A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE LEARNING THROUGH PLAY APPROACH ACCORDING TO THEIR SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS AT SELECTED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK

NEHA PANDEY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in Curriculum and Instruction Graduate School of Human Sciences ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY OF THAILAND 2016
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ABSTRACT

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Thesis Adviser: DR. YAN YE

The purposes of this study was to identify demographic profiles of the teachers, to determine teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach at selected international schools in Bangkok and to compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice of early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty in 2016. A questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect the data. The questionnaire measured the demographic profiles of the teachers and their perspectives towards the learning through play approach. From the total number of 170 preschool and kindergarten teachers working at 17 selected international schools in Bangkok; 93 teachers completed the survey. Statistical measures employed in this study included frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation and independent samples t-test. The results of this study has indicated that overall teachers had positive perspectives towards the learning through play approach. There were no significant differences of teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach according to their nationalities and
years of teaching experience; however, the researcher discovered that there were significant differences of teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach according to their qualification specialty. Teachers with education degree had more positive perspectives towards the learning through play approach than the teachers with non-education degree.
I would like to express my sincere gratefulness to people for their continuous motivation, love and inspiration that supported me to accomplish my study successfully.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter presents a brief outline of the study and defines the research background, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, research hypothesis, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework, scope of the study, definition of terms and significance of the study.

Background of the Study

Learning begins at birth (Haddad, Colletta, Fisher, Lakin & Sutton, 1990). The idea that children only learn by going to a school has been replaced by the fact and growing understanding of the people that learning begins at birth itself. According to the evidences, the first three years of a child's life is known to impact their future success and performance in life (Nutbrown, 2012). The early childhood experiences can impact the developing brain of a child (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). The quality of relationships that children share with their parents is the first step to early learning.

Perspective is a process of believing and viewing the world around. It is one's personal theory about the world or any particular aspect. Perspectives varies according to each person's level of understanding. Each perspective has its own strength and weakness which helps in understanding human behavior (McLeod, 2007). It is important to understand teachers' perspectives on play to promote learning among the young learners and to see how their perspectives affects their daily practice in the classroom. It focuses on their belief towards learning through play approach and how their beliefs are manifested in their daily classroom teaching and activities (Peng, 2011).
Richardson (1996) found that it is important to know the teachers' thought process with regards to play as it affects their perception and judgments which shows a simultaneous effect on their behavior in the classroom. Nelson (as cited in Peng, 2011) concluded that teachers' view were often reflected in their pedagogies. Teachers' beliefs, education, past experience and personal factors had a greater impact on their teaching practice hence it is important to know their perspectives towards learning through play approach.

Play based curriculum is one type of curriculum that uses several kinds of play to facilitate development of a child (Powell, 2010). Play based curriculum focuses on overall development of a child which is the emotional, social, intellectual and physical development. Children learn by playing and use their play experience to learn further more. Play based curriculum has been taken from the idea of Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development and also from Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. Play based curriculum involves hands on approach to learning. It is completely a child centered approach where children learn by doing and keep that as an experience to develop further skills and knowledge (Muchanga, 2012).

The Thai educational system has been facing several challenges since 1999. Thailand wants to reform the country for economic growth, stability, dignity and to compete with other countries in the age of globalization. The primary challenges in Thai education system are unsatisfactory curricula, the outdated teaching methods, inadequate quality of teachers, non-standardized education criteria, too much freedom to write textbooks. The (Office of National Education Commission of Thailand, 1999e, P.1) implemented the National Education Act to make sure education endeavors for full development of people. Under this Act the key areas of reform are: learning reform most importantly for learners and administrative reform which involves upgrading teaching profession by recognizing systems for teachers (Israsena, 2007).
Education in Thailand should change from teacher-centered teaching to child-centered teaching as this would improve the quality of education. Through child-centered teaching children learn to think and discover what interests them. When children appropriately educated between 0-5 years, these five years provides the strength for the children to become high-caliber adults in future. However, very few early childhood educators practice child-centered teaching (Israsena, 2007).

Many studies have investigated into early childhood education and teachers' perception towards play. However, there has been very little research done in Thailand to understand teachers' perspectives towards learning through play approach.

*Early Years Learning framework (EYLF)* is designed to guide the early childhood educators in developing a quality childhood education program. There are various pedagogies involved with Early Years Learning Framework which are holistic approach, responsiveness to children, learning environment, intentional teaching, cultural competence and learning through play. Among these the key element for early childhood learning is play based learning claimed by (Kennedy & Barblett, 2010). Play is a spontaneous activity which the children inherit naturally regardless of their culture. It is an "enjoyable", "intrinsically motivated "and "process oriented" activity (Ahn, 2008). Moving towards 21’ century the educational needs have changed. Practicing play based learning in kindergarten classroom has become vital.

"Without play, learning and evolution are impossible" (Nachmanovitch, 1989). In order to understand a child one must understand his play. Through play children learn culture and express themselves which makes them psychologically strong. Play allows the children to express their thoughts and feelings which they themselves remain ignorant about and start realizing through pretend play. Play allows children learn to master complex difficulties of the past and the present. In fact play has been used as a therapy to manage emotional
difficulties. It has also been considered as tool to prepare the children for future tasks. During the process of play children develop their cognitive skills and they learn to deal with day to day situations. Perseverance is a quality which is easily acquired through enjoyable activities of play. Children learn not to give up if the block doesn't balance at the first time. They learn to experience that success doesn't come immediately as we need to learn to persevere until the next successful result. Perseverance cannot be learnt if the teachers' are only interested in the successful result. Children are often sensitive to their inner feelings, hence encouraging or praising results in a positive output (Bettelheim, 1987).

Early childhood teachers can encourage learning through play by planning and organizing the learning areas and activities. Planning a children's play, teachers can determine the goals they want the child to achieve during play (Rice, 2014).

It has been proved that proper arrangement of learning activities helps in development of socio emotional, cognitive and physical growth of a child. In order to apply learning through play approach teachers need to plan various play experience from simple play to complex play. Children should be given the freedom to choose their own kind of play. Early years teachers should also organize group activities to allow the children to experience unique learning styles (Biddle, Navarez, Hendersin & Kerri, 2014).

According to the research of Huang (2013), play has been highly valued and promoted in early childhood education in New Zealand and the Western countries. However, this concept has questioned by the Chinese families who believe children's academic progress is far more important than play in early childhood education. According to Chinese families education setting should be a place for their children to "learn" rather than "play". Most parents expect the teachers to "teach" rather than let the children play most of the time. Play has been effect of and on culture as children's play reproduces and also changes culture over time. Smith (2010) claims that there is significant cultural difference between Chinese
and Western societies in terms of play. Western societies play a high value on play and role of play in learning. Play is seen as way to promote competence and academic success. Teachers are encouraged to play with children and use play as a means of teaching.

**Statement of the Problem**

Kindergarten in Thailand has radically changed in the last two decades. The children now spend more time being tested for literacy and math than they play, explore or do exercises. Many kindergarten use curricula linked to new state standard to prepare the children for standardized test. Teachers must follow the script from which they may not deviate. These practices violate long-establishment of principles of child development and good teaching. This results in dealing with children's poor health and long-term prospects for success in school (Almon & Miller, 2009).

Globalization and influx of external cultural has affected the lifestyle of Thai families. Thai children have slower pace of development than international standards, which may result from lack parenting skills and inferior quality of early childhood education. The management and organization including standards of care, facilities, teachers and assistants lack effective standards and continuous quality control. There are problems with child development due to insufficient knowledge and understanding of teaching approaches (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2015).

