about social benefit of play and declares:

“Children learn through play how to live and survive together. It helps to remove all discriminations among them”.

Respondent 6 adds his opinion:

“Children gather knowledge of cleanliness and nature around them through play”.

Besides, respondent 7 notes a decision:

“Play makes a teacher- student good interaction.”

So, respondents’ perceptions about social benefits of play support and confirm the result of previous published studies. It can be said that the result of field investigations makes prosperous the role of play in the study.

Pedagogical benefits of play

Obviously, the findings of field investigation of the study are very high similar between the published previous studies. Most of the respondents exposed their accurate perceptions about pedagogical advantages of play. For example,

*“Pre-primary class time duration is long time length 2.30 hours. So, **students feel boring**, but play can remove the brothering and refresh them. As they become refreshing through play, they can give more attention further lesson. Students take part their lesson actively through play or after play. It can help the teachers in teaching and learning activities, **teacher can teach some lessons through play**, such as increasing children’s vocabulary, letter etc. Teacher uses play as a technique of teaching”.* (Respondent 1)

*“It is a part of education. It can help for creating joyful environment, **make lesson easier to understand, attractive, and memorize the lesson**. It can help the teachers to increase the memory capacity of children, they can teach any unknown idea through play easily, such as using letter cards, blocks etc. Teacher uses play as a technique of teaching as well as joyful learning”.* (Respondent 2)

*“They can be ready for next session after play. It also refreshes teachers and help them joyful learning. **It can help the teachers as a teaching technique for letter, word teaching such as missing word and other teaching related game**”* (Respondent 3).

*“**It accelerates learning**. Some plays help the teachers the conception of number and counting teaching. **They refresh and to be interested for next session after play**. Play is step of teaching. Teachers teach anything through play in easy way”.* (Respondent 4)

*Play has relation with teaching and learning activities. Play may be also a medium of learning. Learning occurs through play. Teachers are also benefited through play. Teachers at first give instructions then follow up, then **teacher also be refresh from long time taking class brothering**. Students acquire knowledge from play, so teacher use it as a technique by lesson related play.* (Respondent 5)

*“There are some specific plays in our pre-primary education curriculum, which **makes lessons easier**. Through instructional plays, children learn how to follow instruction and grow attention. **It makes learning process faster and easier**. Through instructional plays, children learn how to follow instruction and grow attention. Teacher uses play as a technique of teaching and learning activities for easier understanding by using lesson related play”.* (Respondent 6)

*“**It gives pleasure and they like to learn through pleasure**. Learning occurs permanent and fruitful through playful teaching than normal teaching. They can easily understand difficult lesson if playful learning occurs. **Play removes panic from the students and creates safe environment**. Teachers use play as a technique of teaching and learning activities for easier understanding by using lesson and learning out comes related play, such as letter game”.* (Respondent 7)

Among above respondents, Respondent 1 emphasizes ‘students feel boring’ so ‘play remove the brothering and refresh them’ Respondent 4 comments ‘They refresh and to be interested for next session after play, Respondent 5 ‘teacher also be refresh from long time taking class brothering’ which don’t relate actual idea of pedagogical

benefits of play. Those mean just mental refreshes through play. On the other hand some of the comments, are good conception about the pedagogical importance of play, such as Respondent 1 'teacher can teach some lessons through play, 'Respondent 2 'make lesson easier to understand, attractive, and memorize the lesson', Respondent 3 'It can help the teachers as a teaching technique for letter, word teaching such as missing word and other teaching related game', respondent 6 ' makes lessons easier, It makes learning process faster and easier,' and Respondent 7 expresses good idea 'It gives pleasure and they like to learn through pleasure. Learning occurs permanent and fruitful through playful teaching than normal teaching, play removes panic from the students and creates safe environment. Teachers use play as a technique of teaching and learning activities for easier understanding by using lesson and learning out comes related play, such as letter game". So, field work investigation findings of the research supported the result of published researches and the findings of the study has confirmed that play can be used a pedagogical approach for early year's educational setting.

