



PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF PUBLIC PRESCHOOL TEACHERS: THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS

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Abstract: *Consistent with the classroom management skills are the pedagogical practices that preschool educators bring into their classroom which makes early childhood education, the most beneficial. Hence, this study explored the pedagogical practices of preschool teachers and how these practices relate to pupils' holistic development. It made use of both quantitative and qualitative methods through a survey questionnaire, structured interviews, and actual observations. The respondents of the study were public preschool teachers and their preschool learners. Results show that while the preschool teachers always use the pedagogical practices along the different domains of development, their pupils' development changes along gross motor, fine motor, self-help, communication, cognitive language, and social-emotional skills have not yet reached optimal development. Moreover, pedagogical practices on gross motor, fine motor, receptive, expressive, and cognitive skills influence significantly the pupils' performance along the domains of development. Significantly, preschool teachers who are young and have higher educational attainment influence their adoption of pedagogical practices in developing skills among their pupils.*

Key words: *domains of development, development changes, holistic development, pedagogical practices, preschool education,*

INTRODUCTION

While there is no doubt that education in the early years is crucial, providing access to education to young children is only the first step. The next step and a more crucial factor to the children's success is the quality of early childhood education they receive. Premised on this idea, an equally important question that early childhood educators consider is what factors determine quality in preschool years.

It can be gainsaid that early childhood education not only introduces children to schooling but also to life-long learning where foundation to quality life begins. Seminal in children's learning are the preschool educators. It is in children's early years when a teacher learns first-hand what it means to teach a child. It is at this point that a teacher begins to share the shaping of a child with the society. The relationship between teachers and children begins at



this time and so do relationships between and among children in the class. Preschool education, then, does not only serve as a gateway into formal schooling for the children, but also care and learning for the teachers. Quality in early childhood education therefore includes how well children are introduced to basic education.

Anchored on the foregoing factors, success in early childhood education zeroes in consideration of curriculum. Curriculum, with its emphasis on child centered principles, is in many cases, difficult to fully implement due to issues such as class size, lack of equipment and the absence of appropriate in-career development for preschool teachers.

Early childhood teachers support learning by providing activities and materials that children find engaging. By facilitating learning, supplying a developmentally appropriate environment, interesting materials, and adequate time to explore, play, and interact, children find learning easy and fun as they are nurtured and nourished as well. Nurturing a child encompasses all aspects of development: physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and moral. In every interaction, a teacher nurtures appropriate growth and development.

Consistent with the classroom management skills are the pedagogical practices that preschool educators bring into their classroom which makes early childhood education, the most beneficial. It is in these classrooms where children apply what their parents have taught them to a practical setting and have their first interactions with people outside of their family. Beginning with children as young as two, teachers guide them through an important transition which focuses on “learning through play” by providing a hands-on, interactive atmosphere where children learn about themselves through playing with other children. Tasks like teaching children how to share, how to take turns, and how to have manners are some few activities where the pedagogical practices can be anchored in. Hence, the motivation for the conduct of this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the descriptive-correlational research design to determine the profile and extent of the pedagogical practices of the preschool teachers along cognitive, social, emotional and physical developmental domains of the pupils. It covered preschools which are all government institutions. These public schools offer basic education, called to protect and promote the right of every Filipino to quality, culture-based, and complete basic education. As a learner-centered public institution, its mission is to provide learners a child-



friendly, gender-sensitive, safe and motivating environment, where teacher facilitates learning and constantly nurtures and develops every child for a life-long learning.

The respondents of the study included the public preschool teachers and learners in public preschools. To generate data pertinent to the study, the assessment of pedagogical practices and learning performance took the quantitative and qualitative forms with the use of a survey questionnaire, observation tool and structured interview guide.