According to (Gardner & Walsh, 2006) children in a play based program display greater academic progress than the children in formal academic program (as cited in Puteh & Ali, 2013). Teachers often understand play and learning as two different parts which are difficult to integrate together. Teachers need a good understanding for play and learning, and how to implement play in their teaching approach. Teachers' education should develop their pedagogical thinking towards understanding play and learning. Teachers' pedagogical
thinking affects their practices, educational contexts and the curriculum hence it is important to know teachers' perspectives towards play (Hyvonen, 2011).

Research Questions

The researcher has arrived to the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic factors of the teachers including age, nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty?

2. What are teachers’ perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok?

3. Are there any significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty?

Research Objectives

With accordance to the Research Questions the researcher considered the following objectives:

1. To identify the demographic factors of the teachers including age, nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty?

4. To determine teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok?

5. To compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty?
Research Hypothesis

There are significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is based on three main theories: Cognitive development theory, Social learning theory and Play as sensory learning theory. All of these theories explain how play is related to learning among the early years learners.

Cognitive development theory: Jean Piaget's child cognitive development theory, it focuses on cognitive development of a young child over a period of time. The cognitive theories mainly focus on the mental process of a child which allows the child to perceive, to believe, to remember and to reason. As the child matures it results in his cognitive development.

Play is a very important vehicle for normal physical, social and cognitive development. Jean Piaget related the series of development stages of play to his theory of the cognitive development in children. The first stage sensorimotor stage (birth to 2 years old) when children try to understand their own bodies and the external objects, also called the "practice play" which involves repeated patterns, movements, sounds and the objects are made to repeatedly disappear and appear. With time children begin to realize the effect of play in their environment. The second stage is preoperational stage (2-7 years) when children associate the objects with words. The children start getting involved in make-believe game by using the objects for purpose other than their intended function. The third stage is the concrete operational stage (7-11 years) when children use logic and start categorizing activities and
start following game rules. By the fourth stage the formal operations stage (12 years and higher), children involve in competitive games and emerge with maturity (McLeod, 2015).

*Social development theory:* Lev Vygotsky's social development theory shows how young children develop from social interaction around them which enhances their cognitive development. Under this theory the two main components which are the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (McLeod, 2007).

*Play as sensory learning:* According to Maria Montessori children need sensory experience to learn and grow (North American Montessori Center, 2010). The sensory experience begins at birth as the children use their senses to understand the environment. Playing with sensory materials children learn to classify things which leads to child making his own experience in the environment.
Conceptual Framework

This study is a comparative study. The conceptual framework Figure 1 demonstrates the dependent and independent variables involved in the research.

Firstly, the researcher surveyed teachers’ perspectives of the learning through play approach based on their practice.

Secondly, the researcher compared the hypothesized differences of teachers’ perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice of early years based on their nationalities, years of experience and qualification specialty.

**Independent Variables**

- **Teachers’ Demographic factors**
  - Nationalities
    - Asian
    - Non-Asian
  - Years of teaching Experience
    - <5
    - 5 or above
  - Qualification Specialty
    - Education
    - Non-education

**Dependent variable**

Teachers’ perspective towards the learning through play approach

*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*
Scope of the Study

This study investigated teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of experience and qualification specialty. The independent variables were nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty. The dependent variable was teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach.

The survey of this research was only provided to Pre-school and Kindergarten teachers working at selected 17 international schools in Bangkok. It included a total number of 170 pre-school and kindergarten teachers at selected 17 international schools in Bangkok that were surveyed on August, 2016. 93 preschool and kindergarten teachers completed and returned the survey.


The criteria for selecting these 17 International schools were the following:

1. All of these schools are big and popular in their local area. They have over 300 students.
2. The average pre-school and kindergarten class size is 15 students.
3. These schools offer International Programs with English, Science, Math, Social Studies, Music, Chinese, Thai, Art and IT as their subjects.
4. They are a member of International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT) and have been accredited by Royal Thai Ministry of Education.

5. The curriculum offered in these schools are American curriculum, British curriculum, International Baccalaureate curriculum, other national curriculums (Australian, Indian, Singaporean etc.)

**Definitions of Terms**

**Cognitive development:** refers to development and growth of intellectual/mental abilities such as thinking, reasoning and understanding.

**Demographic Profiles:** refers to the aspects of age, nationality, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.

- **Age:** refers to teachers' age at the international schools in Bangkok. This is either 20-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36+. This component was measured by item No.1, Section A of the questionnaire.

- **Nationality:** refers to teachers' nationality at international schools in Bangkok. This is either Asian or Non-Asian. This component was measured by item No. 3, Section A of the questionnaire.

- **Years of teaching experience:** refers to teachers' teaching experience at international schools in Bangkok. This is either less than 5 years or 5 year/above. This component was measured by item No. 4, Section A of the questionnaire.

- **Qualification specialty:** refers to teachers' qualification specialty at international schools in Bangkok. This is either education degree or non-education degree. This component was measured by item No. 6, Section A of the questionnaire.

**Early Years Learning Framework:** is a curriculum that guides the early childhood educators in developing the early childhood program.

**Early years:** refers to children aged 2-6 years.
Preschool and Kindergarten: teachers working in the 17 international schools in pre-school or kindergarten section as a homeroom teachers or non-core subject teachers.

Emotional development: refers to child's growing ability to control and manage emotions and form secure relationship.

Learning through play approach: is a teaching method which allows the children to learn through joyful and healthy play. Learning through play has known to be a solution for learning difficulties in young children.

Learning through play strategies: learning through play approach consists of various strategies of play to enhance learning. Below are the important play strategies used in this study.

- **Structured play**: set of activities or games usually led by the teacher in order to accomplish certain learning objectives among the children.

- **Unstructured play**: is an open ended play or free play without any set of objectives with unlimited possibilities to play.

- **Active or physical play**: involves physical movement of the body inform of exercise, aerobic, running, dancing, jogging, stretching, jumping, hopping.

- **Constructive play**: this kind of play is organized and goal orientated. Constructive play uses block to construct imaginary images, Lego, tinker toys, cardboard box, plastic tubes, or recycled materials.

- **Exploratory play**: involves young children exploring the environment or the objects around them. Material like play dough, clay, and paint is used.

- **Creative play**: involves expressing the feelings and emotions through the means of drawing, painting, pictures, thoughts, and stories.
• **Pretend play or socio-dramatic play:** involves with role —play or pretend with various objects, actions or emotions. It also involves acting the fantasy characters such as fairies or heroes.

• **Language or word play:** involves using sound to play with alphabets or words. It also involves playing with language by stories, jokes in order to help the students with their language skills.

• **Music play:** involves using simple music and musical instrument to learn songs, rhymes or themes for the month.

**Pre-School teacher:** instructor teaching children from age 2-4 age

**Perspective:** refers to the view of the early childhood teachers'. It has been measured in the questionnaire part II questions 1 to 18.

**Play:** an intrinsic motivation for children to work. In this study the term play is used for both structured and unstructured play.

**Practice:** refers to teachers' daily teaching practice inside or outside the classroom.

**Selected international schools:** refers to the 17 international schools used in this study

- Australian International
- ABC Pathways International
- American School of Bangkok
- Berkeley International
- Bangkok Prep
- Modern International
- Niva International
- New Sathorn International
- Pan Asia International
- Ramkhamheng International
- Rasami British International
- Siam International
- St. Mark's International
- Singapore International
- St. Andrew International
- Thai Chinese International
- Trinity International

**Social development:** refers to learning skills, knowledge, values and contribute to the family, school and the society.
Significance of the Study

Conducting this research may be beneficial for the following target groups. For young children as they will enjoy learning through the medium of play. This will allow learning to be fun and more child-centered.