Barriers/ policy to promote play

In literature review chapter 2, published studies acknowledged many barriers and strategies or policies for promoting of play in early year's educational setting. The findings from qualitative data investigation of the study identified some important barriers and opinions to promote play in pre-primary educational setting. For example

"Teachers should follow which play is needed for the lesson, without blindness or framework. Curriculum should be playful. Don't know any policy about play; think it is necessary to adopt policy". (Respondent 1)

"Child play and adult play is different; child play is according to their physical and mental capacity. Back benches students can't understand and instructions, can't advance go ahead like advanced students. So, miss understanding with them. We should not create gender discrimination, mixing with girls and boys for playing. So, teacher should make sure remove all discriminations. Curriculum should be designed according plays' theories. I think, it is necessary to adopt policy for following playful teaching learning activities in the classroom". (Respondent2)

"Some time all students want to play with same materials. Then they make a noisy environment, because All they like to play more pleasurable game and attractive materials, so it is not possible to give same instruments at a time all the students. So, more attractive playful materials should supply and involvement of pre-primary teacher when materials are purchased according to necessity. To be added some play for learning English letters in curriculum. Ensure equity and justice during play. Friendly behave with students. Ensure the diversity of playful instruments. Train for playful teaching". (Respondent 3)

"Supplying lots of play materials. Limit numbers students. Make interest towards play. Arrange regularly pleasurable play. Proper Instruction and monitoring are need for effective play. Manage audio visual aids. Extra care for special needs children. Game period should not be excessive longer. Teacher's voice must be understandable and hearing able. Need to add some teaching related play". (Respondent 4)

"We have to use suitable materials of play for children. We have to be careful when they play because they may be injured. No sharp or harmful instruments should be used. Teacher should avoid none playing, non-purposive, anxiety, viewer's behaviors. Should give training to the teachers for playful teaching. In our curriculum, there are plenty amount of plays, we should apply it properly". (Respondent 5)

"As it is the age of playing and children give priority play. It gives them pleasure and influence to come school regularly, so curriculum should be designed with play related activities in the pre-primary education. Should be included age suitable play in curriculum. Should be included lesson related play in curriculum. Easily applicable and understandable play should be included in curriculum. Play should be acceptable and adjustable with social environment. Supply available play instrument and space. Be patience and more time for play. Appropriate classroom management. Deliver clear instructions. If there is a policy about play for making joyful and attractive teaching learning, then teacher will give more emphasize teaching through play." (Respondent 6)

"As play is a technique for teacher as well as joyful and pleasurable learning for student. So, every teacher should emphasize on playful teaching learning activities. Teacher should not be traditional, always should use latest playful method. Supply adequate number of toys or instruments. Arrange child suitable play. Ensure free space for play. Select pleasurable and attractive play. Deliver the clear instructions. A guide line should be adopted to apply playful learning. Teacher should be aware the importance of playful learning". (Respondent 7)

Moreover, the field investigation of the study has found some new findings from respondent's responses, such as 'Teacher should not be traditional, always should use latest method, Deliver the clear instructions; a guide line should be adopted to apply playful learning'(R7) 'curriculum should be designed with play related activities in the pre-primary education. Should be included age suitable play in curriculum. Should be included lesson related play in curriculum. Easily applicable and understandable play should be included in curriculum. Play should be acceptable and adjustable with social environment' (R6), 'Teacher should be aware the importance of playful learning, We have to be careful when they play because they may be injured, No sharp or harmful instruments should be used, Should give training to the teachers for playful teaching'(R5), 'Extra care for

special needs children, more attractive playful materials should supply and involvement of pre-primary teacher when materials are purchased according to necessity'(R4), Ensure equity and justice during play. Friendly behave with students'(R3). 'We should not create gender discrimination, mixing with girls and boys for playing. So, teacher should make sure remove all discriminations. Curriculum should be designed according plays' theories. I think, it is necessary to adopt policy for following playful teaching learning activities in the classroom'(R2), it is necessary to adopt policy'(R1).

In the new findings Respondents2, 6 claims to design curriculum age suitable, social environment acceptable adjustable, easily applicable play and play theory based pre-primary curriculum; Respondents 6,7 emphasizes to aware and use playful latest method; Respondents 5 emphasizes for training on playful teaching; Respondents 2,3,4 suggests to remove all discriminations and ensure inclusion during play; Respondent 1,2,7 recommend to adopt policy or guide line about playful teaching-learning activities.

