

The Challenges Facing Preschool Teachers to Improve Play-based Learning Activities for Young Learners

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Abstract

The academic achievement of children aged 3 to 5 is crucial to their future. Play shows a vital role in helping preschool children develop the concepts and skills necessary for later academic achievement. Early childhood education is increasingly important, and preschool teachers must incorporate play-based learning activities in their classrooms. In this context, teachers have a significant responsibility in designing and implementing effective play-based learning experiences. The aim of this research is to examine how preschool teachers use play-based classroom activities, teachers' perceptions of using them, and children's participation in these activities in the Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka. It also shows the methods preschool teachers employ in their play-based learning activities in the Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka. This research used qualitative research methods, which focus on understanding the meanings, experiences, and perceptions that participants express. Interviews were conducted to gather the qualitative data. The research involved 26 preschool teachers and eight preschool administrators. Many challenges were identified to improve play-based learning activities for young learners. including: inadequate resources, especially play-based learning tools and toys, technological aids, and insufficient training programs. Despite these challenges, the study found that the government and administrators provided preschool teachers with some support, including supervision, resource allocation, and other forms of support. Additionally, the research recommended that all preschool teachers participate in a National Preschool Teachers Training program.

Keywords: Teaching and learning approach, Preschool teachers, Play-based Learning, Young children.

Introduction

The evolving nature of teaching has led to greater emphasis on teacher retention and active classroom engagement. Positive, supportive interactions between teachers and children are necessary for children to learn and grow. These interactions lay the foundation for children's social-emotional development and equip them for future educational experiences (Rajapaksha, 2016). In developing classroom activities, teachers and children must engage in supportive interactions. Additionally, the importance of preschool has also highlighted the need for teachers and children to

interact and engage effectively when teaching young children. The best way for children to learn is through active engagement, exploration, and meaningful interactions with the environment during their preschool years (Pyle et al., 2022).

Among the various teaching approaches used in preschool, play-based learning is usually recognized as the essential method for fostering holistic development (Pramling Samuelsson & Björklund, 2023). Children learn vital abilities via play, including problem-solving, interaction, creativity, cooperation, and critical thinking, all of which are crucial for their future academic performance and lifetime learning (Pramling Samuelsson & Björklund, 2023). Furthermore, educational researchers and policymakers have emphasized that young children should be provided with opportunities to learn through enjoyable, child-centred activities rather than highly official, teacher-centred learning.

Consequently, preschool teachers are expected to build supportive learning environments that foster active participation, exploration, and meaningful play. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in planning, organizing, and implementing classroom activities that encourage kids' education and growth. Strasser et al. (2024) indicated that despite the recognized importance of play-based learning, the extent to which teachers effectively implement activities in classroom practice remains an important area of study. Teachers' understanding, attitudes, and perceptions towards play-based strategies can greatly influence the quality of learning experiences provided to children. In addition, children's active participation in these activities is essential for achieving the intended educational outcomes (Strasser et al., 2024).

However, it has been noted that teaching every aspect of play-based classroom activities presents challenges for preschool teachers (Shiel et al., 2012). Teachers' experiences are influenced by a variety of circumstances, and as a result, concerns might arise from a lack of facilities and instructional resources in preschools, inadequate government assistance, and child-related problems like health issues and classroom conduct (Usman, 2016).

Therefore, it is essential for preschool educators to recognize the primary challenge faced when implementing play-based learning activities and to formulate a viable recommendation. The primary aim of this study is to identify the difficulties preschool teachers face in enhancing play-based learning activities for young learners. Preschool teachers can benefit from these suggestions as they practice their profession.

Research Background

The absence of access to preschool education and the prevalence of low-quality learning experiences were persistent issues for preschools in Sri Lanka. Additionally, a lack of government support and insufficient funding were identified as significant challenges in preschool education (World Bank, 2014). For instance, in 2013, only 1.75% of the government budget was allocated to general education programs in Sri Lanka, resulting in inadequate development of school facilities and unsuitable learning environments for students (World Bank, 2014). Notably, public expenditure on preschool education remains low in Sri Lanka. As a result, preschools heavily rely on private funding (World Bank, 2014). Furthermore, the shortfall in government funding has led to an increase in the number of private preschools. It is estimated that 71% of preschools in Sri Lanka are run by private organizations or individuals (Warnasuriya et al., 2020). The consequence of entrusting the delivery of preschool education to the private sector is that the curriculum tends to be largely unregulated and non-standardized (UNICEF, 2023).