For parents as they can practice learning through play approach with their children at home and provide supportive learning environment. This will build better parent-child bonding and parents can learn how relationships work through play experiences.

For early childhood teachers, as they can empirically and theoretically understand play and make attempt to revitalize play and playful teaching. The results of the research will help the teachers to identify and practice different play types in their daily teaching. Teachers' can analyze their roles in relation to those plays and finally practice playful teaching.

For schools administrators as they can provide better quality of education to the children. The school can produce skilled students with higher academic performance. They can provide playful environment to the children attracting more children and parent to the school.

Lastly for future researchers by providing information about teachers perspectives towards the learning through play approach and different play approach.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of the study is to compare the teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice of early years based on their nationalities, experience and qualification specialty. This chapter presents a report on the results of literature review.

This review of the literature has noted the factors that have contributed to the information of the teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach.

Ideology and Principles of Early Childhood Education Provision

The ideology of early childhood education provision is to offer fundamental education to Thai children that allow suitable development which are physically, emotionally, mentally, socially and intellectually. Children should be given activities that promote brain development and prepare them for elementary education. The early childhood education focuses on development of children with accordance to the nature, culture, civilization and social ways of life (Bureau of Education Testing, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education, 2012).

1. **Principle of Holistic Child Development**: this covers the overall development of a child from healthy body to stimulated mind. Children should be given social training where they learn to interact socially with the people in the community and happily live with others representing their Thai culture.
2. **Principle of Child-centered Management of Experience**: it is the implementation of rearing and training with love, care and executing learning through playing and other stimulating activities. Learning should be fun and self-directed by the child.

3. **Principle of Thainess Promotion**: consist of cultivating the Thai nationality, following the Thai culture, respecting parents and considering the King as the center model in life.


**Learning through Play Approach**

According to Fein and Wiltz (1998) play is active engagement with intrinsic motivation (as cited in Powell, 2010). Children represent their world through play as they work without any constrain or external rules. Play is often seen as a non-serious activity although during play children display serious, focused, concentrated thinking that helps them in learning. Self-regulation skill is learnt when children take roles and follow the rules set by themselves in the play scenarios. Play teaches children to take turns with others in scenario this helps in education conflict resolution skills (Jones & Reynolds, 1992, as cited in Powell, 2010). Children get involved with active learning and enjoy the hand-on experience. They learn to make decisions, overcome challenges, foster empathy, build resilience and solve problems by themselves (Drummond, 2017).
Laissez-Faire, Loosely Structured Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Rich in Child-Initiated Play</th>
<th>Playful Classroom with Focused Learning</th>
<th>Didactic, Highly Structured Classroom</th>
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<td>Ample play but without active adult support, often resulting in chaos</td>
<td>Exploring the world through play with the active presence of teachers</td>
<td>Teacher-led instruction, including scripted teaching with little or no play</td>
</tr>
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Figure 2: The Kindergarten Continuum adopted from *Crisis in Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School* by Almon & Miller (2009).

In a healthy kindergarten, there is a balance between the classrooms with child initiated play by the active presence of teachers and playful classroom with focused learning as seen in *Figure 2*. The creation of healthy balance is now being blocked by current policies and government programs which focuses more on reading first. These policies rely on testing and didactic scripted approach. Indeed many of the current approaches for kindergarten education are based on assumptions of higher achievement for the children and schools (Almon & Miller, 2009)
Play Strategies

Over the past few decades, child psychologists have significant evidence for the necessity of play in children's lives. Both free and guided play is essential for playful learning. Play with intrinsic motivation provides self-independence, while guided play provides targeted learning experience (White, 2012). The play strategies used in this study are listed.

Active play: refers to physical play such as aerobics, jogging, running, dancing, hopping, swimming and playing with ball. Active play helps in physical development and hand-eye-coordination (Early Years Organization for Young Children, n.d). Studies show that active play allows the children to develop emotional bond with their parents and friends (Whitebread, Basilo, Kuvalja & Verma, 2012). Active play helps to strengthen the body and develop social skills.

Play with Objects/ Exploratory play: play with objects begins as soon as infants can hold on to objects; the behavior includes mouthing/biting, rotating while looking, hitting, and dropping. This can also be called as "sensori-motor" play as the child starts to explore how object and material feel. As the toddlers start growing up they began arranging and sorting objects according to their physical attributes. By the age of 4 children start taking interest into Lego construction, block arrangements and developing narrative stories. Play with objects helps with the development of logical thinking, reasoning and problem solving. According to a study by (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998) demonstrated that the children involved in exploration, construction and using physical tools show higher problem solving skills. Play with objects benefits children by maintaining attention, focusing on their goals, monitoring their progress and regulating themselves throughout the task. Constructive play has also known to be useful therapy for children with problem of self-regulation such as autism and ADHD.
Pretend or socio dramatic play: the activities in pretend play are characterized by an "as-if" stance (Lillard et al., 2012). This play is one of the most dominant plays among young children. Pretend play is linked to development of cognitive, social and academic abilities. According to studies pretend play influences the narrative skills and self-regulation among young children with spontaneous attitude. During socio dramatic play, children are indulged in the social rules of the character they are representing. This helps the children in understanding the social responsibility of the character. A study by (O'Connor & Stagnitti, Kas, 2011) reported that children involved in pretend play showed less social disrupting and more connected to their peers compared to the group not involved in play (Bergen, 2002).

Language or word play: includes spoken language, reading, writing, painting, drawing, collage, and visual media. Language play helps in developing technical abilities and expressing experiences, ideas and emotions. This play also involves actives process of developing new words, playing with rhymes, and sounds of the languages. According to (Christie & Roskos as cited in Whitebread, Basilo, Kuvalja & Verma, 2012) language play supports in phonological awareness and early literacy development. In recent work, Vygotsky supported that there is a link between early drawing and writing in children's mark making (Whitebread, 2012). Drawing has perhaps being the earliest types of symbolic representation among children. Studies demonstrates that children gradually increase their "graphic vocabulary" and ability to visualize by practicing their drawings.

Musical play: is an under-researched area, despite being highly significant form of play in all human culture. Children start singing, dancing, exploring and making different sounds at an early age. A recent study determined that musical play helps in building up a powerful social and interactive character among the children (Whitebread, Basilo, Kuvalja & Verma, 2012). Musical play can help children become active in their everyday school activity and motivate them to move (Taylor, Morris, Meredith, & Hicks, 2012). Interactive
musical play contributes to healthy and optimal growth of the young children. Musical play helps children develop social and linguistic interaction.

**Classical Theories of Play**

The classical theories of play evolved in the 19th and 20th century and provided a reason for purpose of play and its function. The classical theories of play contribute in different ways to why children choose to play. The classical theories of play include Surplus Energy Theory, Relaxation Theory, Recapitulation and Pre-exercise Theory (Sanderson, 2010).

*The Surplus Energy Theory:* this theory was founded by Aristotelian philosophy of catharsis, and later developed by Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805). According to surplus energy theory all living things including human and animals produce sufficient energy to meet their needs for survival. When they produce more than what is needed, extra or "surplus" it is eliminated through play. As studied in this theory, play benefits by getting rid of the "surplus" energy that is left over after meeting the basic survival needs. According to Herbert Spenser (1820-1903) a British philosopher believed that during childhood living organism develop uncontrollable desire to play which is considered as superfluous activity. Younger species tend to have higher surplus energy as they are dependent on their parents for longer period of time. Given that the organisms are dependent on their parents less of their energy is used for survival and more energy is freed for play. Spenser's surplus energy theory is fused with play and survival of human species (Saracho & Spodek, 1995).

