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Perception of Elementary Teachers of Balangir District towards Toy-based Pedagogy

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Abstract

Nowadays, the lack of necessary skills and competencies among students is an increasing source of worry. Pupils have limited knowledge of their grade level. Research has shown that Indian pupil lack critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities. The students lack the confidence to tackle the challenges of the 21st century. It hampers students' holistic development. In order to provide quality education, reforms in education are inevitable. The success of any reform in education related to curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation depends on the skills and competencies of teachers. The teacher is the key person to adopt educational reforms effectively. In order to assist students in acquiring skills like cooperation, self-initiative, self-direction, self-discipline, teamwork, responsibility, citizenship, amongst others. The national Education Policy (2020) has highlighted the adaptation of experiential learning through toy-based pedagogy, in all stages of education. Hence, elementary teachers should use toys as a tool of pedagogy for teaching different subjects. The current study intends to measure the perception of elementary teachers in Odisha toward toy-based pedagogy. The present study adopted a descriptive survey method. A sample of 184 elementary teachers who have more than 6 years of teaching experience in government schools of the Balangir district of Odisha was selected by the simple random sampling technique. The data was collected by using a perception scale in online mode and analyzed through frequency, percentage, and intensity index. The findings revealed that the government elementary teachers of Odisha had a favorable perception toward toy-based pedagogy for promoting physical well-being, mental well-being, life skills and values development, and preservation of culture.

Keywords: *Toy-Based Pedagogy, Elementary Teachers, Life Skills*

Introduction

In the 21st century, the goal of education is to make children ready to cope up with knowledge the explosion. For this, teachers should provide quality education at every stage of education. The elementary stage is the foundation for holistic development. Children are the future who take the nation forward. Thus, the school has the responsibility of shaping the personality of children. Providing quality elementary education is a stepping stone towards the full-fledged development of children which depends on the skills and competencies of teachers. According to Froebel, the school is like a garden, the teacher is like the gardener, and the students are like sensitive plants. Similar to a gardener, a teacher must look after the small human plants and provide them with water so that they can flourish and reach their full potential. Reforms in education related to curriculum, pedagogy, assessment along with teacher preparation are inevitable to make children ready to compete with the world around them. The National Education Policy (2020) placed a strong emphasis on pedagogical reforms for enlightening the intellectual sides of children along with developing life skills.

Nowadays, the lack of necessary skills among students is an increasing source of worry. Students lack the confidence to tackle the challenges of the 21st century knowledge explosion without critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The students' holistic development is hampered by a lack of fundamental knowledge and skills required for elementary grades. The schools should prioritize play-based learning, or playing toys (including Indigenous toys), in order to fulfill the goal of National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission. It offers pupils learning based on experience, which in turn helps them acquire certain life skills.

According to the NCERT report (2022), 11% of pupils cannot execute the most fundamental grade-level tasks because they lack the requisite knowledge and skills. In addition, just 37% of pupils have limited knowledge and skills and can only partially complete activities appropriate for their grade level (NCERT, 2020). Indian pupils lack critical thinking skills, so they avoid problems rather than look for solutions (Patro, 2022). In a study conducted with 625 students in Mysore, India, Sherafat and Murty (2016) found that 51 percent of pupils had low critical thinking skills, 17.60

percent had average critical thinking skills, and about 30.72 percent had high critical thinking skills. In addition, 74 percent of students in government schools have poor critical thinking skills.

In order to assist students in acquiring skills like cooperation, self-initiative, self-direction, self-discipline, teamwork, responsibility, citizenship, etc., the National Education Policy (2020) has highlighted the adaptation of experiential learning through toy-based pedagogy, in all stages of education. Hence, elementary teachers should use toys as a tool of pedagogy for teaching different subjects. The elementary teachers should be acquainted with the toys of India. They would get the opportunity for professional development through workshops, and in-service training programs for the adaptation of toy-based pedagogy at the elementary level.

Toys of India

The lives of children are not complete without toys. Around 5000 B.C., during the Indus Valley Civilization, toys were first invented in India. The clay figures of monkeys and bullocks are the most well-known Indus Valley civilization toys. However, indigenous toys might also be

priceless cultural artifact. In addition to narrating historical tales, they also exhibit the traditions and values practiced by various groups of people. Children's imaginations and creativity are stimulated by indigenous toys that could help in enculturation. The children in our country usually play with spinning top toys like Lattoo, firki, kites, dug-dugi, pinwheels, magic cards, flying birds, magic serpents, and other lovely playthings. The toys made of clay and papermache are very common in India. Dhingli, Rasoi, Ring Set Puzzle, Rocking horse, Wooden toys, Chankana, Charkha, Handwai, Bhatukali, Sawantwadi toys are some popular toys of India. Some of the indigenous toys can be used for the purpose of education and entertainment as well which helps in understanding of the child's surroundings. It is observed because our diverse culture a range of Indian toys can potentially satisfy most curriculum requirements at the elementary school level.