In addition, it is expensive for children from low-income families to enroll in private preschools. According to The World Bank (2014), children from low-income families account for only 39% of preschool registrations in Sri Lanka. Although Sri Lanka is rated as a middle-income country, its education expenditure is much lower than that of other middle-income countries (Liyanage, 2014). To catch up with other middle-income nations, research by the World Bank (2014) recommends that the Sri Lankan government invest more in education, particularly preschool education. All children could receive affordable, well-equipped preschool education with more funding.

Regarding preschool teachers in Sri Lanka, there is a shortage of qualified professionals in the field, with fewer preschool teachers meeting the requirements of early childhood education (The World Bank, 2019; Shyamali & Seneviratne, 2022). In addition to this, “When it comes to Early Childhood Educators, 59.9% of the 28, 449 preschool teachers have passed the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) Examination” (Shyamali & Seneviratne, 2022). Although Mukunthan (2020) stated that preschool teachers must have a certain level of education, the majority of Sri Lankan preschools have teachers with lower levels of professionalism and education.

Statement of the Problem

Limited resources are one of the factors affecting play-based learning in Sri Lankan preschools, with difficulties in preschool education in Sri Lanka linked to

minimal government funding (World Bank, 2014). Essentially, play-based activities in Sri Lankan preschool classrooms require resources to support children's skill development and knowledge (Nemeth & Simon, 2013). Additionally, Usman (2016) noted that resources influence play-based activities within the preschool environment.

Another concern raised in the 2014 World Bank report is that insufficient training for preschool educators in Sri Lanka undermines the play-based skill development available to young learners. Inadequate training leaves teachers with a lack of comprehensive knowledge of diverse teaching methods and a limited grasp of how to design learning experiences for preschoolers that foster skill development and knowledge acquisition. Fewer than half of preschool teachers in Sri Lanka have completed their advanced level of education, and only 39% have completed at least 1 year of professional training (World Bank, 2014). In examining the increasing demand for children's education in Sri Lanka, Warnasuriya (2020) found that poorly trained teachers pose a significant obstacle to delivering quality education to children aged 3 to 5 years.

Aim of the Research

The aim of this study to find the challenges preschool teachers face in improving play-based classroom activities for young learners. That is, the research identified factors hindering preschool teachers from supporting improvements in play-based classroom activities for young learners in Sri Lankan preschools. By identifying these challenges and exploring related research literature, the study offers recommendations to improve the development of play-based classroom activities for young children in Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

Importance of children's play-based classroom activities

Play-based learning is commonly accepted as a cornerstone of early childhood education, promoting children's improvement. Chen, Rouse, and Morrissey (2024) explain that throughout the preschool stage, children learn effectively through hands-on participation, investigation, innovation, and interpersonal communication. Scholars emphasize that play is not solely for entertainment; rather, it is a significant educational tool that enriches cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and linguistic development in young students, all of which are essential for children's future academic achievement and lifelong learning (Chen et al., 2024).

Many scholars recognized the beneficial effect of play-based education on children's cognitive and academic progress, including role-playing, block building,

storytelling, and games, which help enhance children's memory, reasoning, focus, and problem-solving skills (Skene et al., 2022). Björklund and Elofsson (2023) concluded that play-based learning enables children to develop a strong foundation for future academic achievement.

The Role of Teachers in Implementing Play-Based Learning

Preschool teachers have a significant role in designing, organizing, and facilitating play-based activities. Prins et al. (2022) indicated that successful learning needs teachers to establish engaging learning environments, provide appropriate materials, monitor children's interests, and guide children's learning through purposeful interactions. Studies indicate that teacher engagement during play activities positively affects children's participation and educational outcomes (Skene et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and professional knowledge significantly influence the implementation of play-based learning in the classroom. Pramling Samuelsson and Björklund (2023) justify that some teachers view play as an effective educational strategy, while others are uncertain about how to balance play with academic expectations. Recent studies suggest that many educators face difficulties with curriculum expectations, assessment obligations, classroom management, and insufficient professional development in play-based teaching methods. Consequently, the successful application of play-based learning is significantly dependent on teachers' comprehension and professional knowledge (Chen et al., 2024).

