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A study on how play-way method supports early reading and writing skills among pre-school children of Kamrup district with special reference to hajo educational block

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ABSTRACT

The present study evaluated how the play-way method supports early reading and writing skills among preschool children in Kamrup district, with particular reference to the Hajo educational block. Employing a normative survey design, both primary and secondary data were collected. The sample consisted of 30 children randomly selected from two Anganwadi centres in Hajo block. Data were gathered using a self-developed instrument, Play-way Method Integrated Language and Literacy Development of Preschool. In line with the study's requirements, mixed-method techniques were applied. Findings revealed a significant difference in literacy outcomes between children exposed to the play-way method and those receiving preschool education through the traditional chalk-and-talk approach, with the former demonstrating superior performance.

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Results further indicated that while the play-way method fosters engagement, it also presents challenges such as friction, lack of clarity, and feelings of detachment, which may hinder skill development. Additionally, the availability of outdoor play materials in Anganwadi centres was found to positively influence emergent literacy, underscoring the importance of the learning environment in shaping early language and literacy outcomes. Overall, the study highlights that the Anganwadi setting plays a crucial role in supporting preschool children's literacy development, with implications for both boys and girls.

Keywords: Play-Way Method, Language Learning, Literacy Development, Pre-school.

Introduction:

Play is an important child-centered activity during childhood and it is often considered synonymous with childhood. The recorded history about major cultures for a thousand years before the birth of Christ indicates the views on childhood as children were never romanticized and were not considered naturally innocent and pure. Rather, they were thought of as helpless, incapable of directing their own lives and having special needs. Now for more than five decades, children have been allowed to have autonomy and freedom of expression that represented the ancient or modern history. Finally, play has been given an important place in child development. Children are not only allowed to play but they were encouraged to play because it provides opportunities for language, intellectual, social development as well as emotional release, which are a significant part of both psychoanalytic and cognitive developmental theories

In recent years, the emphasis on child-centred approaches and learning through play has gained significant attention in early childhood education. These methods are increasingly recognized as vital for nurturing curiosity, creativity, and holistic development during the preschool and early schooling years. The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) underscores this perspective, recommending play-based and activity-driven learning as the foundation for an integrated pedagogical and curricular framework. This vision consolidates the preschool and early primary years into a unified "foundational stage," ensuring that children experience education as joyful, engaging, and developmentally appropriate (Government of India, 2020). Preschool, also known as early childhood education, caters to children aged 3-6. This is the first structured stage of learning and takes place in various settings-Anganwadies, Nurseries, Kindergartens, and pre-school settings in government formal schools. NEP (2020) even identifies the foundational stage (ages 3–8) as critical for cognitive, emotional, and social development. It integrates preschool education into the formal structure through 5+3+3+4 curricular frameworks, replacing the earlier 10+2 model. The policy advocates for a play-based, activity-driven curriculum that nurtures curiosity, creativity, and holistic growth. Various studies have shown that due to mind set of parents in global competitive education system, young children are treated as adult and they are involved in formal teaching-learning process in very young age of life. Study conducted by Lekani,2013; Ginsburg,2007; Li & Rao,2009; Singer.et al.'2009 highlighted that due to increased pressure from formal learning in early education, children in preschools and primary schools are getting very few

opportunities for free play. Learning during early childhood period is also important as studies show that 80% of brain development takes place in early childhood period. Strong foundation of language, literacy and mathematical skills in early years (Age group 3 to 9 years) is critical for all future development. National Initiative for proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN BHARAT- A nationwide Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy) Implementing guideline highlights that literacy as “acquiring the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and the ability to apply them to one’s day to day life”.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act-2000, Article-24 provides: exactly prohibits kids to work in risky environment. Article-21&45 gives the right to education to each and every one the children below the age of 14years. Article- 39 declares the responsibility of the State to give the children a free facility to expand in conditions of liberty and self-respect in a healthy way. The significance of play and activity approach and the need for child-centeredness in the programmes of ECCE as well as in primary school education have been spelt out in the NPE-1986, and it cautions against the dangers of using formal methods of teaching and early introduction of the 3R’s.

Operational Definition of the Terms Used:

Following are the Operational Definitions of Key Terms used:

Play-Way Method:

The Play Way Method is an educational approach based on the principle that children learn best through play and enjoyable activity. Originally introduced by Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), who believed play was the purest form of child development, the method was further developed and named by Henry Caldwell Cook (1917) in his work The Play Way.

According to Vygotsky (1978) emphasized, play creates a zone of proximal development in which children operate above their average age and daily behaviour, making it a uniquely powerful context for learning.

Balanced language & literacy teaching is closely related to the play-way method. A balanced approach means covering all dimensions of language and literacy not just one or two. On the other hand, the Play- way Method is a child-centered approach in learning that emphasizes play-based activities to promote cognitive, social, emotional, and language development in young children. This method is particularly effective in early childhood education, as it fosters a nurturing environment that encourages children to explore, learn, and develop at their own.

