

# Play based learning approach from the perspective of teachers at foundational stage

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## ABSTRACT

Foundational stage is the very foundation of growth and development. This stage includes children of age 3-8 years of age. Play is considered to be developmentally appropriate for this age group of children. The perspective of teachers at foundational stage is very important. So, this paper intends to find the perspective of teachers about play based learning at the foundational stage. providing sufficient classroom space and play-based materials to school, increasing wages for teachers, removing some non-academic responsibilities from the teachers. This study used a descriptive survey in conjunction with a qualitative research methodology. 110 Foundational level teachers in the sadar block of Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, were selected for the study using basic random sampling procedures and a purposeful approach. Data from the teachers was gathered via a questionnaire. The data analysis was done using descriptive analysis. The study's conclusions showed that most kindergarten instructors are aware of and comprehend the idea of a play-based learning approach to instruction. Play-based learning at foundational stage classes was hindered by a number of problems, including a lack of educational resources, huge class sizes, non-academic tasks, low pay, and the need to prepare children for school. According to the study, appropriate and prompt teacher training in play-based learning will improve the conditions for play-based learning to be implemented correctly in practice.

**KEYWORDS:** Play-Based learning, foundational stage, learning through play, developmentally appropriate teaching method, play pedagogy

## INTRODUCTION

Foundational stage is very crucial stage of development. Children belonging to 3-8 years of age are considered to be in this foundational stage of growth and development. This stage of life is very important for growth and development of any individual. This is the basis for future development. At this stage proper care should be given to children. The learning process should be developmentally appropriate. Play based learning is considered most appropriate and suitable for this age group children. Play is the natural activity of children at foundational stage. When children are at play, they are happy, active and energetic.

Play is universally regarded as most appropriate technique of teaching. Existing literature also has highlighted the relevance and prominence of play-based teaching at foundational stage. Play is globally accepted. Play helps to instill pre-academic skill in children in a seamless manner. The best way to teach at the foundational level is through play, according to early childhood thinkers like Froebel and Montessori. Play also has been given importance by Philosophers like Piaget, Vygotsky and Dewey. Piaget's constructivist theory of learning advocated hands on learning experiences. Piaget also emphasised on exploring the things and world around with the help of play. Engaging children in play activities purposefully is very important for children's' learning. Children learn about the world around them and about themselves when they interact with the environment.

Though, play based teaching is much celebrated at foundational stage, its practice suffers. Despite the acknowledgement of play-based learning globally, play based teaching suffers from smooth less implementation in the world around. Play based learning is more visible on papers than in real classrooms. Its implantation in the class rooms at foundational stage suffers from setbacks. Very little is spoken about the real implementation problems at the classrooms. Not much is researched and talked about the problems faced by teachers in classrooms while implementing the play-based teaching.

This paper attempts to Learn about Play Based teaching from the Perspective of Teachers at the Foundational stage. Teachers are the real stakeholders when it come to actual implementation of this play Based teaching techniques in the classrooms. There are many documents which have extensively written about the importance of Play based teaching. After Indian educational reform in the form of NEP 2020, many documents like NCF for Foundational stage 2022, NIPUN BHARAT, VIDHYA PRAVESH, AANAND etc. were published. These documents have written extensively about the crucial role played by Foundational stage and developmentally appropriate methods to deal at this stage. Play based teaching is hailed and spoken extensively in these documents.

But surprisingly, play based teaching has not been the most widely practised approach of teaching at foundational stage by the teachers. In reality teachers face many issues while implanting this method in the real classrooms. There is no doubt that children love this play-based learning method. This paper attempts to highlight different reason for play based teaching not carried out in full foam in practice everywhere. This paper attempts to learn about play based teaching from the perspective of teachers teaching at foundational approach. What are the problems teachers face in implementing this pedagogy?