Challenges in Implementing Play-Based Activities

Although play-based learning is highly encouraged in early childhood education, various obstacles limit its effective implementation in preschool settings. According to Mousena and Sidiropoulou (2018), a significant obstacle is increasing pressure for academic achievement at an early age, which often reduces opportunities for child-centred and exploratory learning. Some educational systems prioritize formal instruction, literacy, and numeracy outcomes over free and guided play experiences. As a result, preschool teachers may feel pressured to adopt teacher-centred instructional methods rather than play-oriented approaches.

Another significant challenge is the lack of adequate resources, classroom space, and teaching materials to implement high-quality play-based activities (Egert et al., 2018). Teachers in some preschool settings also struggle to manage large

classrooms and sustain meaningful engagement among children during play activities. Furthermore, a lack of adequate professional development opportunities and limited training in play-based pedagogy may diminish teachers' confidence and effectiveness in delivering play-based learning experiences.

Furthermore, Hagen (2018) noted that digital play and technology integration have also emerged as new areas of concern and opportunity in early childhood education. Although digital game-based learning has the potential to boost motivation and facilitate interactive learning, researchers emphasize that preschool teachers need adequate guidance and training to implement digital play effectively and in developmentally appropriate ways for preschool environments.

Factors that influence play-based classroom activities.

The development of children's play-based activity skills is influenced by several factors that need careful consideration. Therefore, this section examines these factors, including resource availability and preschool teachers' qualifications and training programs.

Resources

Preschool resources are critical to supporting children's learning and play-based skill development, as they facilitate learning and contribute to skill development among young learners. Usman (2016:28) contends that "materials and non-material factors that enable any institution to attain intended goals are termed resources". According to Pathirana (2017:37), the operation of Early Childhood Development institutions requires resources that affect educational quality, as the preschool curriculum is mainly based on play activities. However, in Sri Lanka, the author also revealed that the government had not focused on fostering a conducive environment for preschool children due to a lack of clear standards and resources. In support of this argument, the World Bank (2014) stated that most early childhood education centres in Sri Lanka conduct classroom activities for children aged two to seven in the same classroom, which may not be optimal for learning.

Preschool Teachers' Qualification and Training Program

According to Egert et al. (2018), teachers' qualifications and professional skills influence classroom practice in supporting children's skill development during classroom activities. Trained preschool teachers are considered important for the development of young children's oral language skills (Wang et al., 2020). A plausible argument is that both formal training, conducted systematically, and on-the-job

training, conducted in the workplace, help preschool teachers understand diversity among children (Bryant, 2018). Unfortunately, it has been reported that in some countries, early childhood teacher qualifications and training are minimal. A study encompassing the eastern, northern, and central regions of China reported limited skills among preschool teachers, attributed to low levels of available training opportunities (Manning et al., 2017). Similarly, in Sri Lanka, early childhood service providers were identified as “having limited or no skills, inadequate training, and no educational qualifications” (Pathirana 2017:38).

Furthermore, compared with preschool teachers in Australia and Canada, teachers in Sri Lanka have lower qualifications and training. Pathirana (2017) highlighted the need to develop a specific regulatory framework that clarifies the requirements for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD). Moreover, training for preschool teachers is not provided on an ongoing basis; in particular, in-service training is generally not conducted in Sri Lanka (Mukunthan, 2020). In support of these statements, the World Bank (2014) noted that, according to national guidelines, fewer than half of preschool teachers in Sri Lanka met the requirements for early childhood education, and that qualified professionals in early childhood education are needed in Sri Lanka.

Methodology

This methodology delineates the theoretical framework and research design, encompassing the data collection techniques, participants involved, and the data analysis procedures utilized in this study.

Theoretical framework

Research is guided by a theoretical framework. As Van der Waladt (2024) states, theoretical frameworks support research processes in the social sciences, offering researchers an analytical perspective for interpreting intricate social phenomena. The theoretical framework is important in any research study because it provides the background that supports the investigation and justifies the methods used to conduct it. Further, it limits the scope of the relevant data by defining specific viewpoints based on specific variables. Thus, a theoretical framework provides the foundation for defining key research elements, including methodologies, theoretical perspectives, and epistemological positions adopted in the research, and how they connect to the research questions.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of philosophical perspectives on the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge. It can be defined as the process by which the

researcher comes to know reality or truth (Kivunja, 2018). Since there is no universal philosophical definition of knowledge, its origin, or how it is acquired, researchers must provide their epistemological positions to enhance the validity of study outcomes. The purpose of an epistemological position is to explain how the researcher perceives knowledge, how they plan to acquire it, what is already known, and how it is justified. The current research takes a constructivist approach. According to Crotty (2020:42), constructionism is defined as ‘the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality, is constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context’. When constructionist epistemology is used, the study is considered a collaborative effort between the researcher and the participants to understand the phenomena under investigation (Kivunja, 2018). In this research, participants and researchers working together aim to construct knowledge about the challenges preschool teachers face in improving play-based classroom activities for young learners.

