

Background

Play is central to children’s lives as a way to explore their environments, interact with adults and peers, practice agency, and construct understandings. In educational settings, play is defined as significant and valuable for promoting children's learning and development. However, play is a culturally and socially situated construct, thus people from different cultures vary in how play is perceived and how to best pedagogically support children's learning through play. In recent years, the Saudi Arabian (SA) government has mandated for SA preschools the implementation of Play Based Learning (PBL), a Western approach to learning and development. However, the SA social, cultural and religious context can be expected to influence preschool teachers' conceptualisations of play and relevant pedagogies to promote PBL

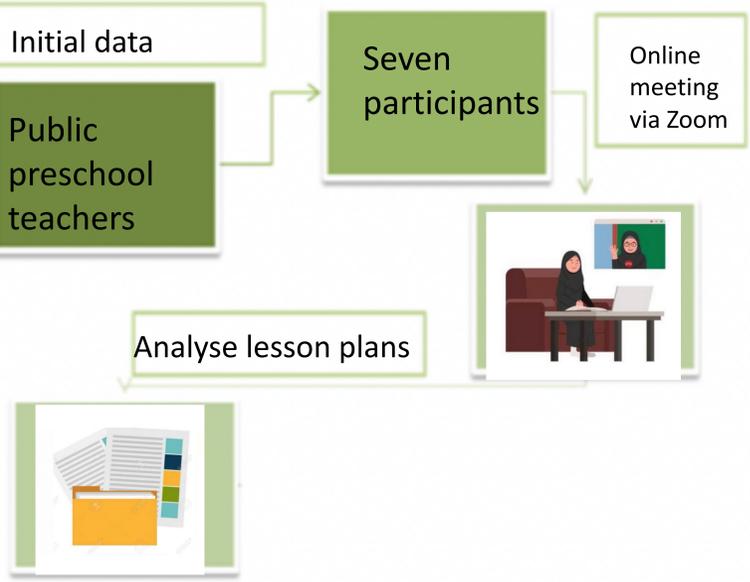
Aims

To explore how Saudi preschool teachers define play and Play-Based Learning.

Methodology

This study is guided by a qualitative research design informed by social constructivism and an indigenous methodology.

Methods



Conceptual Framework



Figure 1.2. Play- Based learning supported by a continuum of teaching and learning



Saudi preschool teachers’ ideological knowledge for conceptualising play

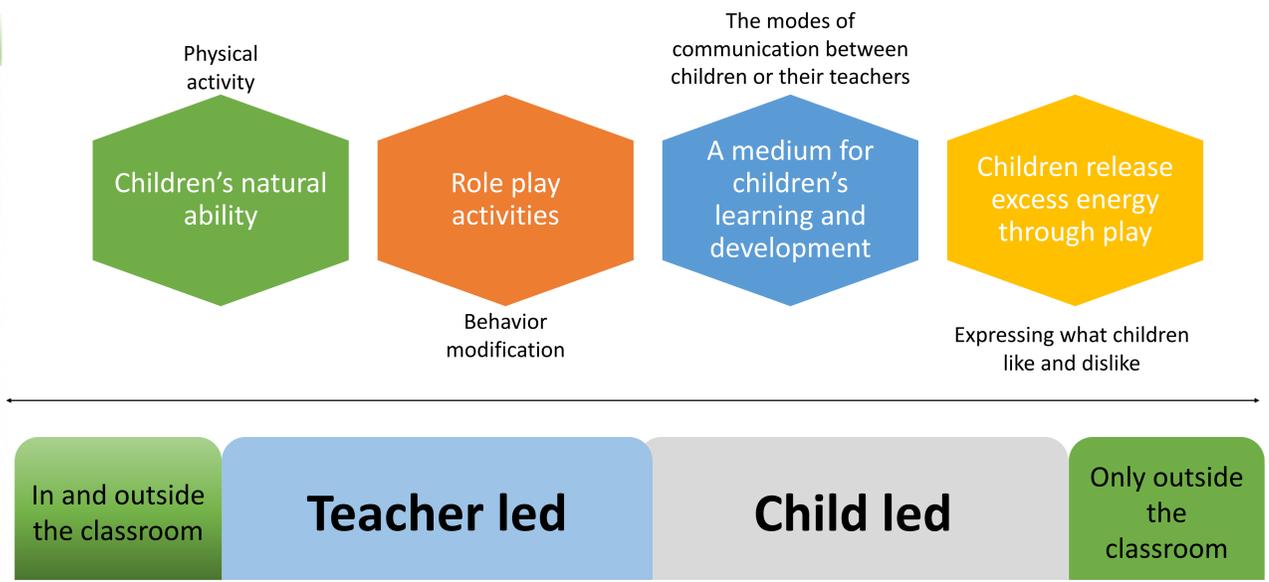


Figure 2.2 Play- Based learning supported by a continuum of teaching and learning

Results

Teachers varied in their expressed understandings about play; although, a common ideological stance was to conceptualise play as promoting children' development and integral to children’s natures. However, PBL in preschool settings did not appear to be clearly articulated in the definitions and implementation shared during interviews. The pedagogical approaches to PBL shared by the teachers positioned play as either entirely teacher-initiated or child-initiated. PBL as teacher-initiated was described as the teacher leading all activities both in and outside the classroom. In contrast, child-initiated PBL was perceived as occurring outdoors only where it was considered separate to learning. A guided-play approach collaboratively designed by a teacher with a child as commonly implemented in Western countries, was not explicitly mentioned by the preschool teachers.

Recommendations

This initial analysis and findings support the need for a clear and consistent SA framework for PBL to translate this introduced Western PBL approach in ways relevant to the unique SA socio-cultural context.

Acknowledgement

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