

# THE USE OF PLAY IN PRE-PRIMARY CLASSES IN BANGLADESH

Raton Das<sup>1</sup>, Nasrin Akter<sup>2</sup> and Kamrul Qader Chowdhury<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Upazila Education Officer, Haluaghat, Mymensingh, Bangladesh.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Education Officer, Directorate of Primary Education, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

<sup>3</sup>Education Officer, Directorate of Primary Education, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

## Abstract

*Play has occupied a unique position for children as a means of their learning because it helps them manage their activities and develop some degree of self-reliance and self-regulation (Walsh et al., 2010). Learning through play-based activities develops children's critical thinking skills. Bruce and Meggitt (2002) state, "Through play, children begin to gain a sense of control over what happens to them". Young children like nothing but play. So, children's development cannot be expected without playful learning. Moreover, we want to greatly incorporate play and play-based activities in pre-primary education (PPE).*

*The purpose of the research was to gather a complete understanding of the works of play and to explore the confidence level of early education providers (EEP) who need support to provide playful quality educational experiences.*

*However, it was found in the study that the issue of playful teaching-learning encounters problems for education providers. Their confidence is incompatible with the concept due to some challenges and shortcomings foremost among them, lack of training, lack of support workers and lack of space. To accelerate pre-primary schooling (PPS) with play-based learning, some recommendations are made at the last chapter for pre-school related professionals.*

**Key Words:** Play, Pre-Primary, Use, Classes, Bangladesh.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a prime factor of addressing the challenges of over-all development. Though Bangladesh has obtained some significant achievements in different aspects of education, recently it has put much important on PPS including playful learning (Ranjan et al. 2014). As a field level education officer, I render my services to impart and ensure quality primary education. From my experiences, I earnestly want to emphasise a playful teaching-learning process that young children long for. So, the purpose of my research work is to highlight the uses of play and its importance in early learning. It is a small quantitative study acting as a pilot for a larger study. The aim of my research including the necessity for the study, my interest in the topic, significance of the study, limitations and outline of the dissertation is shortly presented below.

### Necessity of the study

Pre-primary education is the first step on the stair of formal education. If a child completes pre-primary schooling successfully, s/he will enter into primary education with enthusiasm and well-prepared mind. More advancement and improvement of pre-primary education is much more needed for Bangladesh. For this, the Ministry of Education has recently recruited two more teachers for every government primary school (one is an assistant teacher and another is pre-primary teacher) in the hope of "competent, creative, committed and compassionate assistant teacher in the classroom performing their multiple roles and the tasks for effective teaching-learning makes up the main ingredient for quality improvement in primary education" (DPE 2017, p. 30).

But without play and play-based activities, improvement of PPS is not possible. Young children make everything playful whether it is eating, walking, singing and even being suckled. Children and play hang together. So, playful activities as the effective techniques and ways for developing children's learning are to be focused more.

Pablo Neruda, the famous writer, put much importance on children's play by saying, *"A child who does not play is not a child, but the man who does not play has lost forever the child who lived in him and who he will miss terribly."*

Play attracts children to school and so schools become garden and resounded with physical activity. Play helps to ensure attendance as young children come to school in the hope of playing with their friends. Children who attend early years' education have better performance for easy transition to primary school than other who were not in pre-primary education (PPE) and this results in school retention and decreases dropout (Cambridge Education, 2016 and MoPME, 2013). Early years playful activities are very helpful for teachers also as they can easily teach children and enjoy teaching. Young children learn and understand more by sharing things with other playmates. Play teaches them to be considerate and to show brotherhood and moral capacities. Almon (2003); Saracho and Spodeck (1995) state that the necessity of play had been favoured by decades of research study for nineteenth century when Froebel started play and activity institute. Therefore, the study is very essential for putting much importance on play along with other studies about early childhood learning.

### **Aim of the study**

Though Bangladesh has not much experience in pre-primary schooling, good attention is being paid to its early learning and improvement (Ranjan et al., 2014). For this, Bangladesh has commenced PPS in every government primary school (GPS) and newly nationalised primary school (NNPS) and after every five years, it undertakes many more projects called primary education development program (PEDP), PEDP2, PEDP3, PEDP4, ROSC (reaching out of school children) in order to improve and ensure quality elementary education including one-year PPE (Cambridge Education, 2016 and DPE, 2017).

The main aim of the study was to pool information from pre-school teachers who provide support or need to support play and play-based activities for very young children. Another purpose of this study was to identify how the uses of play might be more effective and useful for pre-school classes (PSC) in Bangladesh. And there were additional purposes also that were to gather good experiences and practices and to know limitations and ways of overcoming these limitations with a view to disseminating for the benefits of practitioners, policy makers and pre-school teachers (PPT).

The research question in my study was:

How is play used in pre-primary classes in Bangladesh?

As play is a means of children's learning and developing, my intention was to pursue the perceptions and experiences of professionals providing care and education to very young children who do not like to learn by reading but playing; and to find out if a particular strategy, books, play things, school-based activities, other materials and support from community and others were helpful to practice and learning outcomes.

### **Significance of the study**

The findings reveal that play and play-based activities are used in PPS but not in very properly in accordance with the existing educational curriculum due to some initial constraints like lack of experiences, lack of supports and support workers etc. (Ranjan et al. 2014). The study shows that playthings available at PPS are insufficient though a variety of playful strategies are tried to apply. However, there is also insufficiency in the confidence of teachers supporting children's playful learning. Most of the professionals in this study confirmed that they badly needed training. Lack of training on play and playful structure leave poor impression on their confidence. On the contrary, meaningful and effective training on play helps them render effective teaching and care. The findings of this study also reveal that play and play-based activities create a good relationship between adults and young people, which seems to be key to developing resilience, self-confidence and self-esteem.