*Relaxation Theory:* Moritz-Lazarus (1883) a German poet identified the relaxation or recreational theory. This theory is exactly the opposite of surplus energy theory. In relaxation theory, play is the medium to obtain energy. Play serves to revitalize or replenish energy used in the work; it doesn't drain off excess or surplus energy. Since play is the
inverse of work it can easily replace the energy used in the work. In this theory play is considered as a recreational activity (Saracho & Spodek, 1995).

*Pre-exercise Theory:* was developed by Karl Groos (1896). He developed this theory when the child-study movement was progressing. He made observations and comprehended the play activities to see the development of children in more scientific way. Gross made categories to identify the function of child's play. The categories included experimental play (games with rules); rough and tumble play; and imitative, social and family game. Play helps to boost role that allows children to prepare for their future. This view of play relates to constructivist theories in which play is an important tool in developing children's intellectual intelligence (Saracho & Spodek, 1995).

In summary, the classical theories of play represent the differences of how play is anticipated in *Surplus Energy Theory, Relaxation Theory* and *Pre-exercise Theory.* According to the surplus energy and relaxation theories play is medium to accomplish energy and deal with excess energy. The Pre-exercise theory defines play in relation to instincts and preparing the children for adult life by practicing the functions of adulthood. The classical theories are based on philosophical thinking, not on research (Ellis, 2011). The classical theories are criticized and poorly judged although they provide foundation for the modern theories of play.

**Modern Theories of Play**

The modern theories of play focuses on the cognitive, social and emotional development of a child. The modern theories consist of *Jean Piaget Cognitive Development Theory, Lev Vygotsky's Social Development Theory* and *Maria Montessori's Play as Sensory Learning.*
Jean Piaget Cognitive Development Theory: Piaget (1936) was the first psychologist to discover child's cognitive development and he believed that young children think completely different from adults. They learn by interacting and experimenting with the environment. Piaget studied how organism adapts to its environment and how their behavior is controlled through mental organization called schema. Schemas are children's way of making sense of the world (Fleming, 2004). Piaget viewed children as logicians and mathematicians. A child forms schemes or mental concept similar to a mathematician's concept of "set". Initially they are vague rules to what belongs to the category, with time as the child matures and learns more the schemas are refined. Schemas are formed by the process of Adaptation. A child develops schemas through constant interaction and experimentation with the environment. Adaptation consists of assimilation and accommodation (Huitt & Hummel, 2003).

In assimilation the child uses the current schemes to manage with new challenges. It is the process of taking in new knowledge and digesting. According to Wadsworth "Assimilation is the cognitive process by which children incorporate new knowledge or concept into the existing schemata" (Fleming, 2004). Assimilation occurs when the behavior is inclusive to new knowledge. In infants this kind of learning happens continuously a new day brings new opportunity to learn and expand the previously learned schemes.

In accommodation the schemes are reformed entirely to fit the new one. This involves more of the cognitive learning than assimilation. The cognitive structures are changed in order to accept something new from the environment. In this way, one scheme is built on another which creates a new set. Children use assimilation and accommodation simultaneously and alternatively throughout their life (Huitt & Hummel, 2003).

Equilibrium is when there is a balance between assimilation and accommodation. When the child is not taking big step to learn and learning has leveled off, the child reaches a state
of equilibrium. Initially when the child was learning and had difficulties in accepting the 
environmental challenges the child was in disequilibrium. Equilibration is when the child 
moves from disequilibrium to equilibrium (Fleming, 2004).

The cognitive development of child occurs in four stages. They are the Sensorimotor 
stage, Preoperational stage, Concrete Operational stage, and the Formal Operational stage.

1. Sensorimotor stage occurs from birth to age 2 where infants and toddlers learn through 
sensory experience and manipulating objects. This is done by using the five senses seeing, 
hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. At this stage child's intelligence consist of basic 
motor and sensory exploration. Piaget believed that at this stage the child develops the object 
permanence which is the understanding that objects continue to exist even if they are out of 
sight; this helps the child to attach names and words to the object. By the end of this stage 
children are able to engage in imitation. This includes the talent to repeat the behavior a child 
has witness previously.

2. Preoperational stage occurs from age 2 to age 7. At this stage children learn through pretend 
play using symbols to represent words, images and ideas. They often struggle with logical 
thinking and accepting the perception of other people, so they cannot justify or understand 
complex ideas. Children at this stage are egocentric, focusing on themselves and their own 
actions rather than others.

3. Concrete Operational stage occurs from age 7 to age 11 which is the point where the child 
becomes less egocentric and starts to think logically. Children demonstrate logical 
understanding of conservation principles, the ability to recognize the properties of the 
substance remain the same even if their physical appearance is altered, for example the 
quantities of liquid will remain the same despite of the size of the container in which they are 
poured.
4. Formal Operational stage occurs from age of 11 to adulthood. The final stage of Piaget's theory involves the increase in logical thinking, reason and understanding of the ideas of the children. At this stage, children become capable of solving problems and think scientifically about the world. They can think about concepts combine ideas to create new ones (Cherry, 2016).

Lev Vygotsky's Social Development Theory

According to Lev Vygotsky's Social Development Theory socialization affects the learning process in the children. He believed that social interaction engages the child to discover and create meaning from their discovery. One of the most important learning that a child could acquire is by getting involved in social interaction with an adult often a tutor or a parent. The child observes the behavior of the tutor and tries to emulate it. This social interaction and imaginative play further contributes to the cognitive development of the child (Fan, 2014). The Social Development Theory includes three main concepts. These consist of Social Interaction in Language Development, the More Knowledge Other and the Zone of Proximal Development (Sincero, 2011).

1. Social Interaction in Language Development: Vygotsky was interested in the role of language in social and cognitive development. According to Vygotsky language was the most important tool a child could utilize socially. In the beginning of a child's life language and thoughts develop in different system within a child's brain. These two systems merge around the age to three and become interdependent. This is when the child's communication is internalized which leads to social and cognitive development.

2. More Knowledge Other: MKO refers to a person who has more understanding or knowledge of the task than the learner. MKO could be an adult, teacher or an expert. For example, the child learns the concept of addition and subtraction because his teacher taught him well. The
traditional MKO is an older person; however it could be referred to a friend, younger people and even electronic devices like computer and cell phone.

3. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): ZPD is the space between what is known and what is unknown by the learner. Vygotsky described ZPD as the current or the actual development of the learner and the next level attainable using environmental tools and capable adults or peer facilitation. The concept is that children learnt best when they are working together in joint collaboration. In such collaboration children endeavor with more skilled children and internalize new concepts and skills (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010).

Play builds a Zone of Proximal Development of the children. In play children behave beyond their average age and above their daily behavior. Play contains all the development tendencies and it is the major source of the development (Pentti & Milda, 2008)

Maria Montessori Play as Sensory Learning

Maria Montessori believed that children learn best through sensory play. Montessori's concept of unconscious absorbent mind and absorbent mind corresponds closely with Piaget's sensorimotor and preoperational stage of development. From birth until age 3, the child goes through a phase of unconscious absorbent mind, during which time the child explores the environment through senses and movement. According to Montessori, when the child turns 3 years, the learning shifts to more conscious, purposeful type. The child becomes a factual and sensory explorer, perceiving and comparing things. During this process, the child constructs his mind until it is capable of memory power (Cooney & Jones, 2011).

The Montessori learning environment for 3 to 6 years old is divided into four elementary areas: practical life, sensorial (material focusing on one or more of the senses), language and mathematics. The sensory plays are series of sequenced exercises appealingly
designed. The children learn to categorize and classify these sensory materials. These activities help to sharpen the senses and create foundation for intellectual development (Goodwin, 2008). The basic concepts and principles of Montessori education are following:

a. Respect- each and every child should be respected and loved for being unique in their own right.

b. The Prepared Environment- the activities in Montessori education are based on free play with prepared environment.

c. Freedom with limits- Montessori classroom gives children with the flexibility to make their own choice of play. Freedom does not mean children can do whatever they like (Modern Montessori International Group, 2011).