The study made use of the "Philippine Early Childhood Development Checklist," a study of classrooms, a questionnaire and an interaction analysis system. It was lifted from the "Philippine Early Childhood Development Checklist" which was issued by the Department of Education to all preschools. Survey questions were answered from tick-off choices, with provisions for responses other than those listed. The survey questionnaire was also used in the classroom observation of the preschool pupils. It essentially looked into the learners' performance as well. Structured interview and classroom observation were held to gather additional insights on pedagogical practices, teachers' points of view, and learners' responses to questions and their performance. This interview and observation also aimed to reinforce and validate, whenever possible, quantitative data obtained in the course of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study generally aimed to determine the pedagogical practices of the public preschool teachers in the East and West districts of Peñablanca, Cagayan. Specifically, it described the profile of the public preschool teachers in terms of their age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, and trainings attended along pedagogy. It likewise described the extent of use of pedagogical practices by the public preschool teachers along domains of development such as gross-motor, fine motor, self-help, dressing, toileting, communication (both receptive and expressive), cognitive, social-emotional skills and moral values and the development changes of preschoolers using two assessments along these domains of development based on DepEd standards. Moreover, it ascertained the problems that are frequently encountered by the preschool teachers with regard pupils, parents, and classroom. It also related the pedagogical practices of the preschool teachers with their preschoolers' development changes along domains namely gross motor, fine motor, self-



help, toilet, dressing, communication, cognitive, and social-emotional skills and the teachers' pedagogical practices with their profile variables.

EXTENT OF OBSERVING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES ALONG DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT

The preschool teachers were asked to assess the extent of their observation of different pedagogical practices along domains of development such as gross motor, fine motor, self-care, dressing, toilet, receptive, expressive language, cognitive language, and social-emotional skills and moral values of the preschoolers. Of the 10 domains of development, receptive language skills received the highest frequency followed closely by fine motor and toilet skills. Self-help skills, cognitive language skills, expressive language skills, social-emotional skills, gross motor skills, and dressing skills, in the same order as they are mentioned, came next. The domain along moral values was least frequently observed as a pedagogical practice.

On the preschool teachers' frequency of using practices to develop the gross motor skills of the preschoolers, almost all practices listed were observed by the teachers, which indicates that they actively engage their learners in physical activities that hone their gross motor skills and that challenge their physical strength. The findings could also mean that the preschool teachers give high priority and attention to the refinement of physical fitness among preschoolers as teachers are cognizant that the lack of physical fitness among children poses a danger to their health as they grow up. The frequency of use of gross motor skills by the preschool teachers especially through the use of play is manifestation of the high motivation drive teachers derive from it to make their preschoolers more challenged and more encouraged to perform activities as these progress from simple to difficult.

As regards the preschool teachers' frequency of using practices to develop fine motor skills of preschoolers, the findings show that the preschool teachers give equally good opportunities for preschoolers as they always observe practices to hone their confidence and self-control in performing the various activities given by them. Preschool education then, in this regard, adheres to the demand of the educational system, which is to help learners become active players in the preschool. Moreover, it also be gleaned from the findings that there is effective transfer of skills from teachers to preschoolers as the former



allow the latter to be creative and expressive of their thoughts and feelings through such varied media like drawing and writing.

On preschool teachers' frequency of using practices to develop self-help skills of their learners, the teachers reported to have observed almost all items, always. It could be surmised from the findings, that the learners are strongly encouraged to perform the activities as their teachers directly and personally monitor and supervise them of their progress. This personal attachment that teachers extend to the learners engenders more connection, hence more genuine desire of preschool teachers, to be a conduit in the development of their preschoolers.

With regard the preschool teachers' frequency of using practices to develop the dressing skills of preschoolers, majority of the practices were always observed by the preschool teachers. The findings provide support to the earlier observations that preschool teachers always ensures practicality of activities for learners to develop. Seemingly, the frequency of use of the mentioned self-help skills, as it is integrated into the lessons, is reflective of the teachers' attitude towards effective and efficient teaching.