The study can play a vital role to the understanding of supports and resources available, provided and expected within and for PPSs. The findings of this study address the issue of low confidence among adults in providing learning with play. This study also addresses some specific challenges which shall be overcome by improving practice as well as whole pre-school policy. And so, there are some suggestions and recommendations through this study to remove these constraints. Lastly, it upholds the necessity for up to date effective and meaningful training for PSTs and for those who are in positions of PPS management.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The priority for a better life is in education and it is a basic need of human beings (Sen, 1999) and a fundamental right for every child (DPE, 2017; UNESCO, 2008). Educational institutions are the cornerstone of over-all development of present era and pre-primary schooling (PPS) is the starting stage of education. Despite having a great deal of help and cooperation from other institutions, a society of equals cannot be created without an educational system (Ray and H. Poonwassie, 2017). So, educational endeavours are important to greatly transform the nature of society, and appropriate endeavours through schools can be conducted to demonstrate new possibilities for the society (ibid). Similarly, PPS is one of such institutions which helps young children develop socially and it is a must for every young child because their access to PPS is the foremost step in building a concrete foundation of a nation (Ranjan et al. 2014). But children do not like reading. They prefer

playing to reading, especially very young children do so. They make everything playful and learn more through play and games. As play is the highest expression of early development (Madray and Catalano, 2010), a child should have play and time of its own. Through play and play-based learning activities, young children improve in the state of emotion, mind, intelligence and society, and play makes learning learnable and possible (Luntley, 2018). Play is one of the best means of inclusion and it teaches children to be considerate and to show brotherhood and moral capacities. In the play-ground or in the playful environment, children's absolute patience and sympathy are noticed when they lose or win. They embrace each other or shake hands forgetting any disparity of cast, creed and colour. Through play, children can rearrange their lives, get their feelings, thoughts, relationships, emotions under their control and can identify their own capability and potentiality in a sense on the reflection of past, continuity of present and rehearsal of future (Einarsdottir et al., 2015 and Bruce and Meggitt, 2002). Children who may be good at drawing in future show eagerness to draw earlier, who may be good at singing show eagerness to sing and who may be a great artist show genius in their childhood. For example, when songs are sung to children, they learn the rhythms of the songs, rhythms of their culture and language of their culture (Bruce and Meggitt, 2002). It is like the proverb that morning shows the day. After all, play is nothing but a part of young children's daily life.

As a teacher educator, I firmly believe that playful techniques are more effective ways for teaching pre-school students. Without playful activities in PSCs, proper and positive interactions can never be expected and even learning cannot be stable. So, I am interested in highlighting play, uses of play, usefulness of play, limitations of play-based teaching-learning and other play related issues in my study.

### **Types of play**

Play of children evolves as they grow and improve. For this, different kinds of play and games are played by them, namely co-operative play, independent play, associative play, onlooker play, parallel play, dramatic play, unoccupied play, symbolic play, guided play (games), physical play, familiarization play, manipulative play, expressive play, role play, pretend play, phantasy play (Pyle and Danniels, 2017; Bruce and Meggitt, 2002). Therefore, a wide range of play are available to children. All these plays develop different kinds of capacities of children and engage children in negotiating between inner and outer worlds, which we can find out in the question of Winnicott (1971) *"If play is neither inside nor outside, where is it?"*

However, types of play differ from country to country within educational curriculum. For example, Japan focuses on three layers of activities combining free play, guided play and teacher-instructed play (Wall, Litjens and Taguma, 2015) whereas Bangladesh focuses two types of play - free play or informal play, and guided play or formal play (NCTB, 2011). Rules of play are different from rules of games and children frame rules in play (Piaget, 1962) though both of them are for joyful learning.

In Bangladeshi pre-primary schooling, there are four corners for free play: imaginary corner; block, touch and moveable corner; water and sand corner; and book and drawing corner where a lot of play materials like earthen jars, earthen pots, masks, bottoms, ropes, paper flowers, clay fruits, clay birds, etc. are available (NCTB, 2011).

There are 22 games for guided play, which are set up from easy play to complex play such as, railcar moving with jhikjhik sound, birds flying etc. (NCTB, 2011). Though rules are must in games (Piaget, 1962), all games are playable and learnable to pre-school students. As play appears in many forms with varied interest and learning, young children take part in all games and play depending on their needs, situation and environment.

### **Importance of play in early education**

There are a lot of benefits of children's play. Through play, a child gathers knowledge and learns to be creative. Play provides a child with the opportunity to discover the world around him/her. When a young child plays with other classmates or same old children, s/he can learn how to mix with them and show sympathy towards them. S/he complies with other's order, advice and request by listening to others with care and patience (Walsh, 2010). Therefore, s/he uses different types of sense and combines them in play, which will help him/her to perform skilfully in adult life. There is an African proverb cited in BRAC (2013 p. 2) that *"To go fast, go alone. To go far, go with others."* Thus, children learn and obtain most of the practical skills by mixing and playing with others.

It is well-known that a child at the lap of its mother tries to play with the moon in the sky and in this way, it starts developing. Through play, a young child learns to love, connect, understand and recognise shapes and colours, sound and pre-school children (PSC) learn co-operation, competition, self-respect, mutual respect and friendship (Elkind, 2008). However, there are several different ways of play-based activities which contribute much to children's learning. Play-based physical exercise is one of them. There are 10 physical exercise prescribed for pre-primary classes in Bangladesh (TGB, 2013). Besides giving merriment and increasing sense of discipline and concentration, these exercises promote children's brain activity, circulate limbs and organ, removes idleness and maintain balance of the body (ibid).

Through different types of play, children learn different things such as how to hold entire things skilfully, take part in, present and represent things by acting and gesturing, share, ask and answer, count, draw, distinguish



between right and wrong, avoid, praise, follow and maintain leading (NCTB, 2013). For example, if there is an arrangement of a local play competition like drawing, PSC confidently take part in it (ibid). Thus, they become curious to attend in another game or program and learn. Khoja (2016) stated that drawing, one of the playful activities, invites children to take part in learning and development, and children thus become more confident and determined to express their views.

However, play taking place in pre-school has a much social interaction and contributes much to language and communication development. Leading is liked by children and they like to do things in which they become enthusiast. Play is a child-led learning process which helps to obtain the best outcomes. While playing independently, a child practices planning and decision-making skills. Play makes children imaginative and creative and it stirs up important physical activity and competencies (Walsh et al., 2017).

Children like to imitate and do following with others that appears to them as play (c). While playing and working with other children and adults including learning caregivers, a child develops self-advocacy skills by resolving and interceding percussion. Pyle and Danniels (2017) stated that young children who play more learn more, be socialized more and be competitive and competent more by working with others. Play is essential for the learning development of each child and its conscious use to promote that development for each young pupil should never be absent in early learning activities (Einarsdottir et al., 2015).

So, pre-schooling cannot be imagined without play. Play renders services in many important purposes. Walsh et al. (2010) stated that every aspect of children's experiences – imagination, emotions, mind and physical activities is engaged by playful activity and it makes them involved in working with others or alone.