Toy-based Pedagogy: Meaning and Importance

Toy-based pedagogy emphasizes the use of toys (including indigenous toys) in pedagogy to teach different subjects. Toy-based pedagogy is a teaching strategy that is

centered on teaching through toys. It makes reference to toys as a tool that can be used in conjunction with pedagogy to encourage all-around development. It contributes toward attaining the objectives of the foundational literacy and numeracy mission. The inclusion of toys in the classroom assists in the clarification, concretization, and simplification of abstract concepts. Toy integration in the curriculum offers a way to logically integrate the content of several subjects in a way that is learner-centered. Toys can be a useful tool in education for fostering 21st-century abilities like critical and creative thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, communication, and adaptation. It also develops design- thinking skills among children.

Hence, elementary teachers should be provided with the opportunity for professional development to sharpen their skills and competencies to integrate toy-based pedagogy at the elementary level. The training program for elementary teachers should also have a sharp focus on teaching through indigenous toys. The current study intends to measure the perception of

elementary teachers of Odisha toward toy-based pedagogy.

Method

The present study adopted a descriptive survey method. A sample of 184 elementary teachers who have more than 6 years of teaching experience in government schools of the Balangir district of Odisha was selected by a simple random sampling technique.

Tool

A perception scale for elementary teachers was constructed by the researchers and validated by three experts to collect data in order to measure the perception of elementary teachers of Odisha toward toy-based pedagogy. The perception scale included dimensions of physical well-being, mental well-being, development of life skills and values, and preservation of culture.

Procedure

Through the use of a perception scale, the data were gathered from elementary teachers in an online mode. Frequency, percentage, and intensity index were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

Table 1-Perception scale on Toy-Based Pedagogy

Sr. No.	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Intensity Index	
		%	%	%	%	%		
Physical Well-being								
1	Students can maintain their physical fitness by employing toy-based pedagogy.	14.42	55.78	13.46	15.38	0.96	3.67	
2	Toy-based pedagogy lowers obesity rates.	13.46	75	9.61	1.93	0	4	
3	Toy-based teaching enhances physical well-being.	19.23	75	5.77	0	0	4.13	
4	Students' stamina to remain active throughout the day is increased via toy-based instruction.	19.23	72.12	8.66	0	0	4.10	
	MEAN	16.58	69.48	9.38	4.32	0.24		
Average intensity index of Physical Well-being: 3.97								
Mental Well-being								
5	Toy-based instruction increases students' confidence.		13.46	67.30	18.27	0.96	0	3.93
6	Toy-based pedagogy lowers stress.		15.39	60.57	21.15	2.89	0	3.88
7	Toy-based pedagogy promotes mental well-being.		11.53	63.46	21.15	3.85	0	3.82
8	Toy-based pedagogy trains pupils to think logically		13.46	52.89	23.08	10.58	0	3.69
9	Toy-based pedagogy enables pupils to learn strategy building.		12.5	53.84	24.03	9.61	0	3.69

10	Toy-based pedagogy boosts students' focus and concentration.	14.42	60.57	14.42	10.58	0	3.78
	MEAN	13.46	59.77	20.35	6.41	0	
Average intensity index of Mental Well-being: 3.79							
Life Skills and Values Development							
11	Toy-based pedagogy improves interpersonal relationships among pupils.	25.96	66.34	6.74	0.96	0	4.17
12	Toy-based pedagogy promotes student collaboration.	8.66	34.61	15.39	36.53	4.80	3.05
13	Toy-based pedagogy enhances team spirit.	25.96	59.61	13.46	0.96	0	4.1
14	Toy-based pedagogy improves empathy among students.	19.23	64.42	15.39	0.96	0	4.01
15	Toy-based pedagogy fosters mutual understanding among students.	18.27	62.5	18.27	0.96	0	3.98
16	Toy-based pedagogy enhances tolerance among students.	25	65.38	9.61	0	0	4.15
17	Toy-based pedagogy strengthens pupils' emotional bonds.	22.11	71.15	6.74	0	0	4.15
	MEAN	20.75	60.58	12.23	5.76	0.68	
Average intensity index of Life skills and Values development: 3.94							
Preservation of Culture							
18	Toy-based pedagogy acquaints students about heritage.	12.5	49.03	24.03	13.46	0.96	3.58
19	Toy-based pedagogy facilitates cultural diffusion.	16.34	39.42	25	19.23	0	3.52
20	Toy-based pedagogy facilitates acculturation.	28.84	61.53	9.61	0	0	4.19
	MEAN	19.34	49.99	19.50	10.89	0.30	
Average intensity index of Preservation of Culture: 3.76							
Average intensity index- 3.86							