Language Learning:

Language is a system of communication in which through speech and writing, or making signs in a way that can be understood by others, it becomes a medium of expression for one’s thoughts, ideas and desires.

According to Sapir (1921) defines languages as “a primarily human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.”

According to Varshney (2001) learning to read and write is crucial in the early school years in India. Without these skills, children struggle in school.

During this early childhood period child learn words, simple sentences apart from expressing their thought with sign language. Language development in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is foundational to a child’s cognitive and socio-emotional growth. The early years are considered a “critical period” for language acquisition, where children rapidly absorb vocabulary, syntax, and communication norms through play, storytelling, and interaction.

Literacy Development

Pre-school stage is most crucial as far as the primary education is concerned since children are made ready to entry in the first grade or class in the school of formal set up. Various studies conducted in the world as well as in India have categorically shown that pre-school education has a greater impact on one’s lifelong learning. The Article 45 of Indian Constitution retains ECE as a Directive Principle. It reads ‘The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.’ Assam is home to various ethnic groups, each with its own language or dialect. While Assamese is the official language, communities such as Bodo, Rabha, Karbi, Mishing, Santhali and Bengali have distinct linguistic traditions. Children from tribal communities often struggle with reading and writing in Assamese or English due to differences in phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar. As Early Childhood is the golden age for learning to talk, just as it is for learning other skills. Recognizing that strong language and literacy skills in the early years lay the foundation for success later in life, the researcher set out to explore how preschool children develop these abilities through the play-way method.

Review of the Related Literature:

A literature review gives a theoretical basis for the research and help to determine the nature of own research of a particular researcher. Deepali (1990) studied on “Pre-School Children and their challenges in rural areas of Kamrup district highlighted the detrimental effects of poverty and parental indifference on the growth and development among Pre-School Children. Christie and Roskos (2006) argued that literacy-enriched play settings provide children with meaningful contexts for practicing emerging literacy skills. Saikia (2013) conducted a study on “Influence of Pre-School education on Child’s language development: a case study in Morigaon of Assam. Results indicated that Pre-School Children attendance fosters the language development of children have been found to be significant higher than those who did not only in two aspects of language skills, that is in identification and naming, ability to indicate parts of body like the school going boys both school going and non-school going girls have shown similar abilities in language skills. Thakuria (2024) conducted a study on “Effect of Covid-19 pandemic on

school preparedness of Pre-School Children in Assam of Kamrup district. Reveals that 80% of schools are having running water, 10% of schools having separate toilet for Pre-School Children, 50% schools are having print-rich classroom and 60% of schools are having outdoor play material for the pre-school children.

Significance of the Study:

The challenges of education towards 21st century, stress appears when our bodies react to a challenge, mental or physical, by increasing success of the nation is determined by the quality of its citizen. In our country, education is in a mess at the present juncture. There is, however, nothing very surprising about it. It cannot be in any other state. Today it is deeply set in the country. The importance of 'play' as fundamental to the way very young children learn is well established. The early years of life are the most significant years for human growth, development and learning. The purpose of the study is to investigate the vernacular medium Anganwadi centres and schools are significant difference between learning and literacy development of pre-school children with special reference to Kamrup district in Assam and learn age limited 5-6 years. Play is a common childhood activity, and it is often considered synonymous with childhood. The recorded history about major cultures for a thousand years before the birth of Christ indicates the views on childhood as children were never romanticized and were not considered naturally innocent and pure. Rather, they were thought of as helpless, incapable of directing their own lives and having special needs. Since the early 17th century, there was no distinction between children's and adult's world. Pyle et al. (2018) note that play is an effective context for early literacy development. The role of various kinds of play, such as free play and guided play, in improving verbal skills, language comprehension, self-regulation, and social skills. Therefore, Play focuses on the process more than the product-during play, young children focus on the process or performance of the activity, not on a goal or the results.

The human interaction that takes place in the school plays an important role. The proposal envisages operation of extraordinary schools for child task inhibited from work. One of the objectives of pre-school is to help children become involved learners, think critically, be creative, collaborate, communicate, and connect with their immediate environment which are well aligned with the early literacy and numeracy skills. In the light of the above discussion of the significance of the study, the title of the present study is fixed as, "a study on how play-way method supports early reading and writing skills among pre-school children of Kamrup district with special reference to Hajo educational block" is relatively an unexplored in Assam. It can be used as an effective resource for classroom teaching and learning by activating their previous knowledge and giving space to their lived experiences such as discussing a theme like seasons through songs or folk songs. The focus during acquisition is not the form or structure of the language's utterances, but purposeful and meaningful interaction through the act of communication itself. Thus, the play-way method is a child-centered, activity-based approach to early education that integrates play with learning. This method ultimately emphasizes the natural, spontaneous activities of children to foster engagement and promote foundational skills

in literacy and language. Its effectiveness in the early years has drawn attention for developing key skills like vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and storytelling.

