

Play Technique: A Significant Tool for Development of Psychomotor Skills among Primary School Pupils in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State

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Abstract

The study investigated the use of play as a tool for development of psychomotor skills among primary school pupils of Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. One hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted correlational design. The population of the study consisted of 10,315 primary one pupils and their teachers. The sample of the study was 216 respondents, comprising 144 primary one pupils and 72 teachers. Data was gathered through researchers-made questionnaire and pupils' psychomotor scale. The data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The finding of the study revealed that play is a significant tool for development of psychomotor skills among primary school pupils of Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. It was recommended that the teachers in primary one, as a matter of importance, should adopt the use of play technique as a major instructional method as this will help in the development of psychomotor skills. Also, school authorities and stakeholders in the educational system should ensure that adequate play space and play facilities are available in the schools.

Keywords: Play, technique, psychomotor, teachers, pupils

Introduction

Early educational activities, mostly in primary schools, are crucial for a child's healthy growth. In the majority of preschool and primary schools, children participate in advanced

learning activities that are out of their chronological range, and the national curriculum is disregarded since it is deemed to be too simple for children of this age (Monity & Oko, 2021). Children are forced into academic work while the foundational abilities required for the academic work are somewhat disregarded. Perry (2010) noticed that children who lacked fine motor coordination or who had not yet developed eye-hand coordination would find it challenging to manage writing tools.

Children who are developing normally place a high value on play since it influences every part of their growth. According to Gumusdag (2019), play experiences of young children serve as the primary vehicle by which they learn about themselves and their environment. The Federal Government of Nigeria stressed that the main medium of instruction in early childhood education shall be through play (FRN, 2014). This highlights the value of play in a child's development. Many learning theories encourage students to actively participate in scheduled or unstructured play activities since they are fundamental to learning experiences. The play technique requires that instructional units should be communicated and provided to students for play-based learning. They gain wholeness and joyfully assimilate anticipated behaviour while they play. The most crucial factor is that pupils study while having fun. When using play as a medium of instruction in an early childhood classroom, students learn more easily, acquired behaviours are more easily internalized, students' attention spans are maintained. Play encourages interpersonal relationships (friendships) among learners and team spirit (collectively), but most importantly, using play as a method of instruction promotes children's total development, including their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development (Ndifon & Cornelius-Ukpepi, 2016).

The play technique was chosen since it has been noticed that it is the best and most appropriate educational strategy for the kid at this level. The child takes to play as a natural desire and its value is undeniable. Generally, growth and development in the life of a normal growing child are wrapped round play activities. According to experts like Daniels and Pyle (2018) and Aras (2016), every area of a child's life is favourably impacted during play while they are learning. Children's play activities depend heavily on gross motor abilities including walking, running, leaping, clapping, tossing and catching, climbing, and balance. According to Whitebread (2020), play fosters dominance as children hone their skills; it fosters mental development as thinking abilities are expanded; it includes language, empowering new uses; it includes proactive tasks; it helps children manage their emotions; and its innovative nature makes it imaginative. Beyond all of that, however, play provides a way for children to adapt to and incorporate their background.

As children learn through all their senses, the availability of play areas becomes essential. Given that the school has taken on the task of educating the kid, it should be in a better position to offer the necessary, suitable equipment for students to interact during play. Apart from enhancing the development of his psychomotor skills, the environment where play facilities are provided should encourage the child to engage in activities that would allow him to learn the joy of discovering, of exploring, of creating, of experimenting, and of observing. This requires many types of facilities and equipment in a suitable space, but the teacher should also directly appropriate the amounts, the variety, and the quality of the activities.

Yarmkaya and Ulucan (2015) underline the necessity of play areas and equipment for kids, noting that quantity, durability, and verballity are all crucial factors. The authors claim that having too much equipment encourages the child to make judgments that are above his capacity and that having too little equipment causes arguments. Effective motor actions, according to Bucher's (2008) observation, need the muscular and neurological systems to function in unison. It takes more than one lesson to build effective motor skills. It takes time to build coordination, and a child's formative years are the most crucial time for development. At that age, the child makes an effort to coordinate their muscular and neural systems in order to do movements like crawling, walking, running, leaping, and climbing. Preschool motor/physical play activities can involve certain equipment and facilities that can be tiny, big, or attached to the ground. The equipment and facilities are chosen based on the child's maturity level and areas of interest.

In the National Early Childhood Education (ECE) contexts, the play style of education, also known as "Play-Based Learning" (PBL), has gained popularity as a suggested curricular approach (Daniels & Pyle, 2018). According to the HighScope Curriculum (2019), children learn and develop their bodies and brains via play, which helps them become aware of their surroundings. Play should be a natural way to incorporate and practice children's interest, energy requirements, and limit with regards to learning in the broadest sense, according to Lynch (2015). Play seems to come naturally to children and they enjoy it without question or restraint. Play-based learning involves teaching children via play while they are having fun and while they are learning.