### Play in this study

As an Assistant Upazila Education Officer (teacher educator), I have to visit at least 10 government primary schools (GPS) per month with a view to observing classes, supervising teachers and monitoring schools (MoPME, 2009). I am committed to ensure quality primary education including PPE. PPE is the commencement of primary education and it is a term of playful learning. So, I want to put much importance on PPE especially play-based teaching-learning activities as there is a wise saying, "a good beginning is a half-done." Though pre-primary curriculum in Bangladesh is generally ad hoc and based on schools' ability and understanding of the subjects, it is play-based, and text of PPE is designed with play-pattern for 5+ year old children (Ranjan et al., 2014). Walsh et al. (2006) stated "The play-based curriculum (Enriched Curriculum) offered four to five-year old children a higher-quality learning experience than did the more traditional formal curriculum" (cited in Walsh et al., 2011, p. 73). As aforesaid, lessons of the text of PPE is full of different types of play and games, all play and games are learnable and joyful.

For an instance-



Figure 1: Children Playing Railcar (sign reads tooth pur), collected from TGB, (2013)

'Railcar moving with jhikjhik sound' is a game where children stand by one before one and place their both hands on the shoulders of before one. This makes a row like a railcar as illustrated in Figure 1. There are some rail stations namely hair pur, ear pur, eye pur, nose pur, mouth pur, tooth pur, nail pur, dress pur etc which are made of written paper and placed at different places in the class room or out of the classroom. There are some

checking masters who can be adults and children. The first child of the rail starts walking with the sound puuuu. jhik jhik...jhik jhik..... like a rail engine and other children walk and make this sound together by placing their hand at other's shoulders. When the car reaches at hair pur station, the checking masters check hair of all in the car. If the hair of someone is found unclean and unsteady, he or she will be fire off from the rail. After being checked, the rail car again starts moving towards another station and in this way it arrives all stations and every time it will be checked. The game is very easy, interesting and learnable. By playing this game, children learn names of the parts of human body, develop their movement, learn about rail and finally understand the importance of cleanliness.

As development of a curricular would provide an appropriate sense of direction for the development of children to teachers, decision-makers and the parents (MoPME, 2008), play-based curriculum is an appropriate and ideal practice for a pre-school educational setting. However, many consider play as an outdoor activity or as a co-curricular activity. But activity outside classroom is not less important than in classroom. Both of them are very crucial for pre-primary education. Ranjan et al., (2014) stated "There should not be any differentiation between curricular and co-curricular activities which is often the case at upper levels of education" (p. 77). Trained teachers, playful activities, lots of play and reading materials in spacious and decorated classroom, co-curricular activities and learning activities outside classroom all are part and parcel of pre-school education (ibid). As Bangladeshi primary schools have started PPS with play and play-based activities which have become a key context to my study. Therefore, helping pre-school teachers adopt playful structure in teaching-learning activities and taking curriculum into their account is a priority in my own practice and professional context.

### **Early Years Education and Play in Bangladesh Context and Curriculum**

Early years education is considered as an important tool in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) and universal primary education (UPE) and "A central tenet of learning through play is bringing together the different spheres of children's life – home, school and community and wider world" (UNICEF, 2018, p. 11).

Most of the counties of the world now have attention and commitment to early childhood development. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 highlighted 'guaranteeing the rights of young children' to survive, develop and be protected and 192 countries of the world demonstrate its acceptance (Ranjan et al., 2014). A massive expansion of early childhood education took place during next several years and the major rationale for this education has globally been in its ability for creating 'a concrete foundation' to attain a better achievement in future (ibid). Play-based teaching-learning activities and playful structures for their elementary education have become crucial as there is no suitable alternative way to play in this level and most of the nations have realised how effective and possible way of children's learning is play. Martlew et al. (2011) stated that growing interest of Scotland in a more play-based pedagogy has commonly been described as children's active learning, and the content knowledge of children across the curriculum and competences, social skills and dispositions to learn is developed by play.

Playful strategy is undoubtedly an appropriate practice for pre-primary classes in Bangladesh as different types of positive and constructive practices of play have been catenated in the strategy to promote children's involvement in learning and wellbeing (MoPME, 2008). In June 2011, MoPME developed a competency-based national pre-primary curriculum and set competencies in a way that these are activity oriented, creativity enticing, developmentally appropriate, inquiry and problem solving based, innovative and imagination idea encouraging (Aktar, 2013). The core principles of curriculum development for PPE are: children as active learners, child centeredness, family/community engagement, school as responsive social institute, local culture, tradition and heritage-based learning environment, immediate environment (family environment, social environment, natural and physical environment where children grow up), environment friendliness, values and inclusiveness (NCTB, 2011).

The process of developing pre-primary curriculum for every primary school is a model as well as a joint venture for public-private partnership of government organization (GO) and non-government organization (NGO) collaboration. Aktar (2013, np) states "Almost all of the curricula developed and practiced by different GO and NGOs in Bangladesh are reviewed along with curricula of 11 other countries from South Asia, East Asia, Africa, Europe and America before developing pre-primary curriculum."

Play, playful structure, observation, exploration and classroom inside and outside activities are specified for teaching learning process of pre-schooling in the national PPE curriculum (DPE, 2012). It follows a play-based curriculum which offers age appropriate learning activities for young learners (Spier et al., 2018). The learning provider facilitates reciting, rhymes, singing, storytelling, indoor and outdoor play, free play and guided play and learning activities with the young learners (ibid).

### **Materials for PPS**

Teaching-learning materials (TLM) and supplementary reading materials (SRM) used as play material play a vital role in assisting EEP to transfer the subject-matter to the young learners (Hirst et al., 2011 and Karaka, 2007). Generally, two types of play materials are used in PPS- indoor play material and outdoor play materials consisting in a varied interest of play materials: creative art play material like drawing; language play materials

like story books; mathematics playing materials like solid blocks; music playing materials like drums; and science play materials like magnifying glass, (KIE, 2008) which all make young children able to have a decision jointly and a sense of controlling their temperament belonging to them (Kamen, 2005).