The study is undertaken with the following objectives:

- To know about the play-based teaching from the perspective of teachers teaching at foundational stage.
- What are the difficulties teachers come across while using play-based teaching in the classroom?
- Suggestions from teachers for the proper implementation of play-based teaching in the classrooms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW:

The foundational level of education is centered on play, which has a long history. Froebel (1782–1852), Dewey (1859–1952), Montessori (1870–1952) and Vygotsky (1896–1934), all promoted the constructivist view of learning, which emphasized the value of play in education. These constructivist theorists questioned teacher-centered instruction and emphasized the "child-centered" theory. Froebel discussed the importance of using play as a teaching tool for foundational school students in order to help them reach their full developmental potential. In her approach to teaching foundational stage children, Maria Montessori also promoted play.

This play tradition is primarily founded on the philosophical, pedagogical, and ideological ideals of Montessori, Isaacs, Steiner, and others. Bruce (1987) and Anning (1999). A set of broad ideas about childhood, kids, and education was developed by the ideological foundation, commonly referred to as "nursery inheritance." Even in the absence of outside assistance, play is thought to be a potent instructional process that allows learning to occur naturally. Free play is viewed in a different way. Children learn best through self-directed activities that are connected to intrinsic motivation, according to Froebel and Montessori. By creating a child-sized environment, Montessori aimed to let kids come closer to reality through their own journey of self-discovery rather than to encourage imaginative play.

By contrast, Froebel endowed spontaneous play with symbolic meaning and had an almost mystical belief in its importance (Anning, 1991). He highlighted the importance of unstructured play as a means of fostering language and demonstrating the unification of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. By emphasizing play, these and other educators in 19th-century Europe aimed to alter the fairly harsh views of children and implement more progressive methods of their upbringing, education, and growth.

Similarly, Susan Isaacs' empirical research had an impact on Britain in the 2000s. According to Isaacs, play has cognitive and imaginative benefits. Play was defined as children's constant shifting between imagination and reality, revealing their emotional and intellectual requirements. According to Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein's psycho-analytical tradition, children can work through fundamental emotional issues, inner conflicts, and fears through symbolic and imaginative play in particular. Play has an educational and developmental purpose by helping kids grow their ego and sense of reality while also teaching them to manage their behaviour and accept the boundaries of the actual world.

As a general phrase, play encompasses a wide range of behaviours and activities that can vary as per the child's age. Three dimensions can be used to characterize play, according to Pellegrini (1991):

- Play as disposition
- Play as context
- Play as observable behaviour

Extrinsic motivation, focus, curiosity, nonliteral behaviours, adaptability, and active participation are all components of play as disposition. Play normally takes place in a familiar, stress-free environment where choices are made freely. Piaget's three phases of play—functional, symbolic, and games with rules—that develop over the course of early infancy serve as the foundation for the criterion for play as observable behaviours. According to Johnson (1990), play can enhance cognitive development and help kids make sense of their experiences. Teachers are therefore well positioned to encourage those processes and assist kids in realizing the scholastic value of play. There is still broad acceptance for the necessity of a play-based curriculum for kids under five. (Bruce, 1991; Moyles, 1989, 1994). Play is a strong motivator that fosters children's creativity and helps them improve their language, thoughts, and comprehension. Children discover, apply, and test their knowledge and abilities through play. (DES, 1990:7).

According to Archer (1975), play has two levels: one that merely keeps kids busy and the other that aids in their educational growth. Play was assessed by Sylva et al. (1980) based on the level of cognitive difficulty. Although play was thought to be a child's natural activity, it was classified in the classroom based on the materials available and the underlying goals of the teachers.

Play-based learning pedagogy, then, is the practice of using play as a teaching technique for children. Play-based learning keeps the children at the center of the lesson, with the entire focus being on meeting his or her needs. Children can explore, communicate, observe, experiment, learn to socialize, and develop problem-solving abilities through play-based pedagogy, which ultimately helps them become self-assured, active, and independent adults. The youngsters are stress-free, joyful, and satisfied learner when using this method.

Despite being recommended and endorsed by practitioners, a "nursery style" curriculum that emphasizes play is not well-documented in actual practice for this age range. Sestini (1987) found that while play activities were offered, they were created covertly while teachers concentrated on other goals, primarily literacy and numeracy. Even while play has become a powerful focal point, its position in the curriculum is still contentious. In practice, it seems that the rhetoric of play is not realized.

