

PLAY-BASED LEARNING FOR KINDERGARTEN: AN OVERVIEW STUDY**Le Thi Bích Van***Dong Thap University*

ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	11/3/2022	The article reviews a number of research projects on play-based learning for kindergarten. The research questions for this article are “What do scientists say about play-based learning? Is there any difference between domestic and international studies?”. The author has read, analyzed and synthesized 36 documents related to play-based learning. To perform this study, the author has synthesized some content about play-based learning such as genres, organizational goals, and differences in domestic and foreign research. Research results has shown some main points: In Vietnam, when mention about play – based learning, the authors almost exclusively refer to “learning games”, the meaning of this game to the intellectual development of children; some authors suggest learning games for teachers and encourage the active role of teachers. Meanwhile, international studies show many differences in the nature of play-based learning and its benefits; on the other hand, the authors have many conflicting arguments about the active role of children and the “supporting” task of the teacher.
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HỌC QUA CHƠI Ở TRƯỜNG MẦM NON: MỘT NGHIÊN CỨU TỔNG QUAN**Lê Thị Bích Vân***Trường Đại học Đồng Tháp*

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	11/3/2022	Bài báo tổng quan một số công trình nghiên cứu về học qua chơi cho trẻ mẫu giáo. Câu hỏi nghiên cứu được đặt ra là “Các nhà khoa học nói gì về học qua chơi? Có điều gì khác biệt giữa các nghiên cứu trong và ngoài nước?”. Để thực hiện nghiên cứu, tác giả đã đọc, phân tích, tổng hợp 36 tài liệu có liên quan đến vấn đề này. Qua đó, tác giả đã tổng hợp được một số nội dung về học qua chơi như các thể loại, mục tiêu tổ chức, một số điểm khác biệt ở nghiên cứu trong và ngoài nước. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra một số điểm nổi bật: Ở Việt Nam, khi nói về học qua chơi, các tác giả hầu như chỉ đề cập đến “trò chơi học tập”, ý nghĩa của trò chơi này đến sự phát triển trí tuệ của trẻ; một số tác giả gợi ý các trò chơi học tập cho giáo viên và khuyến khích vai trò tích cực của giáo viên. Trong khi đó, các nghiên cứu quốc tế nêu nhiều điểm khác biệt về bản chất của học qua chơi, lợi ích của hoạt động này; mặt khác, các tác giả có nhiều tranh luận trái chiều về vai trò chủ động của trẻ, nhiệm vụ “hỗ trợ” của giáo viên.
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147

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1. Introduction

Play is the main activity of preschool children. Through play, children develop all aspects, which are physical, intellectual, emotional and social skills. The research works on play-based learning have utmost significance in training preschool teachers. For that reason, research on preschool children's play is always a necessary issue.

In working and accessing domestic and foreign documents, the author realized some significant differences in play, such as the concept viewpoints and methods of organizing play activities [1]. These theoretical issues guide the practice method of future preschool teachers. Through case studies [1], the difficulties of preschool teachers when organizing play activities for children at kindergarten can also be realized. We believe that if preschool teachers have access to more open theories about play-based learning, it will help teachers have more suitable options in organizing play for children.

In Vietnam, literature review on play-based learning has not been found yet. However, several recommendations for learning games [2]-[4], guiding this type of game for children [5], [6] have been provided. In the international magazines, we find a lot of documents talking about play-based learning [7]-[9], many conflicting arguments are raised [10], [11]. From 36 references, we analyze, synthesize and compare some content about play-based learning.

It is believed that an overview study of theoretical studies on play-based learning may help trainers, preschool teachers have more information such as: generalizing issues of play-based learning, different approach points of view.

2. Research methods

The research questions are:

1. What do scientists say about play-based learning?
2. Is there any difference between domestic and international studies?

The author used theoretical research method: reading, analyzing, and synthesizing 36 articles (of which 8 pieces of Vietnamese authors and 28 pieces in the world) related to game-based learning. The author selected and synthesized information according to the following contents: play-based learning's benefits, the factors affecting this activity, the genre of play – based learning. Finally, the author compared the above contents between Vietnamese and international research.

3. Findings and discussions

3.1. Vietnamese studies

The authors in Vietnam all acknowledge the role of play in children's development. No one denies that play helps children develop physical, intellectual, moral, and aesthetical capacity, forming the first elements of personality and social skills [5], [6]. In addition, play helps to develop the memorize ability [12], manipulative thinking [2], and generalize ability [4].

Dinh Van Vang writes a chapter on learning games, in which he defines learning games, outlines the characteristics and the meanings of these games and guides the organization of “learning games”. Learning games are used in the classroom to help children acquire knowledge. Specifically, the authors design learning games to help children forming mathematical symbols [3], familiarizing themselves with letters, developing language, language skills, and intellectual development.

Thus, most of the studies in Vietnam suggest that organizing learning games is aimed at academics, in which teachers are active in the design and organization of games. In addition, no author has given opposing views.

Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training continually defines pedagogy method in preschool as “*play by learning, learn by playing*” [13]. During a day at kindergarten, “play” and

“learn” happen anywhere and anytime, but firmly in purpose learning activities, outdoor activities, and corner activities.