On the preschool teachers' frequency of using practices to develop the toilet skills of the preschoolers, again most practices were always observed by preschool teachers. Specifically, the preschool teachers always encourage the children to wash hands and face before snack time as part of their clean-up activities, a practice which reaffirms teacher's presence even during snack time of their preschoolers. This finding could also be indicative of the fact that learners do a lot of physical activities in school that would necessarily untidy themselves in the process, such as games, play and the like. Notably, the preschoolers receive orientation and encouragement to do at the right place the basic things they need to learn and do by themselves such as urinating and moving. In achieving the desired end, that is, for preschoolers to learn these skills, the teachers open communication with parents, the direct guardians of the learners.

When asked to identify the frequency of their use of practices to develop the receptive language skills of the preschoolers, they reported to observe always all practices that were listed. As gleaned from the findings, preschool teachers give practical demonstrations to their learners to understand language rather than merely teaching them the language. The



findings indicate that the practical activities offered to preschoolers are found to be helpful by their teachers; thus, the constant use of the practices by them.

When asked which specific practice do they observe most frequently to develop the expressive language skills of their preschoolers, the preschool teachers responded that they always use most of the items that were listed. This finding could be attributed to the fact that picture books are the same materials that learners are actually fond of. There seems to be a correspondence between what learners enjoy the most with what the teachers actually provide. Language use remains to be the greatest challenge among preschool teachers especially in the foundation years of the child. Theoretically, language learning and proficiency would be most crucial at this point since language is basically speech, and as speech, it is basically oral.

On the preschool teachers' frequency of using practices to develop the cognitive language skills of the preschoolers, they reported that they always observed most of the practices found in the list. It could be surmised that teachers maximize all possible avenues to hone the cognitive skills of the learners. The most frequent use of tangible materials such as flashcards to teach learners how to think, anchors on their being visual and tactile learners, who learn best when they see and touch things.

With regard the preschool teachers' frequency of using practices to develop the social-emotional skills of the preschoolers, the findings of the study show that teachers are generally socially and emotionally sound themselves, as their practices would indicate. The use of modeling courtesy and appropriate language to preschoolers which topped the list of practices is a strong indicator of this perception of them.

On the preschool teachers' frequency of using practices to develop moral values of the preschoolers, the findings suggest that preschool teachers have not extensively practiced moral values to their learners. While the frequency would suggest that they always practice the same, it has to be emphasized that of all domains, it received the lowest mean score as compared to all other domains such as gross motor, fine motor, and self-care, to name a few.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

On extent of pupil-related problems encountered by preschool teachers, they exposed that they most frequently encounter problems with large number of pupils in the classroom and



pupils with financial problem. As the context of learning happens in the rural areas, it could be gleaned from the findings that accessibility to learning and resources management are also considerations of the preschool education system. Problems on behavior were not frequently encountered by preschool teachers. It could be surmised from the findings that the cultivation of values and refinement of emotions are prioritized in the education of the young minds. It could also spell out the kind of relationships established by parents at home and which are carried on and nurtured in the school setting. The behaviors displayed are normal at their age which calls for teachers to have maximum tolerance, more often than not.

On extent of parent-related problems encountered by the preschool teachers, they sometimes encounter problems involving on parents' lack of knowledge of activities/lessons of the child, no enough time for children, and lack of involvement in school activities. The findings indubitably underline the significant partnership of school and the home towards the child's development.

On extent of classroom-related problems encountered by the preschool teachers, the teachers disclosed that they sometimes encounter problems on classrooms not equipped with instructional technologies/technology, absence of outdoor toys/playground with different play equipment like slides, swing, monkey ladder, and inadequate space for morning group/ circle time area for the entire class to sit comfortably on the floor and activity room/inappropriate size of tables, chairs and cabinets for children. Evidently, the findings of the study reveal that preschools in the rural areas most especially have the dearth of more sophisticated media/instrument to help learners get attuned to development. However, despite this seeming problem, teachers compensate it with their other pedagogical practices that are of equal if not more use to the preschoolers.