### **Classrooms and setting arrangements for PPS**

There is no separate classroom for PPS in GPS, NNPS and NGPS but the classroom used for PPS has other uses e.g. it is also used for class three/four or five and adjacent to class one and two. But PPS classroom should be friendly and playful located in a place where noise and sound cannot affect, and activities of teaching and learning can take place in the condition of peaceful and undisturbed atmosphere (Ranjan et al., 2014). The normal or minimum classroom size for 30 young pupils is 56 square metres and the standard size is between 56 and 63 square metres but primary class size especially pre-primary class size in Bangladesh is 27-37 square metre (MoPME, 2013). However, there are adequate number of windows and ventilators in all the classrooms, through which enough air and sunlight can pass (Ranjan et al., 2014). The classrooms in GPS are decorated with pictures, posters and artworks but not up to expectation (ibid) though government pay five thousand takas per year only for pre-primary classrooms (MoPME, 2015). NNPS and NGPS's classrooms are hardly decorated and classroom facilities are inadequate (Ranjan et al., 2014).

There are two types of sitting arrangements- sitting on benches and sitting on floor but young children due to their physical growth, feel ease to sit on floor (ibid). GPS's young learners sit on floor, but the learners of other PPS hardly have this scope as they use benches (ibid).

### **Outdoor Play for PPS**

As aforesaid outdoor play is as important as indoor play. For outdoor play there needs space for learners to run, jump, hide and seek, observe, climb etc and the space may be park, garden, seashore, riverbank, open field, greenwood, etc. (Bruce and Meggitt, 2002). Play in a green natural atmosphere promotes children's higher-level attention along with wellbeing as they are exposed to natural elements like open air, sunlight and other green things that contribute to children's bones development, strengthen brain work and boisterous movements and help to strongly perform physical activity (Bento and Dias, 2017).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Approach and Design**

The approach of quantitative and qualitative questionnaire appeared.

The researcher had set seven closed questions for quick data collection. Among them, first two of the questions were on teachers' experiences about playful structure and activities, next two were on teachers' views on benefit of play, third two were on getting support for teaching playful structure and last one was on challenges of play-based activities. The following question along with answers is one of examples of closed questions:

*“What resources do you have in your setting for play? (tick as many as you have and apply)  
 (a) building sets (b) physical things like horse-riding (c) musical instruments like piano  
 (d) role play like using stethoscope e) alphabet and number-based toys (f) pictures”*

To know the challenges and way out of these challenges of and for play, the researcher had set those open-ended questions. Following question is an example of that:

*“How can you overcome the challenges which you face in teaching play-based activities?”*

The questionnaire of qualitative research enabled participants to disclose their attitudes, express their belief, values and past behaviours, and explain activities that assisted the researchers to know insights, and the questionnaire of quantitative research supported the researchers to be acquainted with the general patterns (Dowson, 2009, Menter et al., 2011 and Newby, 2014). Both approaches of questionnaire were used in this study though using questionnaire as a data tool has drawbacks.

### **Data collection tool**

While considering methodology to this study, the quantitative approach with a mixture of closed and open-ended question seemed to be the best choice for the researcher. The data was gathered through e-mail. The data collection tool of this study was questionnaire and we used this tool as it was flexible, rapid and short time process (Menter et al., 2011).

We used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions to consider the “multiplicity of meanings, representations and practices” (Smith 2001: 24) of play in pre-school education.

### **Sample**

The group we intended to research was early education providers (EEP). Therefore, EEP was sample and we used a purposive sample (Cohen et al. 2013) working at Phulpur Upazila under Mymensingh district in Bangladesh. A remainder about survey email was firstly sent to them with the link. Then after 10 days, the



participants were remaindered through the final email. Although the survey had been e-mailed to one hundred potential EEP, thirty-one of professionals participated and completed the survey.

### Data Analysis

In the questionnaire we set seven closed questions and we analysed them using statistical description (ibid). we also set three open-ended questions which were analysed thematically and to be familiarised with that data of these question and to be well-instructed, we had gone through the answer repeatedly (ibid). we found out and marked the main points related to our topic of the study, that was our codes and by utilising that codes in all transcripts, we affixed other new codes for new points making together into themes (Creswell, 2015 and Menter et al. 2011). The data was also indexed and charted after the themes had been identified (Pope et al. 2000).

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Materials/resources used in pre-school classes

The question, “What resources do you have in your setting for play?” was set based on teachers’ experiences about SRM and TLM used for play and play based activities. Responses are shown in the following table.

**Table 1. Available resources for play in pre- school**

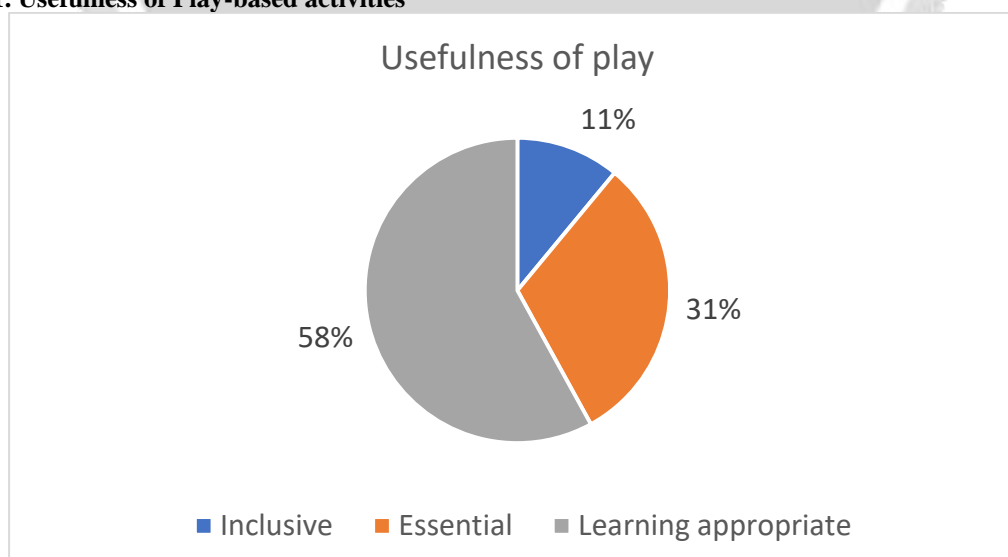
Items	Frequencies	Percentage
Building sets	8	14
Physical things like horse riding	6	10
Musical instruments like piano	4	7
Role play like using stethoscope	2	3
Alphabet and number-based toys	25	42
Pictures	14	24

The above table shows that most of the schools had alphabet and number-based toys that are frequently used as play items and every pre-school had one or more of mentioned 6 items of materials/resources. The highest number of schools had alphabet and number-based toys (42%) and the lowest proportion had role play things (3%). Of the other materials, pictures were used in 24% of the pre-schools, building sets in 14%, physical things in 10% and musical instruments in 7% of the schools. This result indicates that most of the pre-school teachers use different items of instruments and toys for play.