Theoretical perspective

A theoretical perspective consists of assumptions about the reality underlying the questions researchers ask and the kinds of answers they receive (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). It is a lens through which researchers look, serving to distort or focus observations. Thus, “the theoretical stance informs the methodology by providing context that shapes research processes and grounding logic and criteria” (Crotty 2020:7). Interpretivism is a theoretical perspective that involves the researcher attempting to interpret study elements and reality. The current study adopted interpretivism as the theoretical perspective because interpretivism assumes that human beings socially construct knowledge. Thus, an interpretivist theoretical perspective integrates human interest in the research (Crotty, 2020).

In the current research, the aim is to explore the challenges in play-based activities arising from interactions among preschool teachers, government departments (in terms of the support on offer), and learners. Archibald et al. (2019) observed that most qualitative research adopts an interpretivist theoretical perspective, which views the world as interpreted and constructed by people through their interactions with wider social systems and with one another. Grey (2013) highlighted that researchers must interpret to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this research, interpretivism helped the researcher gain insight and an in-depth understanding of the problems faced by preschool teachers in developing

play-based activities for young learners through the experiences of the teachers themselves and administrators.

Methodology: Case study

The case study represents a method whereby researchers develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of intricate phenomena within their actual context. Alpi and Evans (2019:2) characterized a case study as:

An approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time...”

Cleland (2017) endorses the definition, suggesting that a case study is a method of inquiry used to explore a contemporary phenomenon in its actual context. A key justification for the case study is that the research seeks to understand the phenomenon under study, namely, the encounters and the perceptions of preschool teachers and administrators regarding the level of support provided by the government of Sri Lanka for the play-based classroom activities of preschool children. Furthermore, case studies provide extensive information that allows for in-depth interpretation of phenomena. As argued by Cleland (2017), a case study enables the researcher to examine data closely within a specific context, especially when the sample population is small.

The Qualitative Research approach

This research used qualitative research methods, which focus on understanding the meanings, experiences, and perceptions that participants express. The qualitative research method seeks to gather data that helps the researcher understand how people interpret their world and make sense of the phenomena under investigation (Aryal, 2024). This means that qualitative research methods help the researcher to collect detailed information on how people explain events, experiences and actions in their own words (Aryal, 2024). Creswell (2017) noted that qualitative researchers aim to explore and comprehend the experiences of individuals within a social group. In this study, a qualitative approach was deemed suitable for providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges preschool teachers face in enhancing play-based classroom activities for young learners.

Participants

This research has two groups of participants. One group of participants was preschool teachers, and the other group was preschool administrators. All participants were selected from the Batticaloa district, Sri Lanka. The researcher selected 13

preschools using convenience sampling, and from each preschool, two preschool teachers were selected to gather data on their teaching practices and opinions regarding play-based classroom activities. Regarding early childhood administrators, the sample specifically comprised District Coordinators, four Regional Assistant Directors, and three Pre-school Principals.

The group comprised 26 preschool teachers to gather insights into their viewpoints, reflections, and emotions regarding their existing classroom practices. The preschool administrators group comprised eight administrators to assess the resources available to preschool teachers to support the development of young children's play-based classroom activities. Before the interview, the participants were informed of the study's purpose and procedures, their right to withdraw without penalty, and that written informed consent was required. Thus, clear communication on the purpose of the study and voluntary participation ensure ethical clarity.

Reliability and validity.

The presence of bias in research significantly impacts the validity and accuracy of data and findings, thereby reducing the reliability of research (Kusmaryono et al., 2020). Hayashi et al. (2019) indicated that validity will enable the development of accurate study findings based on the selected research approaches. More importantly, when exploring human lived experiences and perspectives, it is significant for research to assess validity and avoid potential bias. As the researcher, I agree that bias is more likely to affect research results. Possible sources of these biases include participant selection and the choice of data collection tools. To minimize bias, the researcher selected all participants who were experienced and qualified in the early childhood education sector. The researchers considered participants with three years or more of experience in early childhood education.