It can be seen that the number of studies in Vietnam is still minimal in the critical field of play-based learning for children. In Vietnam, play-based learning is considered a type of game created by adults to help children solve learning tasks called “learning game”. It is an aspect that does not fully reflect the essence of play-based learning. “Learning” is not only solving “cognitive tasks” but children develop all aspects through play.

3.2. International studies

Many researchers confirm the value of play activities [14]: releasing excess energy (Spencer, 1873); or vice versa, restoring energy (Patrick, 1916); getting rid of personal troubles, fears and feeling safe; practising the necessary skills (Karl Groos, 1901); having ability to participate in society [15].

In contrast, Piaget [16] criticized the view that children's play is just a break or release of excess energy in the child's body. He considered the game as one of the intellectual activities, an essential factor for the intellectual development of children, creating the children's adaptation to the environment. “When playing, children develop perception, intelligence, experimental tendencies, social instincts...”. Similarly, Vygotsky [17] said that play is “the leading source of development in preschool years” [7].

Contemporary theorists argue that play is a child's right and an essential means for a child's cognitive, social, physical and emotional ability. The role of play is emphasized as a necessary and indispensable part [14]. During this period, we see a strong imprint of Froebel to this day when he sees children as a period of their right and not just preparation for later adult life. He built the first kindergarten in which play officially entered the educational program. In turn, Susan Isaacs emphasized, play is at the heart of the kindergarten program [18]. For a long time, free play was at the core of preschools.

Many researchers have found that play is a means of education in recent decades, such as A. X. Macarenco, Bededop, Pho Bach, E. I. Chikhiyeva, N. K. Crupskaya, K. D. Usinsky . The authors said that using games will help children learn more effectively. With movements towards academic standards [19], educators are now faced with responsibility for integrating play-based learning into the curriculum [20].

3.2.1. Factors influencing on the play-based learning organisation of teachers

Play-based learning organisation of teacher is affected by several factors that can be interrelated. Some elements exercise their influence at the teacher level, while others operate at the institutional level.

Teacher beliefs

Teachers' beliefs about educational purpose (i.e., the learning objectives for students) often inform their instructional practice, including if and how teachers integrate play-based pedagogies [21].

Teacher perspective

Parents and/or administration put pressure on teachers about children's academic outcomes [22]. Teachers reported these practical challenges as influencing the pedagogical decision to implement more direct instruction and resulting in fewer play-based learning opportunities [7].

Teacher role

There are many favourable opinions and arguments about the role of teachers in children's play.

The role of teachers during periods of play has been described as passive and observant [23], an enabler of free exploration [24] and someone who offers ideas to extend learning when appropriate [25], provides uninterrupted time for children to engage in free play [21], [26]-[28] and extends children's play and learning by getting involved in play when appropriate without transforming it [23], [26]-[28].

In contrast, the other authors argue about teachers' active roles in play to facilitate learning, including setting up the environment [29], providing an abundance of appropriate play materials [27], [30], [31], leading specially designed games or activities [32], intervening in child-directed play to incorporate academic learning [33] using of educational board games and as co-participants [34], [35].

In moderate intervention, some researchers consider the role of the teacher as a provider of "*appropriate adult scaffolding and support*". This can occur through asking questions, encouraging discussion, introducing new concepts, and modelling literacy and math behaviours [33], [11], [36], [37].

3.2.2. Types of game

Free play

There is broad acknowledgement that free play is freely chosen and child-directed [38]. Children have right, time and space to lead their learning through play.

Guided play

The teacher is the one who designs and leads the game to achieve the academic goal defined in the curricular. From Fisher (2013); Jones & Reynolds (2011), the educator can engage in a variety of practices to embed or scaffold academic learning within children's play activities such as providing comments or questions, becoming an active co-player, or leading games and activities that address curricular content in a playful manner [7].

Balanced Approach

Han (2010) has expounded on the benefits of a balanced approach to develop literacy skills. Teachers need to create a balanced pedagogical approach that includes various modes of instruction and learning, including free play, direct instruction, and guided play [39]. Teachers need to determine how they are engaged in play with children.

To sum up, articles around the world open up many play-based learning issues, in which there are tons of debates, and each place is still going in its direction.

In general, studies in Vietnam show a lot about the role of play in children's development. In the term of play – based learning, the authors refer mainly to the active role of teachers. Teachers organize most play-based learning to achieve educational goals.

The study of international works helps to add a lot of material to the theory of play-based learning. However, international studies reveal a diversity of perspectives. There are endlessly debated issues like teacher role, types of play – based learning. They also mention a lot about factors affecting play – based learning such as teacher beliefs, teacher perspective.

4. Conclusion

The article reviews several studies on play-based learning. In Vietnam, most studies talk about the role of games and the types of learning games that are encouraged to be used to achieve educational goals. Therefore, teachers must be proactive in creating games and guiding children to play. However, children's play is recommended by many foreign authors to be free, created by children themselves, while teachers mainly play a supporting role when really needed. This view has been debated for a long time in many different countries and they also go on different paths. There are many controversies about the concept, the role of the teacher and the role of the child. Through the literature review, the author realizes that there is a need for comparative studies on the effectiveness of different directions (children - direct or teacher active) to have an effective comparison in practice.

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