#### Usefulness of play and play-based activities

Through the question “How are play-based activities?” the respondents were asked to tick the answer to express their opinion about play on their own teaching experiences. The purpose was to seek pre-school teachers’ thinking and attitudes towards play in consisting curriculum. However, most of the respondents considered play and play-based activities as the medium of inclusive education.

**Figure 1. Usefulness of Play-based activities**



The above figure shows that majority of responses are in favour of play as it fascinates children of all class family. When specifically wanted to know about how play and play-based activities were, most of the respondents (58%) said that these were inclusive, 31% were in essentiality and 11% were in learning appropriateness.

### Beneficiaries of play

Through the question “Who is/are the beneficiary/s of playful learning?” it was wanted to know about the stakeholders whom play-based activities benefit. The aim was to hunt after pre-school teachers’ view on benefit and beneficiary of play.

**Table 2. Beneficiaries of play**

Beneficiaries	Frequencies	Percentage
Students	1	3
Teachers	0	0
Community	3	10
Both students, teachers & community	27	87

The table presents that beneficiaries of playful learning are not less. Twenty-seven respondents (87%) expressed their views that both students, teachers and community benefited from playful learning activities. Three respondents (10%) said that only community were beneficiaries and one respondent (3%) was in favour of students only. No responses came from the respondents that only teachers benefitted from play.

### Benefits of play and playful activities

To know the teachers’ view about in which way children get benefit from playful learning, through the question “How do young children benefit from play?” According to the responses, findings are depicted in the below figure.

**Figure 2. Benefits of play**

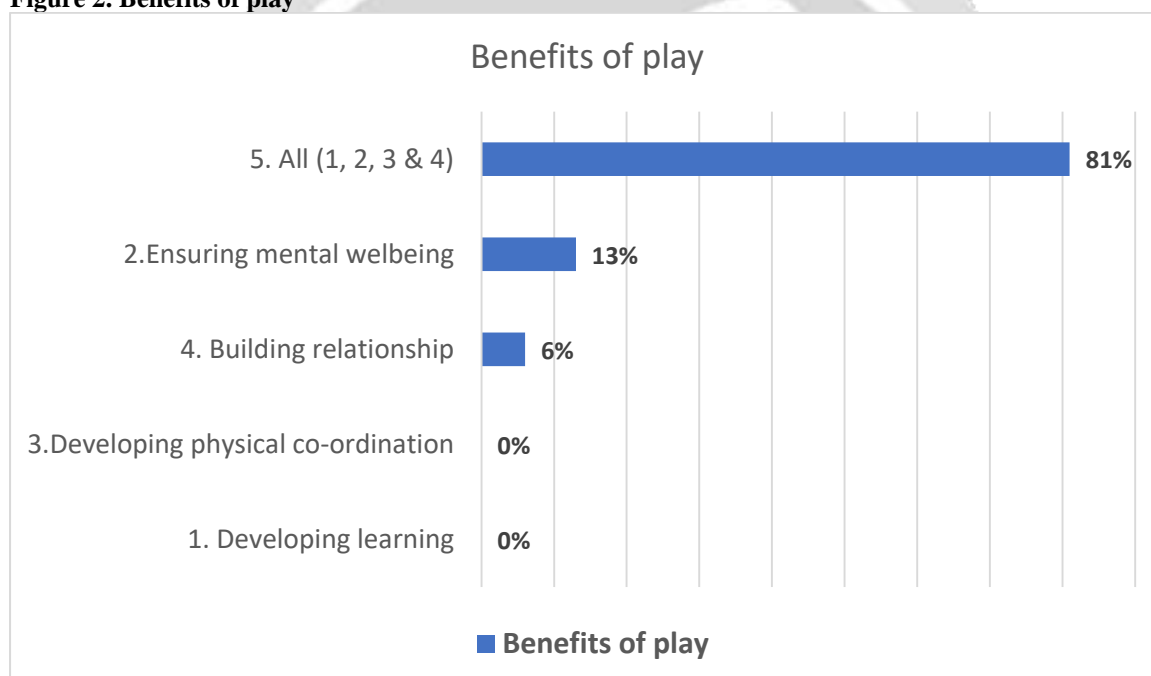
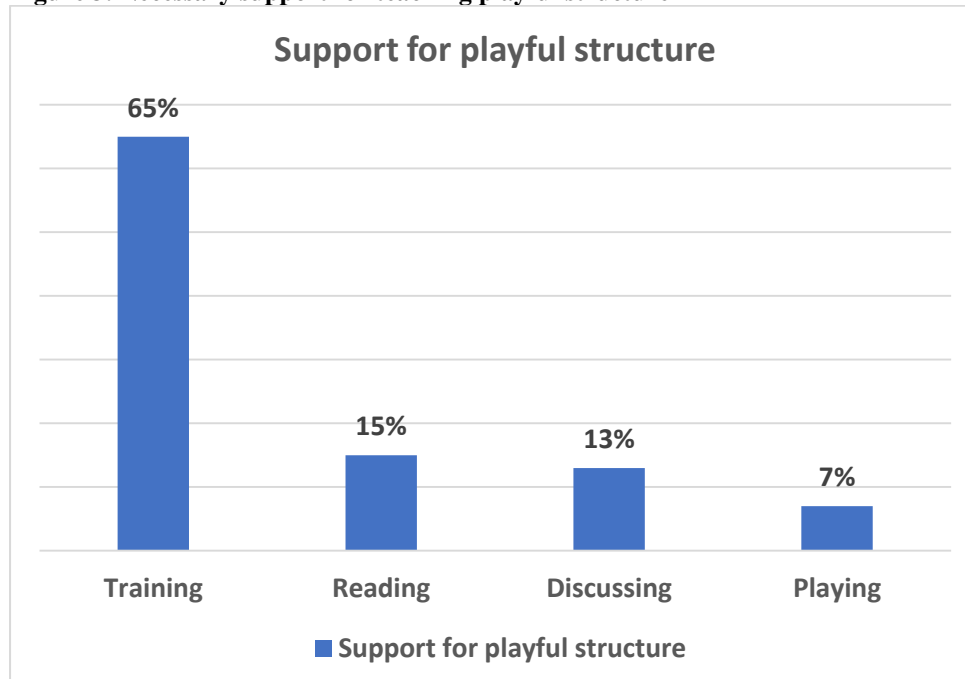


Figure 2 presents that there are a lot of benefits of play. Through play and play based activities young children acquire some special knowledge that help them become skilled in developing quality. Twenty-five respondents (81%) gave their consent that play built positive relationship among children and adults children, children and adults, developed physical co-ordination and learning, and ensured mental health wellbeing. Three respondents (13%) thought that play helped young children not only to learn but also to ensure their mental wellbeing, and two respondents (6%) were in favour of building relationship. No responses supported that play only developed learning and physical co-ordination.