DEVELOPMENT CHANGES AMONG CHILDREN ALONG DIFFERENT DOMAINS

On the development changes of the preschoolers along different domains such as gross motor skills, fine motor skills, self-care skills, dressing skills, toilet skills, communication skills (receptive and expressive), cognitive language, and social-emotional skills, the preschool teachers were asked to assess their preschoolers' development changes during the middle term and the final term of the academic years of the children in school. Generally, the development changes of the preschoolers in all domains were assessed by the preschool



teachers as good. Along gross motor skills of preschoolers, the skills of hopping on preferred foot, jumping and turning, walking upstairs with alternate feet without holding on to the handrail were assessed to be very good as assessed by the teachers. Their fine motor skills are very good as well particularly on drawing circle purposely and using all five fingers to get food/toys placed on a flat surface. For preschoolers' self-help skills, they are assessed to be very good at drinking from cup unassisted and getting drink unassisted. Relative to their dressing skills and toilet skills, they were generally good at performing the different tasks. With regard their communication skills, the teachers assessed their learners as generally good in reception and expression but one skill stood out to which they are very good at such as the skill on using five recognizable words. Of the skills along cognitive language domain, one skill which is matching objects that the preschoolers were assessed to have shown a development change. It could be gleaned from the findings that teachers use organization that involves simple perceptual and motor adjustments to things rather than symbolic manipulations of them; thus, making learners very good at the said skill. Finally, in terms of their social-emotional skills, the preschoolers were assessed as very good in demonstrating respect for elders using terms like *po* and *opo*. The implication of the findings to the development of skills of the child, behooves the preschool teachers to apply what they deem are the most effective practices as deficits in the areas of development can have long term implication for the child, often affecting his or her ability to respond to the challenges provided in the educational system.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND PUPILS': PERFORMANCE ALONG THE DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT

On relationship between the pedagogical practices and the pupils' performance along the domains of development, the study hypothesized that the pedagogical practices of the teachers do not influence the pupils' performance along the domains of development. The results of the correlation analysis indicate that five domains such as gross motor, fine motor, receptive, expressive, and cognitive skills have correlation coefficients that have associated probability values of lower than the 0.05 level of significance set in the study, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

On relationship between teachers' pedagogical practices and their profile variables, the study theorized that the pedagogical practices of teachers in developing domains of pupils'



development are not related to their profile variables. However, two variables such age and highest educational attainment have correlation coefficients whose associated probabilities are lower than 0.05, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that although the preschool teachers always use the pedagogical practices along the different domains of development, their pupils' development changes along gross motor, fine motor, self-help, communication, cognitive language, and social-emotional skills have not yet reached optimal development. Moreover, pedagogical practices on gross motor, fine motor, receptive, expressive, and cognitive skills influence significantly the pupils' performance along the domains of development. Moreover, preschool teachers who are young and have higher educational attainment significantly influence their adoption of pedagogical practices in developing skills among their pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and the conclusions made, the following are recommended:

1. Parenting programs, seminars and workshops in collaboration with preschool teachers may be developed and implemented to make parents aware of the maternal/paternal control they employ on their children and give them appropriate support and encouragement at home.
2. School administrators need to review the curriculum, monitor their preschool teachers' performance, and provide adequate trainings to them, all for the purpose of ensuring teachers' better performance.
3. School administrators are admonished to support the endeavors of the teacher in establishing the cornerstones of effective pedagogical practices in preschools schools, such as giving more space for outdoor activities and for multi-media facilities, to improve everyday child rearing practices.
4. Preschool teachers are encouraged to do more evaluation of their pedagogical practices to tailor fit to the needs of the preschoolers so as to help the young minds have better developmental changes in their skills along the different domains.
5. School administrators and teachers need to collaborate on the inclusion of moral studies as moral values should be emphasized in the preschool curriculum for this



aspect remains essential in the formative years of pupils. A weekly conduct of an activity to emphasize values formation is strongly recommended.

6. Parent-teacher conference is likewise suggested as there are no avenues for teachers to provide feedback of the pupils' performance to their respective parents. Individual feed backing on this note based on pupils' anecdotal records should be done.
7. Similar studies may be conducted to include private preschools as locale of the study, looking into teachers' pedagogical practices and how these compare with the public preschool teachers' practices.

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