Sensory Play

Sensory play is essentially a play that involves one or more of the senses. Most play has the potential to be sensory however; sensory play differs from other types of play. Sensory play encourages the children to use all their senses to focus play to realize the use of one particular sense. Sensory play involves outdoor play in the environment, sand and water play. The opportunities to get involved in a sensory- rich play surround us in our everyday lives in form of muddy puddle to tree root and most of them are cheap and easily available (Gascoyne, 2012). Sensory play enables the development in various areas such as cognitive, social and emotional development. Children learn to understand the concepts of material such as more/less full/empty and sink/float. Children practice their motor skills and eye hand coordination while pouring, molding, stirring, sifting, sorting, measuring, lifting and carrying sensory materials. Sensory materials are known to be calming and soothing for the children. Children learn to manage their feeling of anger and anxiety through sensory play (Goodwin, 2008).
Previous Studies on Preschool Teachers' Perception towards the use of Play-Based Approach in Language and Literacy Development for Preschool

Puteh and Ali (2013) discussed the perception of preschool teachers' towards learning through play approach in their research *Preschool Teachers' Perception towards the use of Play-Based Approach in Language and Literacy Development for Preschool*. The research showed that teachers have a positive response towards play-based approach in preschooler's language and literacy development. However, there were other difficulties such as time allocation for play, limited space for play, lack of skills and knowledge required to implement play made educator use the didactic teacher directed approach.

Haney and Bissonnette (2011) studied teachers' perception about the use of play to promote social, emotional and cognitive development skills in their research *Teachers’ Perception about the use of Play to Facilitate Development and Teach Prosocial Skills*. The study included undergraduate students, graduate education students in the Teacher Education Program and practicing elementary school teachers. Participants completed a questionnaire in which the first part of the questionnaire asked them for their demographic information including gender, age, education level, teaching experience, and area of teaching specialization. The second part of the questionnaire assessed the perceived importance of play to cognitive, social and emotional development of children. The items in the questionnaire were designated with a 5-point Likert response scale 1 to 5: definitely not important to very important. The result revealed that teaching experience; teacher educational levels were significantly and positively correlated with one's perception to the importance of play. All the participant believed that play is important for all three domains cognitive, social and emotional development. As a part of the research of (Haney & Bissonnette, 2011) that is relevant to this research Teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach and
the result is illustrated in Figure 3. The figure indicates the respondents' perception towards the importance of play for cognitive, social and emotional development of a child.

*Figure 3. Haney and Bissonnette (2011). Students and Teachers perception towards the importance of play in areas of development*

**Background of the Selected International Schools in Bangkok, Thailand**

International Schools can be the perfect solution for expat students (multinational corporation executive, children of diplomat and NOG staff) in Thailand. International Schools cater every age group in Thailand ranging from pre-school to higher education. Most International Schools can be found in Bangkok, Phuket, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin and on the Eastern seaboard. International Schools are popular among both expatriates and Thai families. The facilities in International schools are usually high standard and the class size is small. International Schools in Thailand usually follow American or British curriculum. Some also follow German, Swiss, Japanese or Indian curriculum. The International Schools are registered with International School Association of Thailand (ISAT) which ensures the
quality and high standards of the school while some are registered with the Royal Thai Ministry of Education (MOE).

In Thailand kindergarten is part of preschool system early childhood education. The early childhood education in International Schools consists of nursery and kindergarten. This program usually accepts students from 2 to 6 years; students less than 2 years would usually join playgroup or day care program. The curriculum for early years contributes great importance to play and is considered to have a great impact on the social, mental, physical development of the child (International School Association of Thailand, 2014).


Summary

This chapter discussed the three important theories of play: Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory, Lev Vygotsky's social development theory and Maria Montessori play as sensory learning. This chapter also discussed the classical theories of play and how they have improved over the period.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years. This chapter discusses the methods of data collection and research instruments. Explicitly, this chapter addresses: research design, population, sample, research instruments, data collection, data analysis and the research process.

Research Design

The research was a quantitative study using both descriptive and comparative methods to understand teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok. Likewise, the research compared differences among teachers' perspectives based on their demographics. A questionnaire was built and used to determine teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach and compare their perspective with their demographic factors.

Population

This study was conducted in 17 international schools in Bangkok in the 1st term of the academic year 2016-2017. All 170 pre-school and kindergarten teachers were the target population. The criteria for selecting these 17 International schools were the following:

1. All of these schools are big and popular in their local area. They have over 300 students.
2. The average pre-school and kindergarten class size is 15 students.
3. These schools offer International Programs with English, Science, Math, Social Studies, Music, Chinese, Thai, Art and IT as their subjects.
4. They are a member of International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT) and have been accredited by Royal Thai Ministry of Education.

5. The curriculum offered in these schools are American curriculum, British curriculum, International Baccalaureate curriculum, other national curriculums (Australian, Indian, Singaporean etc.)

Sample

The researcher used convenience sampling technique to give out the questionnaires to all 170 pre-school and kindergarten teachers. 93 pre-school and kindergarten teachers completed and returned the questionnaires.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was mainly based on the literature review of the play from Putel and Ali (2013), Haney and Bissonnette (2011) to compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice of early years based on their nationalities, experience and qualification specialty. The questionnaire also adopted research of Powell (2010).

In the questionnaire, Section A was used to determine pre-school and kindergarten teachers' demographics, including their Age, Nationalities, Years of teaching experience, Qualification, Qualification specialty. Section B was used to measure the teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach.

The respondents were asked to rate their agreement levels in each items which are organized in a five Likert Scale format. The researcher then interpreted the responses as follows:
Table 1

*Interpretation of Section B Questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement Level</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.51 — 5.00</td>
<td>Very Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.51 — 4.50</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.51 — 3.50</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.51 — 2.50</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.00 — 1.50</td>
<td>Very Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire consisted of positively and negatively worded items in Section B, Part II which measures teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach. Item number 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18 were positively keyed and rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Items number 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 17 were negatively keyed. These items were reverse scored and rated on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Agree, 1 = Strongly Agree).

A total of 170 questionnaires were distributed to the head teachers in the selected 17 international schools. The head teachers requested the pre-school and kindergarten teachers to fill up the questionnaire. Once the questionnaires were completed the head teacher collected all the questionnaire from the teachers. Out of total 170 questionnaires 93 questionnaire were returned and the percentage return rate was 54.7%.
Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was adopted from Powell (2010) *Preschool Parents' and Teachers' Perspective of Learning through Play*. In order to provide validity and corrections to the questionnaire, the researcher asked three experts, who work for Graduate School of Human Sciences at Assumption University, to check the content validity of the questionnaire.

The first expert attained his M.Ed. in Educational Measurement at Srinakarinwirot University. He currently works as the dean of Graduate School of Human Sciences in Assumption University. The second expert obtained her Ph.D. in Development Administration at National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, Thailand in 1999. She earned a Master degree in Higher Education at faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand in 1985. At present, she works as the program director in Educational Administration at Graduate School of Human Sciences in Assumption University. The third expert is an instructor at Graduate School of Human Sciences in Assumption University. She has conferred upon a Ph.D. in Higher Education from Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok Thailand. She also received a M.A Education (Curriculum and Instruction) from Andrew University in Michigan USA.