### Necessary support for teaching playful structure

Through the question- “What is the most important way to develop professionally in teaching playful structure?” participants were asked what types of supports they needed for professional development. Findings are presented below in accordance with the responses.



**Figure 3. Necessary support for teaching playful structure**

As a teacher of modern era, s/he must be up to date of present happenings in teaching and will be skilled and perfect for teaching. But a teacher cannot be perfect with his own alone efforts and for this, s/he needs training, reading text and articles, discussing with others about techniques of play and playthings. A young child's learnings and development depend on him/her. So, s/he needs different kinds of supports and efforts. When the respondents were asked how they could professionally develop, two-third of them (65%) argued for training. Reading was supported by 15% respondents, discussion by 13% and playing by 7% of the respondents.

#### Support providers

Supports are something that can make or break one's career. So, to build a good career as a skilled pre-school teacher, and teach students effectively, s/he is badly in need of supports from head teacher, community, government, students and higher authority. Responses from the question- "Who support you most in developing classroom environment?" are exhibited in the following figure.

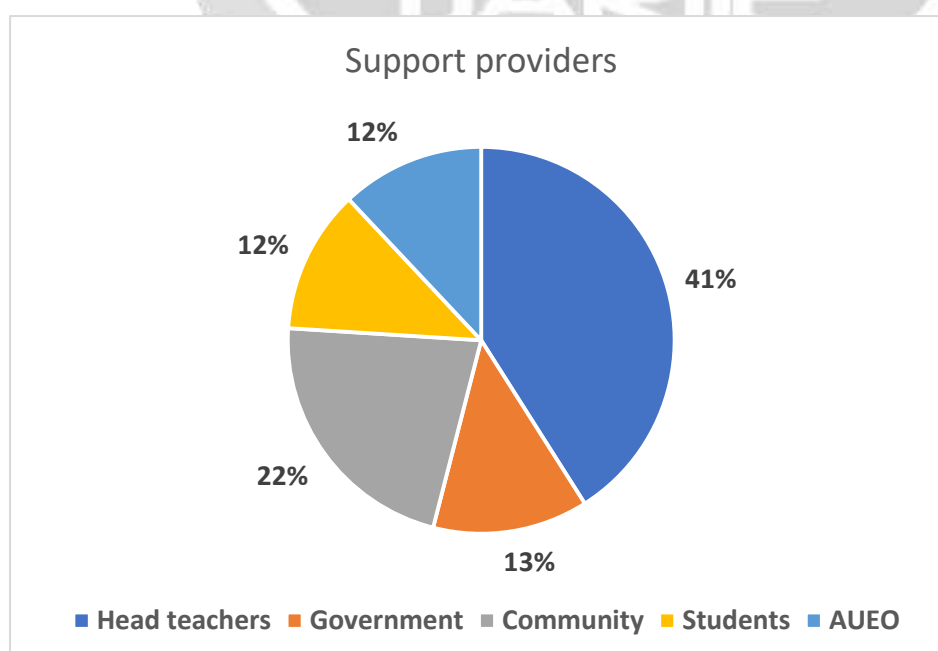
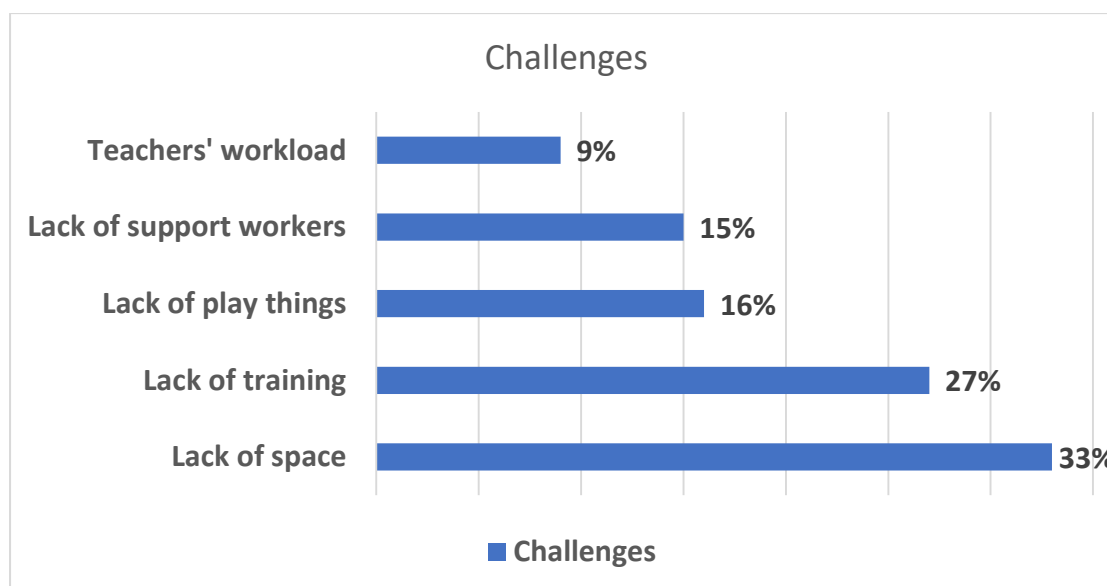
**Figure 4. Support providers**

Figure 4 presents that different kinds of people provide support to a pre-school teacher. When specifically asked regarding the most support providers in developing classroom environment, 40% of the respondents were in favour of support from head teachers, support from community was in 22%, support from government was in 13%, support from students and AUEO was in both 12% (figure 4) This result shows that pre-primary teachers mostly get support from head teachers.