Statement of the Problem:

A study on how play-way method supports early reading and writing skills among pre-school children of Kamrup district with special reference to hajo educational block

Objectives:

- To identify specific play-based activities that enhance early reading skills
- To examine the role of play in strengthening fine motor skills necessary for early writing.
- To compare the impact of play-way method in language development of pre-school boys and girls

Hypotheses of the Present Study:

This research is conducted based on the following hypotheses.

- 1) There is no significant difference in play-way method of learning and literacy development of pre-school children.
- 2) There exists significant difference between language learning and literacy development of pre-school children.
- 3) There is a significant interactional effect of play-way method and literacy development of pre-school children.

Delimitations:

The present study has been carried out some limitations as following:

- 1) The study has been delimited to the 5-6 years old Pre-School Children only.
- 2) The areas of has been restricted of Kamrup district only.
- 3) The study has been confined- 30 both child boys and girls only.
- 4) This study has been confided to the variables-play-way method, language learning and literacy development only.

Methodology:

The Normative Survey method of research was used to conduct the present study.

Sample Size:

A sample size consists of 30 pre-school children both boy and girl. They were randomly selected from different area of Kamrup district in Assam. The sample of the present study was limited to two Anganwadi centres.

Tools used for Collection of Data:

A self-made questionnaire constructed by the investigator to assess the basic concepts in Language Learning and Literacy Development of Pre-School Children through play-way method .

Statistical Techniques Used:

Mean, Standard Deviation and *t-test* were used for analysis and interpretation of data.

Analysis and Discussions:

The raw data after scoring the tests as per norms was analysed using various statistical techniques in order to test the hypotheses and to get meaningful conclusions. The results of the analysis of the study are presented as follows:

Table No-1: Showing the Mean and S. Ds on Learning and Literacy Development of Pre-school Children in Respect to Play-way Method

Variables	Mean	SD	t-ratio	significance
Learning Styles	76.93	9.54	3.51	significant
Literacy Development	69.10	10.37		

Table-2: Showing Language Abilities comparison of Pre-School Children with Respect to Sex of Kamrup district in Assam

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	Significance
Boy	15	32.77	4.64	2.71	Not significant
Girl	15	13.95	5.39		

From the table no.2, observed that the language abilities of children attended Pre-School Children have been found to be significant higher than those who did not only in two aspects of language skills, that is in identification and naming, ability to indicate parts of body like the school going boys both school going and non-school going girls have shown similar abilities in language skills. It reveals that pre-school a having outdoor play material for the children, showed that early education can make a huge difference between boys and girls.

One of the objectives of pre-school is to help children become involved learners, think critically, be creative, collaborate, communicate, and connect with their immediate environment which are well aligned with the early literacy and numeracy skills. The overall development of the personality of a child through play, manipulation of concrete material for discovery, experimentation, and exploration is the purpose of pre-school education. It emphasises on a print rich environment that allows children to practice foundational literacy skills in their daily life, combined with age between 3 to 6 years and developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices of key concepts and literacy skills.

The Play-way Method integrates play with learning, emphasizing natural, spontaneous activities to foster engagement and foundational skills in literacy and language. Research highlights its effectiveness in developing vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and storytelling abilities. Through creative play, well-thought-out games, and suitable adaptations for children with special needs, children develop working memory, focus their attention, and acquire self-control. Therefore, providing opportunities for children to explore their environment while engaging in meaningful communication with pre-school children fosters cognitive and social development.

Conclusions:

The present study revealed the major findings and conclusions as follows:

Therefore, the first hypothesis reads as, “There is no significant difference in play-way method of learning and literacy development of pre-school children”, is significant and fully accepted.

Hence, the second hypothesis states as, “There exists significant difference between learning and literacy development of pre-school children”, is also significant and fully accepted.

Therefore, the third hypothesis reads as, “There is a significant interactional effect of play-way method and literacy development of pre-school children”, is also significant and fully accepted. It could be summarized that intervention programme lead to a significant impact on emergent literacy in children of Anganwadi center of Kamrup district in Assam with special reference to Hajo block.

Remedial Measures:

The investigation has put some educational implications for further study. The following implications may guide in making fields more authentic.

This paper identifies the policies and the need as issue can to really get addressed and determined. The focus in this issue is on putting education in values and for character building on the national agenda.

The facility should be provided to rural schools for development of values and creativity among the 3-6 years children. There are many gaps in the investigations in the field of environmental sustainability and conservation issues and challenges with special reference to their family environmental education and due to schemes like Right to Education, Mid-Day Meal which gave children an incentive to study.

The role of NGOs was also important in bringing this fall in child labour. The children should be motivated for study of value based literacy.

A similar study can also be carried out to see effect of school environment, home environment on students.

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