After the three experts approved the questionnaire, the researcher operated a pilot study with 31 pre-school and kindergarten teachers from Bilingual and Thai schools in Bangkok which had the similar English program for young children as the selected 17 international schools in Bangkok chosen for this study. The collected data of the pilot study was used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. Table 2 shows the reliability of the pilot study and present study by using Cronbach's Alpha. In the table, the alpha value of the pilot study was .43. The alpha value of the present study was .69.
Table 2

Reliability of Pilot Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Numbers of Items</th>
<th>Pilot alpha</th>
<th>Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ perspective</td>
<td>1-18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collection of Data

The survey was completed from August-September 2016. The researcher firstly received the approval from the head teachers of the 17 selected international schools in Bangkok, Thailand in July 2016.

The head teachers who worked at the international schools assisted the researcher to implement the survey by distributing it among all the pre-school and kindergarten teachers in their school.

A total of 170 questionnaires were distributed and 93 questionnaires were completed and returned. The returned rate reached 55%.

Data Analysis

To analyze the needed data of the objective, the following methods were utilized.

Research Objective 1: To identify the demographic factors of the teachers including age, nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.

To identify the demographic factors of the teachers, Frequency and Percentage were used.

Research Objective 2: To determine teachers’ perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok.
To identify the teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach, Mean and Standard Deviation were used.

Research Objective 3: To compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.

To compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their nationalities (Asian or Non-Asian), experience (5 years or 5 years above), qualification specialty (education degree or non-education degree), and Independent Sample t-test was implemented.
## Summary of the Research Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Objectives</th>
<th>Source of Data or Sample</th>
<th>Data Collection Method or Research Instrument</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To identify the demographic factors of the teachers including age, nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.</td>
<td>93 pre-school and kindergarten teachers from 17 international schools in Bangkok</td>
<td><em>Part I</em>-demographic information of the teachers: age, nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.</td>
<td>Frequency Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To determine teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok.</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Part II</em>- Teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach.</td>
<td>Mean Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Samples t-test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter the results of data analysis are presented. The data were collected and then analyzed in accordance with the research objectives posted in chapter 1 of this study. The objectives of this study were to identify the demographic factors of the teachers, to determine teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach and to compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their nationalities, experience and qualification specialty.

The data was obtained from questionnaire which was completed by 93 pre-school and kindergarten teachers from the 17 international schools in Bangkok. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A examined teachers' demographic factors: their age, nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty. Section B explored into teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice at selected international schools in Bangkok.

Research Findings

The research finding are organized according to the objectives of the study.

Research Objective One: To identify the demographic factors of the teachers including age, nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty. In order to complete this objective, the researcher used frequency and percentage in the analysis.

Age of the teachers. Table 3 shows the age groups of the teachers. 28 teachers were in age the group 36+ (30.1%), 25 teachers were in age group the 26-30 (26.9%), 23 teachers were in age group 31-35(24.7%) and 17 teachers were in the age group 20-25 (18.3).
Table 3

*Age of teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36+</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nationalities of the Teachers. Table 4 indicates the nationalities of the teachers.

Among all the teachers 59 teachers were Asians (59%) and 34 teachers were Non-Asian (36.6%)

Table 4

*Nationalities of Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Asian</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Years of Teaching Experience of the teachers: Table 5 illustrated years of teaching experience of the teachers. 39 teachers had less than 5 years (41.9%) of teaching experience and 54 teachers had more than years (58.1%) of teaching experience.
Table 5

*Years of Teaching Experience of Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or above</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualification Specialty of the Teachers: Table 6 displays the proportion of qualification specialty of teachers. 63 teachers had an education degree (67.7%) and 30 teaching had a non-education degree (32.3%).

Table 6

*Qualification Specialty of teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Background</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Degree</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-education Degree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Objective Two: To determine teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok.

Section B of the questionnaire was developed to determine teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 18 items. All the items in Section B adopted a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, as shown in Chapter 3.
The mean score in Table 7 illustrates teachers' perspective towards the learning through play approach based on their practice. The mean score of teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach was 3.87 which was at "Positive" range as referred to the Interpretation Table in Chapter 3.

Table 7

*The Mean Score of Teachers' Perspectives towards the Learning through Play Approach*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective towards Learning through Play Approach</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Objective Three:** To compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.

The hypothesis statement of this study is: There are significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty. The hypothesis was tested with a significant level of 0.05.

In order to determine if there are significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty, an Independent Sample t-test was used to examine the difference of the mean of perspectives between the two independent groups nationalities (Asian or Non-Asian) Experience (less than 5 years or 5 years or more) and qualification specialty (Education or Non-education degree).
Table 8 indicates the results from independent sample t-test between the Asian and Non-Asian teachers' perspective score. The P-value .273 was more than .05, which means there was no significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their nationalities.

Table 8

*Comparison of Teachers’ Perspectives According to their Nationalities.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Asian</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 indicates the results from independent sample t-test between teachers with less than 5 years and 5 years or more teaching experience. The P-value .695 was more than .05, which means there was no significant differences of the teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their years of teaching experience.

Table 9

*Comparison of Teachers’ Perspectives according to their Years of Teaching Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>-.153</td>
<td>.695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or above</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 indicates the results from independent sample t-test between teachers with Education degree and Non-education degree. As shown in the table probability significance was .00, which is less than .05. The research hypothesis was accepted, hence there were significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their qualification specialty.

Table 10

Comparison of Teachers’ Perspectives according to their Qualification Specialty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education degree</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-education degree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

The chapter is divided into five parts: Summary of the Study, Findings, Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendation. In this chapter, the researcher summarized the objective of the research and the approach used to achieve the analysis. The researcher made a summary of the major findings and additional findings. The researcher discusses teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years based on their nationalities experience and qualification specialty. Eventually the researcher proposes recommendations.

Summary of the Study

The three objectives of this study were:

1. To identify the demographic factors of the teachers including age, nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty

2. To determine teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok.

3. To compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.

Thus, the study identified the demographic profile of the teachers. Second, the study determined teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok. Lastly, the study
compared the teachers’ perspective towards learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationality, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty.

The sample of the study was 93 pre-school and kindergarten teacher at selected 17 international schools in Bangkok, Thailand. A total of 93 respondents returned the questionnaires and the returned rate reached 55%

**Findings**

**Objective 1:** To identify the teachers’ demographic profile based on their age, nationality, years of teaching experience and qualification specialties.

1. Among 93 teachers, there were 28 respondents in the age group 36+ (30.1%), 25 respondents were in the age group the 26-30 (26.9%), 23 respondents were in the age group 31-35(24.7%) and 17 responded were in the age group 20-25 (18.3%).

2. Among 93 respondents, 59 teachers' were Asians (59%) and 34 teachers' were Non-Asian (36.6%)

3. Among 93 respondents, 39 teachers’ had less than 5 years (41.9%) of teaching experience and 54 teachers had more than 5 years (58.1%) of teaching experience.

4. Among 93 respondents, 63 teachers had an education degree (67.7%) and 30 teaching had a non-education degree (32.3%).

**Objective 2:** To determine teachers’ perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international schools in Bangkok.

The mean score of teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach was 3.87 (77.4% of the maximum score of 5). According to the interpretation table (Table 7) this aspect was Positive.
**Objective 3:** To compare teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty

1. In comparison of teachers' perspective based on their nationality, the probability significance was .273 which was bigger than .05. Therefore there was no significant difference on the teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach based on their nationality.

2. In comparison of teachers' perspective based on their teaching experience, the probability significance was .695 which was bigger than .05, which means there were no significant differences of the teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach based on their teaching experience.

3. In comparison of teachers' perspective based on their qualification specialties, probability significance was .00, which is smaller than .05. Therefore, there was a significant difference on the teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach based on their qualification specialty.