No doubt play based teaching is an excellent pedagogy at foundational stage but its practice in full fledge suffers from hindrances and setbacks. This study aims the highlight the perspective of teachers in putting the pedagogy of play-based teaching in to practice. This paper also aims to throw light on the meaning and definition from the real practitioners of this method of teaching. What are the difficulties teacher face in implementing this wonderful method in to the classrooms?

As a result, firstly, study highlighted the issue of lack of play-based materials in the school. For play based teaching for this age group of children, there should be adequate resources and materials to play with. At this age children learn best with the help of concrete objects.

Inadequate space in the classrooms- There should be enough space in the classroom. Separate classroom for play. But the reality is some of the schools do not even have a classroom to sit and learn. Teaching is done outside the school in open area or under the tree. There should be provision of toys, puppets, sand in the classroom.

Improper teacher-child ratio- Number of children in the class is more. There is inadequacy of practitioners and play materials as per the strength of the class. When children are small they require more of personal support

and care from their teachers.

Teachers have other academic and administrative work- Apart from classroom teaching, teachers are burdened with other administrative work, updating reports and registers. They have to fill nearly 16-18 registers belonging to care, development and nurturing of lactating mothers and children. They have other duties during elections and polling.

Irregularity of students in the classrooms – Students coming to these Foundational stage schools in Sadar block in Gautam buddha nagar belongs to daily wage earners. Parents of these children move to cities for earning their daily bread.as and when there are some festivals they visit their home towns and return to school after a break of 10-12 days. This beak and irregularity effects the interest and motivation of children towards learning.

Children coming to these Foundational stage school belongs to families where both the parents are working. And the younger children are sometimes left at home under the care of these school going aged children. Due to this also there is irregularity among these children.

Teachers are also burdened with preparing children for more academic subjects and making them school ready. This forces the teachers to teach children using traditional method of verbatims and not using play-based teaching in reality.

Because foundational stage students are under academic pressure, the public has criticized kindergarten classrooms. Consequently, there is less play in kindergarten classrooms. For the simple reason that they are buying textbooks and workbooks rather than art supplies, items for dramatic play, or sand and water boards. Since kindergarten is a learning environment, learning takes precedence over play. Furthermore, the way that educators view and feel about using the play-based learning method to instruction is heavily influenced by how they think and comprehend the idea. According to UNICEF, teachers' opinions regarding the use of play pedagogy are impacted by their own lack of knowledge about play theory. Because of their perceptual experiences, many educators shun play-based learning methods.

Last but not least, in addition to the social environment of a particular institution, the location, dimensions, shape, and structure of the classroom, as well as the availability and efficient operation of various educational resources such as furniture, reading materials, and library services, all directly affect the teaching strategies employed in classrooms. For instance, teachers are better able to show the confident use of interactive activities in a well-ventilated, orderly classroom with suitable learning resources.

## METHODOLOGY

The study's main goals were to find out what the Foundational stage teachers in the Sadar block of Gautam Buddha Nagar district thought about the idea of play-based learning as a teaching method and what obstacles they faced when attempting to incorporate it into their lessons. Nonetheless, the study used a descriptive survey and a qualitative research approach to achieve this goal. In order to make the study specific and manageable, it was limited to Foundational stage teachers who were currently teaching in the Sadar block in Gautam Buddha Nagar district. To this end, 110 respondents were chosen using purposive and basic random sampling techniques.

The research tool used to gather data was a questionnaire because the study involved a descriptive survey of kindergarten teachers' opinions regarding play-based learning. For this survey, questionnaires were the primary method used to collect data. Responses were obtained from the respondents using questionnaires that included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. When the researcher uses a questionnaire to get data, it allows them to quickly gather the opinions of a big sample.

