

Preschool teachers' perception on use of play based activities for language skills development

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In early years language skills are acquired through social interactions with peers and adults. Play activities provide opportunities for children to improve language skills. The Sri Lankan standard for early childhood education and care highlights the need of play based activities for language development. It is necessary for teachers to understand the role of play to develop language skills in children. The focus of this study was to examine the teachers' perception on use of play based activities for language skills development and to identify factors influencing the implementation of play based activities for development of language skills. A survey method was employed using questionnaires as the main instrument to collect data. The respondents consisted of 80 preschool teachers from the Certificate in Preschool Education Programme, 2014/15 academic year in Colombo Regional centre in the Open University of Sri Lanka. All respondents were selected randomly. To gain additional insights into the teachers' perceptions and the factors influencing their implementation 15 respondents were selected to be interviewed and observed based on their consent. The findings showed that the preschool teachers have favorable perception about the use of play based activities for language development. They were aware of the importance of play for language development. Majority believed children like very much to involve in play and when children engage in play based activities they use more language skills. However majority were unsure of organizing and implementing effective play based activities suitable for language development. Factors related to teachers' qualifications and experiences, preschool administration, preschool timetable, time, physical space and materials influenced them for more teacher directed activities. The study points to the importance of emphasizing use of play based activities for language skills development.

Key words: Perception, Preschool education, Language skills development, Play based activities