**Conclusion**

This study examined teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their nationalities, years of experience and qualification specialties.

The results of the study indicated that there were no significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their nationalities.

There were no significant differences of the teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their years of teaching experience.
There were significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their qualification specialty. It was noticeable that teachers' with education degree had more positive perspectives towards learning through play approach compared to the teachers with non-education degree.

Discussion

In this section, the research findings, related research, and primary areas of improvement for the selected 17 international schools in Bangkok are discussed.

The Demographic Factors

The age group of the teachers ranging from the most to the least were 36+, 26-30, 31-35 and 20-25. For nationalities, the total number of Asian teachers were more than the Non-Asian teachers. For the years of teaching experience, there were more teachers who had 5 or above years of experience. For education specialty, teachers with education degree were more than teachers with non-education degree.

According to the statements from the head teachers of the selected 17 international schools in Bangkok, the schools prefers to hire teachers with at least 2 years of teaching experience, qualified with an education degree as this helps in teaching, learning and child development. An education degree can support the teachers to understand how children learn, grow and pedagogies of teaching. This is the reason why majority of the participants who worked in the international schools had an education degree and 5 or more years of teaching experience. In most of the international schools in Bangkok if a person is qualified with master's in education they can hold a position of a pre-school or a kindergarten teachers. Since many of the Asians teachers had 5 or more years of teaching experience and had an education degree it is likely that the school choose to hire more Asian teachers which resulted in higher Asian nationalities in this study.
Teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years

According to the findings of the study teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their practice for early years was positive. Specifically there were top three items were "positive". The items were "Music and songs are activities not only used for play" (Item 4); "Play is how children learn about the world around them". (Item 8); "Learning does not only take place during the quiet environment of circle time". (Item 14). Three items were at "Neutral": "Early years learners learn best when they are allowed to do whatever they want". (Item 5); "Watching children play is a way to tell how smart there are". (Item 6); "Learning should not be teacher directed". (Item 17). All the remaining items were listed as "Positive".

All the teacher participants held a positive perspectives towards the learning through play approach as it contributed to child's learning and development. Play benefited in children cognitive, social, emotional and physical domains (Peng, 2011). The teachers believed that learning and play are the same things and that children should be allowed to play at most times. They also believed that music and songs are the best medium for play. In addition teacher participants felt that play contributed to social skills and knowledge acquirement such as learning to work with others, communication skills, perspective — taking, sense of confidence and self-esteem. In regards to teachers' perspectives on the benefits of play, "play is how children learn about the world around them"; had the highest mean score, this was similar to Lev Vygotsky's belief "through play children make sense of the world around them and work through new experiences, ideas, and feelings" (Farr, 2014).
According to the results majority of the teachers strongly disagreed to item 14 "Learning only takes place during the quiet environment of circle time" this is because teachers accepted that young children learn best by doing and play is the best way of offering them these hands-on-experience. Whether reconstructing real situation or building imaginary world. Children can develop their thinking, language, imagination, speaking and listening in many different ways (Drummond, 2017).

The item 5 "Early years learners learn best when they are allowed to do whatever they want"; had the lowest mean as teachers were not sure if learning should be based on free play entirely. According to Montessori children should be given freedom within limits. Children should have the flexibility to make their own choices about the work to engage in whether to do collaboratively or individually. Freedom does not mean that children can do whatever they like; rather they should be encouraged to think independently and act as a member of social group. (Modern Montessori International Group). This could be reason why teacher were entirely sure about item 5.

The item 6 "Watching children play is a way to tell how smart they are"; was also rated neutral as teachers believed that watching children play could help understand their play cognitive process, the ways they get frustrated, their tolerance level, their curiosity creative responses. Play helps in development of intelligent level, but does not determine how smart a child is (Lillard et al., 2012).

The item 17 "learning should be teacher directed"; teachers were unconvinced with this statement. Teacher directed approach means that children have limited choice in the learning that takes place and how that learning happens. This has also resulted in increasing inability in young children to self-initiate play and to sustain it, if they were given the opportunity to do so. The benefits of play are maximized when teacher facilitate play. The role of a teacher during child's play to support with problem solving, questioning, redirecting
undesired behavior and enticing children to play themes (Rice, 2014). The evidences above justified teachers' uncertainty to item 17.

**Teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach based on their nationalities, years of teaching experience and qualification specialty**

The results of the research showed that there were no significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years at selected 17 international schools in Bangkok based on their nationalities and years of teaching experience. However, there were significant differences in teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years at selected 17 international schools in Bangkok based on their qualification specialty.

The two variables for nationalities were Asian and Non-Asian. Culture is an important factor in determining how people in different nation view play. Teachers' perspectives of play are influenced by their culture and vary widely. According to a previous study on *Perspectives of Play in Three Nations: A Comparative Study in Japan, the United States, and Sweden* it was seen that American and Swedish teachers related play as a process of learning however, none of the Japanese teachers related play to academic learning, their notion of play was focused on social and emotional development. The results of our study supported this idea as majority of teachers involved in this study were Asians. It is possible that Asian teachers viewed play as source of social and emotion development and did not related it to academic learning (Taylor, Morris, Meredith, & Hicks, 2012).

Haney and Bissonnette's (2011) study showed that teaching experience was significantly and positively corrected with one's perception of how important play is for cognitive development of the children. Hence greater levels of teaching experience in the classroom may provide a valuable increase in the teachers' knowledge about how children develop and how play experience can affect their development. However the results of our
study didn't support this idea as teachers might not be familiar with the concept of play and learning. Majority (30%) of the teachers were in the age group 36+, it is possible these teachers went through an education system which was academic and lacked play. The education system affected their perspectives towards learning through play approach.

The qualification specialties included in this study were education degree and non-education degree. There were significant differences on the teachers' perspectives towards the learning through play approach from their practice for early years based on their qualification specialty. It was noticeable that teachers with education degree had higher perspective towards learning through play approach compared to the teachers with non-education degree. It is possible that teachers with education degree are more likely to learn about the relationship of play and development in their course work which influences their perspective. An education degree provides context rich experience such as independent projects associated with advance coursework or continuing education and real-life teaching experience which helps teachers construct knowledge of their students (Haney & Bissonnette, 2011). Teacher with education degree are more likely to possess pedagogical skills and take more facilitative role in the classroom with regards to play and child development (Puteh & Ali, 2013). The above reasons contribute to teachers with an education degree having a positive perspectives towards the learning through play approach.
Recommendations

According to the findings and conclusions of this study the following recommendations are suggested:

**Recommendations for Directors and Teachers**

The school directors and teachers are recommended to help students by using play based approaches in the classroom. The directors should ensure that the teacher have knowledge and skills to use play in their teaching approach. This can be done by training the teachers to use early childhood pedagogical principals. The Director should also encourage the teachers to reflect closely on their teaching practices, and effectively become learners themselves. The teachers should follow good teaching practice; this can be done by preparing creative play based activities that contributes to all aspects of child development. They can observe and record the students' progress and plan additional fun activities for those children who are making speedy progress. Teachers can also integrate play based activities according to the themes and let children make their own choices of play.