Kankam and Weiler assert that the best method for learning about respondents' opinions and viewpoints is through questionnaires. The respondents were given a total of 130 questionnaires in order to elicit answers

that addressed the main topics of the study. However, 110 of the 130 questionnaires—or 85% of the forms were found to be completely filled. The approach used for the study of the gathered data was the descriptive analysis process. Excel software was used for data processing. Following response coding for easy identification, frequency distribution count tables, percentages, charts, and graphs were used to analyze the data. Coolidge provided support for this by arguing that the results of a data analysis should be presented, examined, and explained as provided by the respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biographical factors including gender and teacher training were chosen for this study because they were directly related to the adoption of play-based learning in classrooms.

**Table 1. Teachers at the foundational stage and their demographics.**

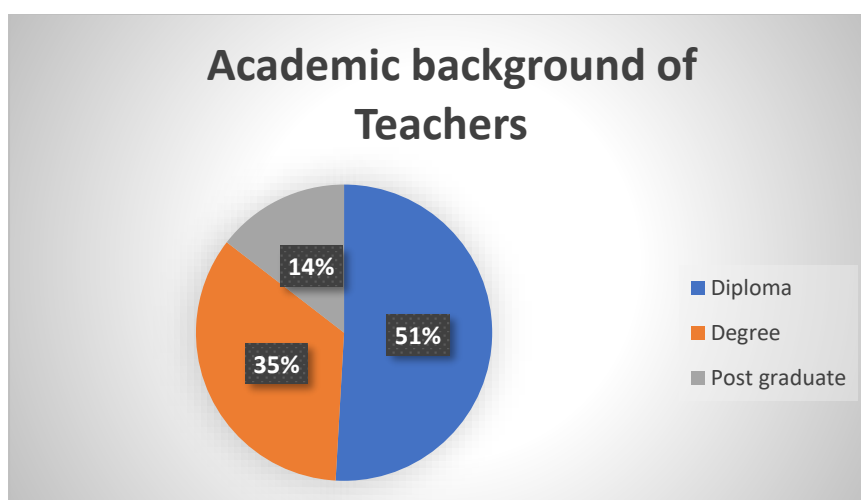
Gender	No of teachers	percentage	Qualification	No of teachers	Percentage
Male	0	0	Trained	110	100%
Female	110	100%	Untrained	0	0

All 110 kindergarten teachers who participated in this survey were female, accounting for 100% of the sampled respondents, according to the data in Table 1. Every teacher was literate, and all of the female teachers were 100% trained.

**Table 2: Foundational Stage Teachers of Sadar Block's Academic Background.**

Academic background	Total number of teachers	Percentages%
Diploma	56	50.90%
Degree	38	34.55%
Post graduate	16	14.55%
Total	110	100%

According to Table 2's data, 56 teachers, or 50.90% of the total, hold diploma credentials. 38 teachers, or 34.55%, hold degree. The remaining 16 teachers, or 14.55%, hold postgraduate degrees.



**Figure:1, Academic background of Foundational stage Teachers**

### Perception of Teachers on the "Concept of Play Based Learning"

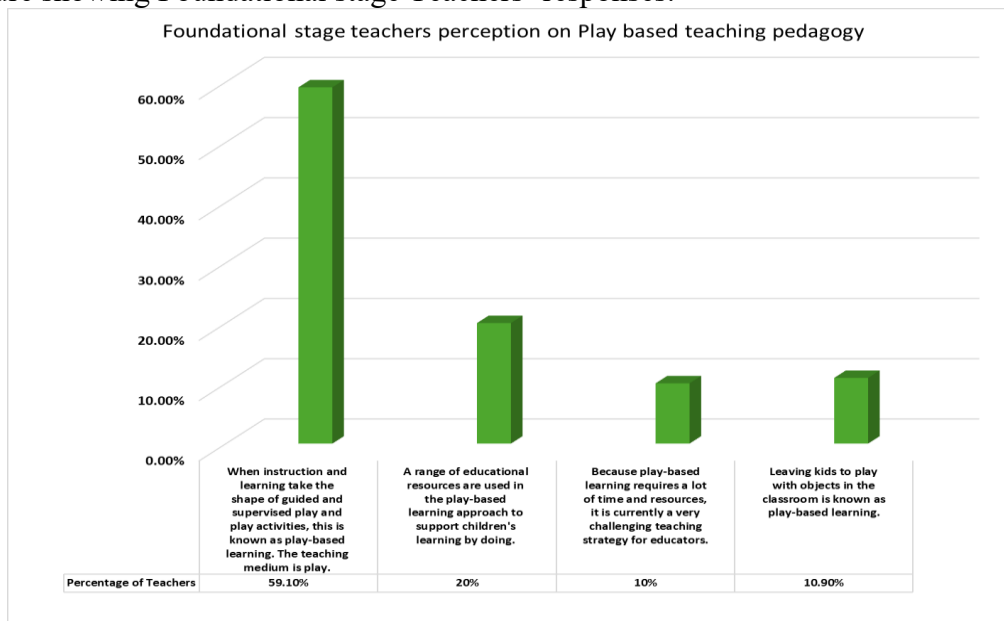
Research Question 1: What are the opinions of teachers in Gautam Budhha Nagar regarding the use of play-based learning in foundational education? The purpose of this study was to determine how foundational stage instructors perceive the use of play-based learning in the classroom. One hundred (110) respondents were