### Challenges

Teaching is a noble profession, but it has always some challenges too. Pre-school teachers also cannot go without it, rather they have to face multiple challenges in teaching playful structure. Through the question “What challenges of teaching playful activities do you face in your setting?” it was wanted to identify challenges of play and find out the way of overcoming them. Responses are shown in the following figure.

**Figure 5 Challenges of teaching playful activities**



Findings of the figure 5 demonstrates that teaching playful structure is not an easy task. Its goal is hard to achieve. Here, we found that 33% respondents faced the scarcity of space for play, 27% for lack of training, 16% for lack of playthings, 15% for lack of support workers and 9% for their workload.

### The most common challenge

Through the responses of the previous question, it is found that there are a few challenges which must be taken into an account to overcome. The researcher wanted to know through the question- “What is the most common challenge in your educational setting?” The responses are categorised into five shown in the following table.

**Table 3. Most common challenge of teaching playful activities**

Challenges	Frequencies	Percentage
Lack of space	18	58
Lack of training	2	7
Lack of support workers	1	3
Teachers' workload	4	13
Lack of play things	6	19

The purpose of the question was to find out the main challenge of playful activities and focus on some appropriate solutions. The highest number of responses (58%) were in favour of lack of space which was the most common challenge in implementing playful activities. The responses showed that lack of play things was marked by the second highest (19%) of the respondents, teachers' workload was in 13%, lack of training was in 7% and lack of support worker was in least (3%).

### Solutions to challenges

Challenges in the way of teaching-learning through play must be overcome to make a learning appropriate environment. To find out the probable solutions and valuable opinions from the experienced respondents regarding challenges, the researcher set the question- “How can you overcome the challenges of play and playful activities?” Respondents mentioned a few numbers of ways which have been categorised into six enablers shown in the figure below.

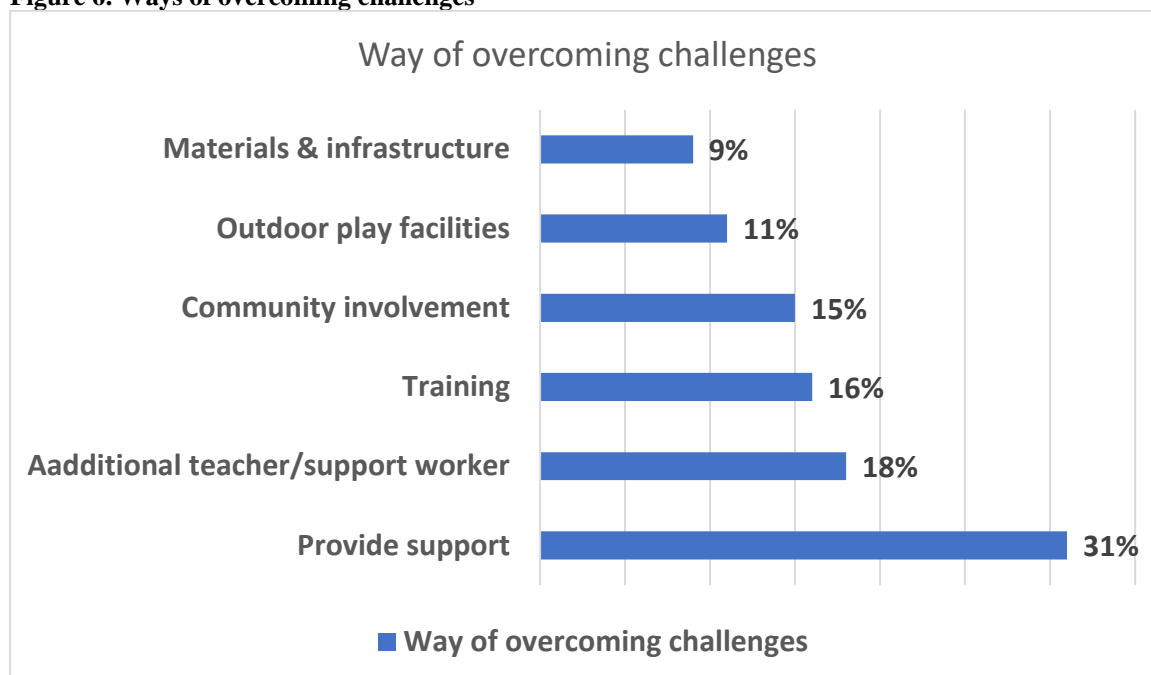
**Figure 6. Ways of overcoming challenges**

Figure 6 exhibits that the respondents illustrated some solutions which are important to overcome the mentioned challenges. 31% of the respondents said that supports from every stakeholder like students, parents, teachers, community etc. might be helpful to outdo each of the challenges. The second highest respondents (18%) stated that additional teachers or support workers were important. 16% of the respondents thought that adequate training could be very useful to overcome challenge. 15% of responses were in support of community involvement and 11% were in favour of outdoor facilities like play grounds, gardens, park play things etc. Again, 9% of the respondents asked for materials and infrastructure including play things, well-furnished classroom and playful environment so that they could confront the challenges.

### Supports expected by PPT to ensure playful activities

Some challenges like lack of SRM, TLM can be overcome by the PPT themselves or with the help of others e. g. students can do clay dolls making, paper letter making. The responses from “What support would you like to help you overcome the challenges you face?” are categorised into six supports which are displayed in the following table.

**Table 4. Prospective supports for ensuring playful activities**

Item of support	Frequencies	Percentage
Play materials	10	25
Decorated classroom	6	15
Playground facilities	4	10
Support for outdoor activities	3	8
Training and professional development	9	23
Support from community	8	20

The above table focuses on some important requirements for the PPT with what they can render teaching effectively. They asked for some different types of supports which are classified into six terms. Among all these supports, play materials was on the highest demand (25%) meaning that majority of schools need attractive and age appropriate safe play materials. 23% respondents longed for adequate subject related training through which they could develop professionally and 20% of the respondents expected supports like additional teachers, part-time teachers, support workers and cooperation from community. Well-furnished, colourful and standard sized classrooms were expected by 15% of the respondents. Playground facilities like swing materials, seating materials etc. were asked for by 10% of the respondents, and 8% of them needed supports for outdoor facilities like safe playful learning environment, ways of movement, field ride, jump and run etc.