**Recommendations for the School Administrators**

The school administrators are recommended to provide a fun based environment to practice learning through play. The school principals must ensure to hire qualified teachers with strong background in child development or early education pedagogy. The school must ensure that teachers have enough resources to facilitate play based learning in their classroom. Continuous training program on how children develop must be conducted in the schools. The school should provide release time to the teacher to attend workshops or observe others teachers' in the classrooms. Schools can also establish inter-school database network where early childhood teachers can exchange ideas, lesson plans and activities, discuss similar areas of concern and share classroom practices.
Recommendations for Students

Students are recommended to initiate their own choice of play with the support of their teachers. The students should get involved in art, dramatic play, sensory play, constructive play etc. The students should self-select materials and play independently. Children are recommended to play with friends to enhance social development. Students should have a flexible routine of play with minimal disruptions.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Future researchers can expand the scale of this study using larger sample by including more preschool teachers to share their experiences. The scope of this study can be extended to perspective of administrator and parents as their perspective may aid to accomplish the perspective of early childhood teachers in addressing potential gaps and challenges to educational policy makers. This study has opened a window to a neglected approach to learning which is through play. Further research is needed to understand the belief of the early childhood practitioners.
REFERENCES


https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/53567_ch_10.pdf


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Early Years Teachers’ perspective questionnaire

Greetings!

The researcher is a student of Assumption University of Thailand has designed this questionnaire to gain Early Years Teachers’ perspective towards learning through play approach. Participation is voluntary and you may stop the questionnaire at any time. This is an anonymous questionnaire and no identifier in this questionnaire can disclose your identification. Thank you for taking the time to complete this important questionnaire. Your time and efforts are completely appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Neha Pandey (The researcher)

Part I: Demographic Information

1. Age
   - 20-25
   - 26-30
   - 31-35
   - 36+

2. Name of School __________________________ Level Teacher _____________

3. Nationalities
   - Asian
   - Non-Asian
   Specify _______________________________

4. Years of teaching experience
   - Less than 5 years
   - 5 years or above

5. Qualification
   - Bachelor's
   - Master's

6. Qualification specialties
   - Education diploma /degree
   - Non-education diploma/ degree
   D
7. In my teaching, "The effective learning through play strategies" that I preferred are: 
(choose your 5 preferred strategies form the following list) by ✓ on the box in front.
- Active or physical play
- Constructive play
- Exploratory play or object
- Creative play
- Pretend play or socio-dramatic play
- Language or word play
- Music play
- Other ______________

8. In my teaching, "The difficult learning through play strategies" that I think are: (choose 5 strategies form the following list) by ✓ on the box in front.
- Active or physical play
- Constructive play
- Exploratory play or object
- Creative play
- Pretend play or socio-dramatic play
- Language or word play
- Music play
- Other ______________

Part II: Teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach

This section of the questionnaire is designed to find out your ideas regarding children's play and learning based on your teaching experiences and practices. It is not a test, so there is no right or wrong answers. Please Q circle the score to which extent you agree / disagree with each of the following statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach</th>
<th>1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4=Agree 5= Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I believe Play and learning are two separate things.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. At school children should only be allowed to play during recess.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Play is a child's work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Music and song are activities used only for play</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong></td>
<td>Early years learners learn best when they are allowed to do whatever they want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers' perspective towards learning through play approach</strong></td>
<td>1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4=Agree 5= Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong></td>
<td>Watching children play is a way to tell how smart they are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong></td>
<td>The best way to prove that early years learners are learning is through worksheets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong></td>
<td>Play is how children learn about the world around them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong></td>
<td>Learning only takes with help of a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong></td>
<td>Young Children learn many things while playing on the playground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.</strong></td>
<td>The main purpose of play is for children to get rid of energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.</strong></td>
<td>Hands on activities are the best type of learning for young children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.</strong></td>
<td>I believe children cannot be imaginative or creative during structured activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.</strong></td>
<td>Learning only takes place during the quiet environment of circle time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15.</strong></td>
<td>Young children play in order to acquire knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16.</strong></td>
<td>The purpose of play is to promote social skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17.</strong></td>
<td>Learning should be teacher directed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18.</strong></td>
<td>I believe through art children can improve their academic value.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for completing the Questionnaire.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire Validity Approval Form
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
VALIDITY APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: Neha Pant
Contact Information (phone/e-mail): neha9Opandeygmail.com

Dissertation Title: A STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE OF "LEARNING THROUGH PLAY" APPROACH BASED ON THEIR PRACTICE FOR EARLY YEARS AT SELECTED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK

Questionnaire Title: Early Years Teachers' perspective questionnaire

Valid' Approval

Does the validity of this questionnaire have your approval?

[ ] Yes

[I] No

I have read and certify the validity of this questionnaire. I have read and am unable to certify the validity of the questionnaire.

My comments, suggestions are noted below.

Comments or suggestion

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................
Name: Z. SAMBOB LAMSAH
Validity expert Signature: B. Lamo
Date: .... ........
APPENDIX C

Questionnaire Validity Approval Form

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
VALIDITY APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: Neha Pandey
Contact Information (phone/e-mail): neha90pandey@email.com
Dissertation Title: A STUDY OF TEACHERS PERSPECTIVE OF "LEARNING THROUGH PLAY" APPROACH BASED ON THEIR PRACTICE FOR EARLY YEARS AT SELECTED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK

Questionnaire Title: Early Years Teachers' perspective questionnaire

Validity Approval

Does the validity of this questionnaire have your approval?

Yes, ................................................................ have read and certify the validity of this questionnaire, entitled ‘Teachers’ perspective towards learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected International Schools in Bangkok.

My comments, suggestions are noted below.

No, ................................................................ have read and are unable to certify the validity of the questionnaire, entitled ‘Teachers’ perspective towards learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected International Schools in Bangkok. My comments, suggestions are noted below.

Comments or suggestions:

.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
Name.............................................................................

Validity expert Signature ............................................
APPENDIX D

Questionnaire Validity Approval Form

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
VALIDITY APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: Neha Pandey
Contact Information (phone/e-mail): neha@0pandey@gmail.com
Dissertation Title: A STUDY OF TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVE OF “LEARNING THROUGH PLAY” APPROACH BASED ON THEIR PRACTICE FOR EARLY YEARS AT SELECTED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK

Questionnaire Title: Early Years Teachers’ perspective questionnaire

Validity Approval

Does the validity of this questionnaire have your approval?

❑ Yes. I, Surapee Sorajjakool, have read and certify the validity of this questionnaire, entitled Teachers’ perspective towards learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected International Schools in Bangkok. My comments, suggestions are noted below.

U No. I, ........................................................... have read and are unable to certify the validity of the questionnaire, entitled Teachers’ perspective towards learning through play approach based on their practice for early years at selected international Schools in Bangkok. My comments, suggestions are noted below.

Comments or suggestions:

...1. Make your questions include concept of play that is part of learning such as what, when, where and how.
Name: Surapee Sorajjakool
Validity expert Signature: Surapee
Date: 27 May 20...
Biography

Miss Neha Pandey is from Bangkok, Thailand. She received her Bachelors of Science in Biotechnology from Assumption University of Thailand. She worked as a QC official (Quality Control) in cosmetic industry for 1 year and she realized this is not what challenged her. She started her teaching carrier by working in a Thai school and later moved to a Bilingual school to acquire more experience. Teaching at the Bilingual school she recognized her love for children and teaching. After teaching for a year in the Bilingual she was able to secure a job as a kindergarten teacher in an international school.

She has been teaching young children for 5 years now and enjoys every bit of it. In 2012, she had started her studies as a master degree student majoring in Curriculum and Instruction at Graduate School of Education at Assumption University, Thailand. Teaching and studying simultaneously had been challenging, that is when she learned the importance of time management in her life. She enjoys listening to self-development and motivational podcast.

Currently Miss Neha Pandey is a Kindergarten teacher at ABC Pathways International Kindergarten. She enjoys teaching Phonics and Cambridge English programs to her children. She appreciates incorporating Learning through Play Approach in her daily lessons. She believes learning should be fun and child centered.