Table 1 shows the items related to physical well-being, mental well-being, development of life-skills and values, and preservation of culture. An average of 16.58% of teachers strongly agreed, 69.48% agreed, 9.38% were neutral, 4.32% disagreed and 0.24 % elementary teachers strongly disagreed that toy-based pedagogy promotes physical well-being among the elementary students. The average intensity index of items related to physical well-being was found to be 3.97 which signify that the elementary teachers had a favorable perception of toy-based pedagogy for promoting physical well-being among elementary students. Many elementary teachers agreed that the integration of toys (i.e., indigenous and modern toys) as a tool in pedagogy to teach different subjects improves the physical health of students, reduces obesity, boosts stamina to stay active the whole day, and helps students to stay physically fit. This could be linked to the fact that physical activity has a significant impact on children's health and development since they like playing so much. The report of Ginsberg (2007) (American Academy of Paediatrics) stated, "Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of

children and youth. Play also offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children. Despite the benefits derived from play for both children and parents, time for free play has been markedly reduced for some children".

For the items related to mental well-being, it was found that an average of 13.46% of teachers strongly agreed, 59.77% agreed, 20.35% were neutral, and 6.41% of elementary teachers disagreed that toy-based pedagogy improves the mental well-being of elementary students. The average intensity index of items related to mental well-being was found to be 3.79 which signify that the elementary teachers had a favorable perception toward toy-based pedagogy for improving the mental well-being of the elementary students. Majority of the teachers agreed that toy-based pedagogy improves the focus and concentration of students, reduces stress, increases confidence, develops logical thinking and strategy-building ability, and improves the mental health of students. Playing with toys and playing games is not only a kind of entertainment for children, but it also promotes their emotional development and improves their mental health (Sezer, 2012).

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20.75% of teachers strongly agreed, 60.58% agreed, 12.23% were neutral, 5.76% disagreed, and 0.68% of elementary teachers disagreed that toy-based pedagogy develops life skills and values among the elementary students. The average intensity index of items related development of life skills and values among elementary students was found to be 3.94 which signifies that the elementary teachers had a favorable perception toward toy-based pedagogy for developing life skills and values among elementary students. Most of the teachers agreed that toy-based pedagogy enhances interpersonal relations, collaboration, team spirit, empathy, tolerance, emotional bonding, and mutual understanding among students. According to Hardenberg, (2009, 2010) toys play a significant part in socialization by enabling children to explore and engage in popular norms and activities.

The dimension of preservation of culture, revealed an average of 19.34% of teachers who strongly agreed, 49.99% agreed, 19.50% were neutral, 10.89% disagreed, and 0.30% of elementary teachers disagreed that toy-based pedagogy helps to preserve culture. The average intensity index of items related preservation of culture was found to be

3.76 which signify that the elementary teachers had a favorable perception toward toy-based pedagogy for the preservation of culture. Many teachers agreed that toy-based pedagogy acquaints students with heritage, and facilitates acculturation, and cultural diffusion. The indigenous toys tell stories of a particular culture that demonstrate customs of that particular culture.

The average intensity index of items related to physical well-being, mental well-being, development of life skills and values, and preservation of culture is 3.76 which signify that the elementary teachers had a favorable perception toward toy-based pedagogy.

Implications of The Present Findings

Government-

- The findings of the study have implications for policymakers. They may consider the findings in designing educational policies that support more planning time for teachers.
- In-service training providers, i.e., DIETs, SCERT, can design an appropriate programme for teachers.

Conclusion

The integration of toys in pedagogy to teach different subjects will provide students with interesting learning

experiences. It helps to create an environment in school where students can learn without burden. The elementary teachers perceived that toys as a tool of pedagogy at the elementary level will help to promote holistic development of learners. The elementary teachers had a favorable perception toward toy-based pedagogy to promote physical and mental well-being, develops life skills and values among students, and in the preservation of culture. Hence, toy integration into pedagogy is a stepping stone toward promoting full-fledged development of children's personality. This has implications for policy makers to give emphasis on toy-based pedagogy in the elementary teacher education curriculum and in the in-service teacher training programmes.

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