However, details will be illuminated in the discussion chapter.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Available resources/materials for play in pre-primary schools

Young pupils do not require costly props or items for play and so, teachers should plan and supply props for children, which help them (c) play deeply (Bruce and Meggitt, 2002). Information from collected data on the use of materials in PPC has been categorised into the following six groups: building set; physical things; musical instruments; role play things; alphabet and number-based toys; and pictures. Building set included puzzle game, making robot, making toy train, making pyramid etc.; physical things included cock horse riding, merry-go-round, see-saw, cradle rocking etc.; musical instruments included piano, harmonica, etc.; role play things included stethoscope, acting dress etc.; alphabet and number-based toys included letter card made of hard paper, plastic and wood, number card indicating number of birds, fruits etc.; and pictures included different types of pictures of fishes, cars, birds, animals etc. These play materials are appropriate for both indoor and outdoor play which enhance children spirit of group work and make their learning real. This result concurs with the previous literature that the learning and care provider facilitates indoor and outdoor play, free play and guided play by using instruments and materials with the young learners for achievement of the best outcomes (Spier et al., 2018).

### Usefulness of play-based activities

A common phenomenon of play is that it fascinates every child, even adults also. This result indicates that playful activities draw the attention of every child regardless cast, creed, colour and physically challenged towards schools, that foster learning and development. Previous literature suggests that improvement of learning development of each individual child must always be present in PPS activities (Einarsdottir et al. 2015). Play-based activities assist young learners to do advanced things which can be managed by them in their real life (Vygotsky, 1978)

### Beneficiaries of play

In the light of responses (table 2) it can be said that students, teachers and community get benefit from play as all of them are stakeholders of education, especially primary and pre-primary education. As play makes children active learners and they develop most through play, schools fulfil their target with play-based activities and parents get maximum potentials from their children. This finding is supported by Pyle and Daniel's (2017) findings as playing more of formal and informal play, children must be more socialized, competitive and competent and they can serve for themselves and for the nation.

### Benefits of play

Play suggests the pathways to explore possible identities and it is a way of staying fit by blowing steam off (Elkind, 2008). The results (figure 2) focus that play has multiple benefits for early years' education: developing learning; ensuring mental health and wellbeing; developing intelligence and physical co-ordination; building relationship with adults and making learning accessible are significant. This finding concurs with the findings of Luntley (2018) where the author states that play help young children to be developed in mind, emotional activities, and it makes learning learnable and possible.

### Necessary support for teaching playful structure

To teach playful structure effectively in PPC, teachers need different kinds of supports. The most important component in providing support to the PPT is training which creates skilled and tactful persons. Though the teachers get support from other sources such as, reading related books, articles, discussing with colleagues and seniors, observing class of experienced teachers and online sources etc., a great number of fruitful techniques are taught to teachers in training. It can be said that there is no alternative to training in professional development. However, the result of figure 3 is similar with the findings of Osgood et. al (2017) where they stated that training for pre-school teachers offers a course content and it provides support for playful teaching activities, by which pre-school teachers can make themselves confident.

### Support providers

Success of a pre-school mostly depends on pre-education provider and it is next to the head teacher because pre-primary is one out of the six classes in a Bangladeshi primary school. There is a wise saying that as is the head teacher, so is the school. So, without the supports from a head teacher, a beautiful and effective pre-school environment can hardly be expected though there are several sources to provide supports to pre-school teacher. The previous research shows that head teachers provide support to early years' teachers about play based activities as for early years' foundation (Roberts- Holmes, 2012). Besides this, community also helps a PPT by providing funds and materials though these are not enough. Government also helps by providing five thousand takas only for pre-primary classes per year and arrange different kinds of training for PPT (MoPME, 2015). Students also provide resources and AUEO helps pre-school teachers by sharing and showing techniques and class demonstration.

### **Expected support for ensuring playful activities**

The respondent teachers claimed that they badly needed supports for outdoor play like visiting seashore, children park etc. Besides this, they expected furnished and colourful classroom and modern and attractive play materials to ensure play and play-based activities. This finding concurs with the findings of Aktar (2013) that many primary schools including pre-schools need an age appropriate curriculum, adequate teaching-learning materials, playful activities and joyful teaching-learning environment to ensure quality pre-primary education.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

#### **Recommendation 1**

Adequate play materials should be ensured in every pre-school as these are used to enhance and improve children's holistic development (KIE, 2008). In the light of the findings, there lacks play materials in some pre-schools. So, attempts should be taken to purchase, collect, install and make the best use of play materials as every GPS in Bangladesh is funded by the government with five thousand takas for pre-primary classes and forty thousand takas for school level improvement plan (SLIP) per year and is donated by the community with money or resources (MoPME, 2015). However, more funds and play materials are expected to allocate by the education planners, the policy makers and the authorities. And head teachers should ensure a working plan with play materials that confirms EEP with balanced time table of play and academic activities.

#### **Recommendation 2**

Young children learn nothing without play. So, they should be given time and taught in an effective and playful way that makes a sense to them (Bruce and Meggitt, 2002) and EEP must build relationship with children and act as friends. They(e) should not to be rude and shout at the children so that they (c) can express their feelings without scaring. They can play with children and conduct free play and guided play properly. Besides this, training on playful techniques should be given to PPE and they should cordially receive this training with a view to imparting playful education.

#### **Recommendation 3**

Being up to date in teaching profession is a must for providing expected and standard education. For this EEP should read latest articles, journals, books, text books and e-books related to play-based learning. They should also discuss teaching-learning techniques with colleagues.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Quality teaching increases learning effectiveness and it is the most important factor of school affecting children learning (Anderson and Mundy, 2014). So, persons having experiences on play, reading and mathematics should be engaged or recruited as PPT because play, mathematics and reading are the basic ingredients that learners need from early life and apply successfully throughout their practical lives (Bakken et al., 2017).

### **CONCLUSION**

The study lacks more research in the effectiveness of the whole playful strategies in pre-primary education due to some important information unavailable as the field of study is dominated by research from the different parts of the world. It was difficult to find studies about benefits of play in Bangladeshi pre-primary schools during the literature search for this dissertation. If possible, the research field would benefit from Bangladeshi perspectives. Moreover, findings could be strengthened if further data were collected by other researchers by using a different design, e.g. with qualitative method with wider group of stakeholders. If my sample size was larger and more varied, it would be beneficial with more validity and reliability and it could compare the respondents and participants with different character, age, background and teaching experience. Further researches in a different way in which PPTs' service experiences and more open-ended questions regarding play and its use are corroborated would be much beneficial.

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