According to Pyle et al. (2017), play is a significant source of learning and preparation for a fulfilling life in a society. The writers went on to say that the developing youngster has to gradually but steadily develop the traits of persistence, honesty, integrity, hard effort, obedience, excitement, collaboration or teamwork, decision-making, and other group dynamics. Children use play as a means of examining their surroundings as they seek to understand the nature, traits, and behaviours of the objects around them as well as

what the circumstances have to offer. Children's play activities serve as contexts or bases for education. This implies that in order for students to learn about the environment, schools must give natural resources like sand, pebbles, bottle corks, water, wood, among others. This is true because kids learn more and more quickly via play. They see the teacher's job as that of a facilitator who observes and engages with the students. Since growth and development complement one another from birth, it is important for instructors, facilitators, and even parents to understand child development and to detect the many indications regarding it. This is why Bergen (2014) contends that human development begins with child development and that children grow and develop into adults.

This emphasizes the value of the play-based approach to early childhood education since play and exploration help children learn more effectively and quickly. To guarantee active participation, advancement, and benefit for the child, play-based learning activities must be properly planned and supervised by a teacher or an adult. Without guidance, the youngster may descend into destructive or unproductive play without realizing the benefits. Ahupa and Ushie (2008) proposed a variety of play strategies, including musical experiences, movement and dance, creative or imaginative play, and exploration play activities, in order to direct the child's learning via play.

In a child's life, play is a crucial part of the growing process. Play is essential to a child's development and must have influenced the Federal Government's decision in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) that the primary method of instruction in early childhood education shall be through play. Child development experts hold the opinion that students who did not acquire the fundamental skills at an early stage in life are at a disadvantage when they are of school age. For pre-school education, the play-way style of learning is stressed as an educational technique. Role play, dramatic, constructive, creative, symbolic communication, fantasy physical/motor, cooperative play, and other types of play can all be used as teaching strategies.

Primary school-aged children are quite active physically. This procedure lays the way for excellent health, awareness of their talents and environment, as well as their own abilities and capacities. Preschoolers are supposed to absorb the material via play while in a learning environment since it is common knowledge that nursery school is never boring. Students are asked to participate in order to maintain their interest in the course and provide opportunities for motor skill improvement. Play is the only approved mode of education in early childhood classrooms because it helps children develop their basic motor skills and their cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor growth. In playtime, every aspect of a child's life is active. More specifically, when teaching is delivered through

play, the entire kid is observed, and they learn to make friends, share their ideas and express their feeling. These aid in children's motor skill development. Craftsmanship and play expose children to a variety of tangible experiences.

All young children should engage in healthful activities including running, colouring, climbing, constructing with wood blocks and legos, tossing and catching tiny balls, and riding a tricycle. They demonstrate this via play and the use of play areas and toys. Playthings are important for the growth of motor skills, according to Ekanem (2008), who considered them to be the most extrinsic variables. In fact, early childhood education specialists like Obinaju (2012) and Bergen (2014) have noted that many students show up to school eagerly in the hopes that they will get the chance to play with their friends and utilize the various playthings available. Children's play environments work as a "silent teacher," providing opportunities for movement and engagement with playthings that lead to beneficial learning experiences. Moving playthings like balls, tricycles, rubber rackets, baskets, and mattresses are considered equipment, whereas immovable playthings like merry-go-rounds, slides, see-saws, ladders, and tunnels are called facilities (Ekanem, 2012). Outside of other creative movement, the students run, leap, kick, toss, catch, climb, and skip using the facilities and equipment already in place. These exercises are necessary for students to strengthen their gross motor abilities, especially in the area of muscle control and coordination.

Teachers view play and proactive activities as interchangeable components that contribute to a child's overall development. According to Abass (2010), children experience the majority of key developmental interactions while they are actively participating in society. Each child possesses both unique and universal qualities. This role gives the child the freedom to share, select his own play activities, and play areas.

Statement of the problem

People who have psychomotor retardation experience a slowing of both their mental and physical processes. Children's ability to think clearly and move naturally may be compromised. Their facial expressions and eye movements are also affected. For the development of fine motor abilities, effective gross motor skills are crucial. Poor coordination, unsteady balance, trouble with hand-eye coordination activities, and inefficient motions are just a few examples of gross motor skill difficulties. A child who has trouble with fine motor skills might: possess an immature or awkward pencil grip for their age, possess clumsy, laborious, or sluggish artistic or literary abilities, easily become exhausted when using a computer mouse or keyboard. It is clear that play equipment is seldom present in the majority of Calabar Municipality's public primary schools, and when it is there, it is either poorly constructed or there is not enough space for it to be

used. Despite these obstacles, the researchers were prepared to examine play as a key instrument for the development of psychomotor abilities among primary school students in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State.

Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between play instructional technique and development of psychomotor skills among primary one pupils in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State.

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between play instructional technique and development of psychomotor skills among primary one pupils in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State.

Methodology

This study adopted correlational research design. This was to establish the relationship among variables studied. The study area is Calabar Municipality which is one of the 18 local government areas in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of this study consisted of 485 teachers and 10,315 primary one pupils. There are forty-eight (48) government primary schools in Calabar Municipality. To select the number of primary schools for the study, simple random sampling technique was used. The researchers wrote the names of the 48 primary schools on pieces of paper, folded into ball-like shapes and placed in a container. They were mixed and one of the researchers blindly picked fifty percent (50%) of the paper balls from the container which amounted to a total of twenty-four (24) primary schools. The twenty-four (24) schools automatically became the schools used for the study. The second stage of sampling was to select the respondents (teachers and pupils) used for the study. The researchers randomly selected three (3) teachers and six (6) pupils from each of the selected schools. Therefore, the sample of the study consisted of 72 teachers and 144 pupils totaling 216 respondents.

The instruments for data collection were questionnaire tagged, ‘Play Technique and Psychomotor Skills Questionnaire (PTPSQ)’ and ‘Pupils Psychomotor Scale (PPS)’ which were constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire had two main sections. Section one contained personal data of the respondents such as name of school, pupil/teacher, class. Section two contained fifteen (15) items based on four point likert type scale; strongly agree (SA) 4, agree (A) 3, disagree (D) 2 and strongly disagree (SD) 1. The items were divided into three parts of 5 items each: 1) The teacher use of play technique; 2) Development of motor skills in pupils; and 3) Availability of play space and facilities. The PPS was used to measure pupils’ psychomotive skills. The instruments

were validated by three experts in test and measurement and elementary education. The instruments were also tested for reliability through the Cronbach alpha method. The reliability coefficient were 0.78 and 0.84.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between play instructional technique and development of psychomotor skills among primary one pupils in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State.

The result of the analysis is shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) of relationship between play instructional technique and development of psychomotor skills (N=216)

Variables	Mean	SD	r-ratio	Df	p-level
Play technique (X)	17.08	3.21	.413**	311	.000
Development of psychomotor skills (Y).	27.33	4.93			

*Significant at .05 level; $p < .05$.

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used to test the lone hypothesis and the results are as indicated on table 1. The findings showed that play instructional technique had a mean score of 17.08 with a standard deviation of 3.21 while development of psychomotor skills had a mean score of 27.33 with standard deviation of 4.93. The result further showed that the r-calculated value of 0.413 is greater than critical-r value of 0.062, tested at .05 level of significance and 311 degree of freedom. Also, the p value of .000 is less than .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between play instructional technique and development of psychomotor skills among primary school pupils in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. was rejected indicating that there is a significant relationship between play instructional technique and development of psychomotor skills among primary school pupils in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State.

Discussion of the findings

Hypothesis one sought to determine whether there is a significant relationship between play instructional technique and development of psychomotor skills among primary school pupils of Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. The result showed that indeed there is a significant relationship between play instructional technique and development

of psychomotor skills among primary school pupils in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State. This conclusion is consistent with the finding of Ndifon and Cornelius-Ukpepi (2016), who observed that the most crucial factor is that students learn while playing. The authors claim that when using play as a medium of instruction in preschool, it facilitates learning for pupils, facilitates the internalization of learned behaviours, maintains pupils' attention span, fosters interpersonal relationships (friendships) among pupils, fosters team spirit (collectively), and most importantly, promotes total development in children, including their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development.

Still consistent with the current outcome, effective motor activities, according to Bucher's (2008) research, depend on children's muscles and neurological systems cooperating well as they play. The author claims that it is impossible to build effective motor skills in just one class. Coordination takes time to develop, and the formative years, when a kid develops mostly via play, are crucial for development. At that age, a kid tries to coordinate their muscular and neural systems in order to do movements like crawling, walking, running, leaping, and climbing. Preschool motor/physical play activities can involve certain equipment and facilities that can be tiny, big, or attached to the ground. The equipment and facilities are chosen based on the child's maturity level and areas of interest.

Conclusion

In view of the findings of the study, the researchers arrived at the conclusion that there is a significant relationship between play instructional technique and development of psychomotor skills among primary school pupils of Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. The play instructional technique is the most appropriate educational strategy for kids at early child education level. This is because a child takes to play as a natural desire and its value is undeniable, thus helping in developing the child's psychomotor skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were given by the researchers:

1. Teachers in primary one, as a matter of importance, should adopt the use of play technique, among other instructional methods, as this will help in the development of psychomotor skills.
2. School authorities and stakeholders should ensure that adequate play space and play facilities are available in schools.

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