Data Collection Methods

The research inquiry centred on the difficulties preschool educators face in enhancing play-based activities for young learners. Investigating these challenges in this study requires tools capable of capturing qualitative data. Among the most widely used data collection instruments are interviews. Interviews primarily collect qualitative data, depending on the design of the study's questions (Creswell, 2017). In this research, a semi-structured interview was selected as the most suitable tool for collecting information. The researcher contacted the participants via their respective workplaces in the Batticaloa district before collecting the data. An invitation letter was sent to the participants, inviting them to take part in the study.

Qualitative data analysis: Thematic analysis

According to Naeem et al. (2023), thematic analysis aims to uncover themes within data. This process involves examining a collection of qualitative data to discern patterns in meanings. Thematic analysis is essential for qualitative research designs, as it yields valuable insights from data that reflect respondents' opinions, experiences, and emotions. In this research, the investigator employed thematic analysis on the qualitative data to pinpoint recurring themes. Thematic analysis consists of six steps when applied to qualitative data (Braun & Clark, 2021; Kushnir, 2025). This method was selected for the study due to its established reputation for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes in qualitative data (Peel, 2020).

Findings And Discussion

The interview data include administrators' and preschool teachers' opinions on the challenges they face in improving play-based classroom activities for children. The primary themes in this case encompassed resources, issues pertaining to children, and training initiatives.

Preschool teachers face challenges in enhancing play-based activities in the classroom.

Theme 1: Resources

When the administrators and preschool teachers were questioned about the difficulties preschool teachers face in enhancing play-based activities for preschool learners, they identified a shortage of resources as a significant concern. The administrators acknowledged that preschool teachers have access to craft materials, handmade aids, and stationery supplies. Nevertheless, they also emphasized the absence of play toys and tools as a critical issue, stating: "Both the teachers and children do not have play-based resources such as open-ended materials, sensory materials, building and scrap materials and even Natural Resources (Leaves, pinecones, sticks, mud, and water). This is a huge issue for them." This statement underscores that the administrator views play toys and tools as essential to enabling teachers to implement play-based classroom activities effectively, thereby enhancing learning outcomes.

Preschool teachers expressed similar opinions, noting that resources pertaining to technological aids, including audio and video materials, are essential for supporting preschool children, particularly those with physical disabilities. Regarding this matter, they remarked:

“In this situation, educators require numerous learning tools to aid the children... specialized devices are exceedingly uncommon in our area.”

Theme 2: Children’s Health Concerns and Classroom Behaviour

Administrators and teachers identified children’s health issues as obstacles to preschool education and play-oriented learning experiences. They noted that the underlying issue is that, at times, children exhibit laziness or lack physical strength and may feel lethargic. This presents a considerable challenge for teachers in fostering physical activities for preschool-aged children. The analysis reveals that health concerns among children also pose obstacles for preschool teachers seeking to enhance their play-based activities in the classroom.

Moreover, a critical issue raised by administrators and preschool teachers was that children occasionally fail to cooperate in the classroom, resulting in adverse learning outcomes. They specifically noted: “While the preschool activities have been conducted by the teachers, not all the children are engaging in play-based activities in the classroom.” This observation suggests that enhancing children’s social skills is essential, as these skills affect their behaviour in the classroom. Additionally, they pointed out that the children’s lack of cooperation is further impacted by other negative behaviours, such as poor attendance. This statement suggests that poor attendance among preschoolers poses a significant challenge for preschool teachers seeking to enhance their play skills, as these children are not engaged in classroom learning activities.

Theme 3: Training

When asked about other challenges faced by preschool teachers in improving the play-based classroom activities of preschool learners in Sri Lanka, both administrators and preschool teachers pointed to the need for training, including pre-service and in-service programs. In particular, the administrators noted that there was no pre-service training for preschool teachers in Sri Lanka as a preparatory step to teaching preschool children, stating that “With that, all preschool teachers do not have training in Sri Lanka”. At the same time, they pointed to a lack of funds and resources as a hindrance to the pre-service training of preschool teachers, which can affect the play-based classroom activities of children. However, preschool teachers also indicated that more in-service training is required to improve their skills. Teachers explained that: “However, it would be better to give more training programs to the teachers regarding play-based classroom activities. This commentary from participants highlights that they believe preschool teachers currently do not receive adequate pre-

service and in-service training in classroom activities; hence, there is a need to expand existing pre-service and in-service training programs.