The above discussed findings of the study are associated with respondents' teaching-learning activities in pre-primary education of Bangladesh. These findings of play in pre-primary education are potential, influencing and supporting evidence. These evidences confirm the result of previous published studies. Now, implications of these findings and recommendations for practice and future research are discussed following chapter 5.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to explore the role of play in the pre-primary classroom environment. To do so, this study investigated about the three key themes, such as understanding of play, benefits of play and barriers/policy to promote play. Also, this study attempted to identify the challenges which are faced to implement play according to the respondents' experiences (mentioned in appendix table no 1). This chapter discusses briefly achievement of the research objectives and aims based on the chapter 4 (research findings and analysis) and the findings of literature review in chapter 2. Finally, this chapter presents a summary of the qualitative data findings from the field investigations and recommendations that can be helped to establish the necessity of play in early year's education and enhance the field of research in the role of play in early year's education.

Achievement of the research objectives or aims

This chapter is divided into three sections according to three research aims. It was mentioned, the purpose of this study was to 'explore the role of play in pre-primary educational setting of Bangladesh'. The research aimed answer the following question;

1. to explore what is understood by play in pre-primary educational setting.
2. To consider the barriers to play in a Bangladesh pre-primary educational setting and
3. To review the curriculum and policy content of Bangladesh curriculum in promoting plays.

The first research aim

The first research aim was "to explore what is understood by play in a pre-primary educational setting?" which was set by the researcher. In Chapter 2, there were title "understanding of play" & "the role of play" - there were critically reviewed the conception and importance of play. The chapter has discussed the play related different researcher's important ideologies which provided us understanding about play in early year's educational setting. According to their opinion there is no universal conception of play, but it is clearly said that play is a part of children's lives which gives pleasure and helpful for learning as well as physical, social, emotional and mental development of children. The findings in the Chapter 4 provide respondent's similar and some new experiences about the understanding and benefits of play, such as play is a co-curriculum activity; it gives the opportunity for physical and mental development, it is a medium of pleasure and recreation, it is an entertainment activity and medium of learning, it is a physical exercise for physical and mental development. Play performs important role for physical and mental health and it accelerates learning. These influencing findings about the understanding of play are highly relevant with the findings of published studies which are shown in Chapter 2.

On the other hand, the wide-ranging benefits of play are directly and sometimes indirectly related with development of children's social, emotional, physical and mental health. It is helpful for optimal teaching-learning activities and can be used as a pedagogical approach in early year's educational setting. The considerable responses from respondents are; play is helpful for physical and mental development, it can be energized physically and mentally, it increases understanding capacity, it helps to move children's unknown field, it increases children's creativity and visual power. It creates democratic and co-operative mind, children learn through play how to live and survive together, it helps to remove all discriminations among them, children gather knowledge of cleanliness and nature around them through play, play makes a teacher- student good interaction. The responses also revealed the various pedagogical benefits of play, such as play can remove the brothering and make them refresh, teacher can teach some lessons through play, teacher uses play as a technique of teaching by using letter cards, blocks, toys, teaching related game etc. Teacher uses play as a technique of teaching as well as joyful learning, students take part their lesson actively and they can give more attention

further lesson through play or after play. They also added, it is a part of education, it can help for creating joyful learning environment, make lesson easier to understand, attractive, and memorize the lesson; it accelerates the learning process. These findings of the field investigation of the study are in line with the discussed published research in Chapter 2.

The second research aim

Secondly, to consider the barriers to play in a Bangladesh pre-primary educational setting.

The second research aim was “to consider the barriers to play in a Bangladesh pre-primary educational setting”. The presented considerable findings in Chapter 4 show the barriers of play which are highly significant and influencing problems for early year’s educational setting. The revealed barriers from respondents are directly obstacles for implementing play in pre-primary educational setting. Respondents argued that there is no specific policy, curriculum is not actually playful, teachers are not also conscious about this, gender discrimination, insufficient training, classroom environment and playful materials. Which are confirmed by published studies in Chapter 2.

