The Full Day Kindergarten Classroom in Ontario: Exploring Play-based Learning Approach and its Implications for Child Development

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Research Overview

A qualitative research study examining Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) teaching practices.

Introduction

Across Canada policymakers are looking to expand children’s access to early childhood education. In 2007, the Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning introduced the document ‘The Early Learning for Every Child Today’ and established a framework to guide the development of Ontario early childhood settings. In September 2010, Bill 242 – Full Day Early Learning Statue – Law Amendment Act came into effect and started the process of changing kindergarten learning in Ontario public schools from a half-day to a full-day program. The Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program (FDELKP) outlined the vision, purpose and goals of the new FDK program. It was a part of an overall plan to help more children have a strong start in school. Mustard (2006) conducted studies showing that early brain development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health.

Methodology

The five key elements of the FDK program were examined through the PIECE model. The teaching and learning practices integrated various educational philosophies in a comprehensive pedagogical approach to meet the needs of individual learners. This theoretical framework created a lens to understand the quality of the educational experience. The main methodology was the case study approach and it was weaved with the narrative inquiry. A triangulation process where multiple sources of data collection allowed for a deeper look at the eight teacher participants. Data collection included semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and review of artifacts and photographs. The qualitative research design captured rich experiences, provided meaningful information and deeper insight into various teaching practices and perspectives.

Highlights

Play is a holistic approach to learning as it engages mind, body, and spirit. It engages and energizes children. Play produces joy, freedom and satisfaction. Educators reported they found play gave children many opportunities to problem-solve and explore areas of their own interest, use their imagination and think in creative ways.

Conclusions

In the ‘wonder years’ we need to nurture the joy of expression, curiosity, sense of wonder and awe. The study examined and shared various ways to implement quality play in FDK.

References


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Participants

- Participant Profiles
- The Early Years Education (EYE) Model
- Demographics of the Classroom
- Designing My EYE Model
- Provinces in Canada
- More Research Showing Effect: Impact of FDK vs. HDK
- Comparing Provinces Within Canada