Discussion

One of the findings from the current research showed that all preschool teachers experienced a lack of resources, especially regarding play-based classroom materials and toys. In previous studies on resources (Pathirana, 2017; Usman, 2016; World Bank, 2014), it was noted that early childhood institutions require resources that help preschools achieve their intended goals and create an enjoyable learning atmosphere that enables children to become actively involved in play-based classroom activities.

The role of secure administrators is to safeguard resources and support preschool educators in enhancing play-based learning activities for young children. Administrators clarified that it is the duty of officials to guarantee that the necessary resources for play-based learning are supplied to preschool teachers. These resources were sourced from non-governmental organizations and ‘well-wishers’ within local communities. They regarded procuring resources as their contribution to ensuring preschool teachers have the tools needed to enhance children’s physical abilities.

Preschool teachers need educational qualifications and professional skills as these have been shown to have an impact on classroom practice when supporting children’s learning and classroom activities (Egert et al., 2018). The current study’s findings showed that preschool teachers lack pre-service and in-service training in Sri Lanka. In turn, preschool teachers and administrators identified challenges related to pre-service and in-service training of preschool teachers as key factors influencing teaching practice in preschools.

However, previous studies point out that early childhood teachers’ qualifications and training are inadequate in Sri Lanka. This statement is supported by the World Bank (2014) report, and also by the research of Pathirana (2017) and Rajapaksha (2016), who report that, according to national guidelines, less than half of the preschool teachers in Sri Lanka fulfilled the necessary requirements of early childhood education and that qualified professionals in early childhood education are required in Sri Lanka. According to these researchers, poorly trained or untrained teachers hinder the development of classroom activities for preschool children because they lack the necessary knowledge.

Despite their low levels of qualifications and lack of training, the preschool teachers implemented a variety of experiences in their classrooms to support the

children's activities. The findings showed that they utilized approaches and strategies in their teaching practice, including picture cards, play activities, singing, and storytelling, to support children's skill development during classroom activities.

Conclusion

Recommendations of the study

To strengthen the policies and practices in Sri Lankan preschools to better support the play-based learning activities of young children in the Batticaloa District, the quality of early childhood education needs to be improved. The subsequent recommendations are proposed as methods to accomplish this.

Recommendation 1 - Address the lack of resources

This research recommends the creation of a partnership among local non-governmental organizations, the management committee, and the Ministry of Education to address key issues relating to the lack of resource allocation between the urban and rural preschools in the district. The partnership could provide additional funds to purchase adequate play-based classroom activities, tools, and toys, including audio and video equipment, teaching materials, and computers.

These aids were regarded as essential to their work, as were the teachers themselves. Therefore, it is imperative for the government and administrators to allocate resources appropriately, given that preschool teachers have identified a shortage of resources as a significant obstacle to enhancing young learners' classroom activity skills in the Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka.

Recommendation 2 - Introduce a national preschool teachers' training program

The government's initiation of a national preschool teacher training program would guarantee that all preschool teachers undergo consistent pre-service training before starting their careers. Such a standardized pre-service training initiative would ensure that every preschool teacher is adequately trained according to the national training framework and its educational standards. Moreover, preschool administrators would be equipped to provide uniform, regulated in-service training programs for preschool teachers that align with national training standards. This approach would enhance teachers' competencies and help them integrate new advancements in effective teaching methodologies. The training would improve preschool teachers' skills, self-assurance and knowledge, as they would gain confidence in their teaching

practices, all having attained the necessary national training qualifications as a foundation.

Regarding children's health issues, government and non-governmental organizations, administrators, preschool teachers, and parents should take the necessary measures to support children.

Conclusion

The key objective of this research was to find the difficulties preschool teachers face in enhancing play-based learning activities for young children in the Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka. To do this, two groups of participants were involved in this study. One group of participants was preschool teachers (26), and the other group was preschool administrators (8). The findings revealed that there were a number of challenges that teachers face, such as inadequate resources, especially in play tools or toys, and technological aids, such as audio and video tools, teaching materials, and computers, and preschool teachers' lack of training (pre-service, in-service) programs. Therefore, the research recommended that the Sri Lankan education system establish and implement a partnership among local non-governmental organizations, the management committee, and the Ministry of Education to address key issues.

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