asked this study topic, which included questions like "what is play based learning approach to teaching?" and "what does "play based learning" mean to you personally?" What are your thoughts on the idea of play-based learning? The following themes and patterns were inferred and grouped into four topics based on the teachers' responses. The themes that surfaced from the instructors' comments are listed below:

- When instruction and learning take the shape of guided and supervised play and play activities, this is known as play-based learning. The teaching medium is play.
- A range of educational resources are used in the play-based learning approach to support children's learning by doing.
- Because play-based learning requires a lot of time and resources, it is currently a very challenging teaching strategy for educators.
- Leaving kids to play with objects in the classroom is known as play-based learning.

Below is a figure showing Foundational stage Teachers' responses.



**Figure:2, Foundational stage teachers' perception on Play based teaching pedagogy**

Figure 2 shows that the majority of kindergarten instructors have a mediocre comprehension of the "play based learning" approach to instruction. 59.1% of the 110 respondents, for example, demonstrated that they understood the idea of the play-based learning method to instruction. According to their perspective, play pedagogy is "the act of assisting children to learn by allowing children to actively explore and participate in a variety of class activities through play." Many child specialists who maintain the child at the center of learning hold this view.

Nonetheless, according to 22% of the respondents, play-based learning uses a range of educational resources to help kids learn. This demonstrates that, as learning through play requires the use of a variety of materials, a shortage of resources in schools might occasionally prohibit teachers from implementing the play approach in their classrooms. As a result, 11% of respondents said that play-based learning took a lot of time. It takes a lot of time for teachers in this group to use play activities in the classroom. Planning the class activities and setting up the materials appropriately take time. The use of play-based learning in the classroom was perceived by the respondents as a technique that teachers find challenging and tiresome.

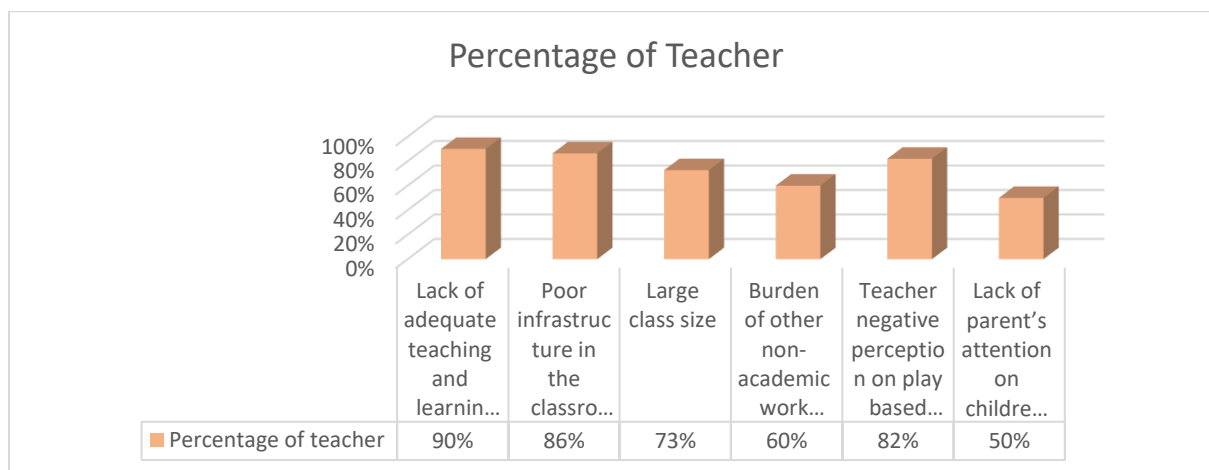
Lastly, just 10.9% of respondents said that "play based learning" is a teaching strategy that lets kids act out in class. According to this group of educators, play-based learning entails giving kids the freedom to roam around the classroom and engage in the learning process. Bruce argued in favor of this viewpoint by arguing that play is unstructured and unintentional, which is why play activities have always been incorporated into the curriculum for early childhood education. It is clear from the respondents' answers that the majority of the