The third research aim

The third research aim was “to review the curriculum and policy content of Bangladesh curriculum in promoting plays”. In critical review of published studies in the Chapter 2 has identified different strategies for promoting play. In this case, there is no policy or strategy in Bangladesh for promoting of play in early year’s educational setting. This study has shown the findings of field investigation about promotion of play in Chapter 4. Different respondent has delivered their different recommendations for promoting, which are; curriculum should be designed play-based, it is necessary to adopt policy for applying playful teaching learning activities in the classroom, to eliminate all discriminations and implement inclusion by ensure equity and justice during play, supplying available play related materials because supplied materials are not sufficient and no involvement of pre-primary teacher when those are purchased according to necessity, friendly behave with students and avoid non-playful, non-purposive and anxiety behavior, teacher should be aware to teach latest playful teaching method, arranging training for the teacher, proper instruction and monitoring during play, special care for special needs children, ensuring play space and enough time. Most of the respondents emphasized to adopt a guide line or policy for applying playful teaching-learning activities and creating awareness of play. In Chapter 2, numerous studies have shown the different recommendations to promote play in early year’s educational setting. Obviously, these emerging findings of the study are highly relevant with the published studies which are shown in Chapter 2.

Recommendation for future improvement

According to given supporting strengths of research evidence, as seen in Chapter 2 and discussed findings of the third research aim” in Chapter 4, all practitioners (Head teacher, other teachers, administrators, policy makers) and beneficiaries (parents, students, pre-primary teachers, community) should recognize the benefits of play for children health and well-being and have to take necessary steps to promote it. To promote play in pre-primary education, we must need plan and ensure the suggestions which are discussed in Chapter 4 in title of “the findings of third research aims”.

First, play-based pre-primary curriculum should be designed. It should be implemented in all primary schools’ level.

According to respondents’ responses there is no strategy or policy about early year’s play and they do not aware about it. So, it is necessary to adopt policy for applying playful teaching learning activities in the classroom. It is very important for creating awareness about children’s play among practitioners and beneficiaries and to ensure eliminating of all discriminations and implementation of inclusion by ensuring equity and justice during play. It will make awareness of teacher to apply latest playful teaching-learning method.

It is needed to arrange short time training for the teacher about early year’s play. It will make teacher perfect for easily applying of play and conscious for friendly, avoiding non-playful, non-purposive and anxiety behavior with students.

According to respondents, it is needed to supply available play related materials because supplied materials are not sufficient. They suggest ensuring their involvement when those materials are purchased according to necessity.

I think that, in the modern civilization period, the opportunity of children play is losing day by day and in some cases already disappeared only for growing the using of modern technology and varying of the academic loads. So, not for only understanding, obviously play is a need for children’s holistic development. Therefore, the recommendations for educational settings are:

- a. To support teachers in conducting play-based teaching-learning activities through classroom observations.
- b. To provide professional development for colleagues and teachers through training sessions and feedback of academic supervision.

c. To create awareness towards teachers, parents and community with the emphasis on child's play during mother-guardian's meeting and open discussion monthly head teachers' co-ordination meeting.

a. Observation of class room activities

As my professional responsibilities, I have to observe teacher's teaching-learning activities in class room situation and give necessary feedback. When I will observe class room, I collect some data and indicators of children's participation during play and appropriate using of play. As mentor, I will use the data to give necessary feedback. I will inspire to apply playful approach for teaching-learning activities.

b. Professional development

As my professional responsibilities, I have to conduct various types of training in primary education. I can deliver the positive impact of play and necessity of implication in my training session. I can seek kind considerations for the implementing of play and professional development to higher authority. Besides this, I can share the collected data from the observation of class room to other teachers and colleagues.

c. Awareness towards teachers, parents and community

As my professional responsibilities, I have to participate and deliver speech in the mother-guardians' meeting, head teachers' monthly co-coordinating meeting and other meeting with teachers and communities. I can highlight the importance and description about play. For example, what plays are for pre-primary education, introducing play materials, providing ideas for home play. I can invite parents to come in school for observing the children's action for gaining ideas about play to apply at house. In addition, I can arrange seminar for parents and guardians about the importance of play with the concern of authority.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can mention an important quote of George Bernard Shaw, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing." I think as a practitioner of primary education, I have professional responsibility to arrange and ensuring a rich environment which furnish the optimal opportunities children to grow. Therefore, I must ensure the availability of appropriate amount of play related materials, freely moveable play-oriented classroom which help children to acquire learning and develop values, skills for becoming a good citizen. Mardary and Catalano (2010) state that play is known as child's work which express what is in a soul of child. Baines and Slutsky (2009) comment that play and time both are need for children because give relaxation, make creative energetic and give the opportunity to interact with others. Finally, this is my final thought of the study, doing something for enjoyment is play, play is the vital factor for teacher as pedagogy, play is needed for children to be a perfect human, practitioner should facilitate related play then learning occurs automatically through it.

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