Sadar block's Foundational stage teachers are sufficiently knowledgeable and comprehend the idea.

### **The following factors influence teachers' use of the play-based learning approach in foundational stage classrooms:**

The second research question asks what keeps instructors from implementing a play-based learning strategy in the classroom. Finding the potential barriers that instructors may face while attempting to incorporate a play-based learning strategy into their instruction of children was the goal of this study question. The following are the respondents' answers about some of the things that hinder or interfere with instructors' use of play-based pedagogy in the classroom.

- Lack of adequate teaching-learning materials. (90%)
- Poor infrastructure in the classrooms such as lack of space in the classrooms. (86%)
- Large class size. (73%)
- Burden of other non-academic works on teachers. (60%)
- Negative perception of teachers on Play based teaching pedagogy. (82%)
- Lack of Parents' attention on their children's studies. (50%)



**Figure:3, Factors influence teachers' use of the play-based learning approach in foundational stage classrooms:**

### **Teachers' recommendations for improving the use of play-based learning in Foundational classrooms.**

Majority of the teachers agree that play based teaching pedagogy is a wonderful teaching-learning approach. If this pedagogy is practised, its result will be commendable. But, in reality there are certain hindrances. Teachers at foundational stage gave the following suggestions.

There should be provision of adequate infrastructure in the classrooms. Classrooms should have enough space for indoor and outdoor play activities. Play should not be understood as waste of time and should not be underlined in front of academics. Teachers role at foundational stage should be seen with respect from authorities and society. Teachers should be relieved from some of the academic and non-teaching works. Parents should also feel responsible for their child's education and should not feel that only school is responsible for children's education at foundational stage. As education learning at foundational stage is the joint responsibility of parents and teachers and parents should also pay attention when child is at home. From time to time the teachers should be given training in play-based teaching approach. Teacher's salary should be increased, so that they feel satisfied in their work and are motivated.

Regular in-service training courses at the foundational stage should be organized to encourage teachers to employ a play-based learning approach while instructing youngsters. Teachers should be encouraged to keep up with the latest developments in education and to broaden their knowledge. Additionally, educators should be inspired to use play-based learning in their classrooms. To motivate their co-workers to enumeration, they

ought to receive incentives and awards.

## IN CONCLUSION

Drawing from the study's findings, the following conclusions are made. Teachers that instruct at the foundational level possess sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the play-based learning approach. According to the study's findings, the main obstacles preventing teachers from implementing play-based learning in the foundational stage classroom of the Sadar block in Gautam Buddha Nagar include a lack of teaching resources, learning materials, and proper classroom settings. As a result, the Sadar block's foundational level teachers in Gautam Buddha Nagar are knowledgeable about and comprehend the play-based learning methodology.

Nevertheless, they could not be using play-based learning in their classrooms because of a lack of resources, learning materials, and a conducive learning atmosphere. Thus, the study's results supported those of the Alemu study, which demonstrated that instructors' use of an interactive method to teaching children is hindered by a paucity of instructional materials in schools. Lastly, as this study is very preliminary, more research should be conducted to examine play pedagogy at the foundational level.

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