Abstract

Social Learning & Outdoor Play

It is widely known within the field of Early Childhood Education that play lays a foundation for life-long learning in a child’s life. The partnerships between a parent and educator are crucial for the holistic development of a child. This study explored immigrant parents’ perceptions of play-based learning and analyzed their relationships with their child’s educators. This qualitative study used a narrative design approach and collected data through semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which took place with immigrant parents. The data revealed that the participants do not understand the full benefits of play-based learning. Four major themes emerged from the findings: social learning & outdoor play, academic success, restricted learning, and dissatisfied relationships with educators. The data also conveyed that some of the participants are not satisfied with the relationship they have with their child’s educator, suggesting that their voices are not being heard. Through these findings, the researchers hope this study can assist early childhood educators to effectively inform immigrant families about the importance of play-based learning and to build strong partnerships with immigrant families that encourage and respect their voices within the field of Early Childhood Education.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology, more specifically a narrative design was used as it is open-ended and allows the participants to provide more detailed information.

Instrument

The researcher used face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 5 participants to collect data. The interviews were between 30-45 minutes in length and consisted of 11 questions designed to answer the research question and one sub-question. During the interviews, an interview protocol was used and interviews were audio-recorded for transcription purposes only.

Procedural

Phase 1: Recruitment

Step 1: The researcher contacted potential participants who fit the requirements from the researcher’s acquaintance list via email.

Step 2: Participants who agreed to join the research study were given an Invitation Letter and Consent Form and Sound Recording Consent Form.

Phase 2: Data Collection

Step 1: The researcher met with each participant at the agreed-upon location, day, and time.

Step 2: The researcher had two copies of the Invitation Letter and Consent Form. Once the participant had reviewed and signed the letter, the researcher kept one signed copy and gave one copy to the participant to keep. The same procedure was done with the Sound Recording Consent Form.

Step 3: The interview took place using the interview protocol.

Step 4: Participants were contacted once the interviews were transcribed for member checking.

Phase 3: Data Analysis

Step 1: Following member checking, each transcript was read and re-read. The researcher conducted a line-by-line analysis, first creating codes by highlighting 2-3 word sections of text. Next, codes were combined to create themes that emerged from the data.

Step 2: The researcher triangulated the findings.

Participants

• Sampling Strategy: Homogeneous Sampling

• Sampling: Purposeful Sampling

• Participants: Immigrant Parents, who have immigrated to Canada within the past 10 years and who have had at least one child attend (or is currently attending) a childcare centre or full-day kindergarten within Ontario. All participants were members of the Sikh community (the Sikh community makes up a large part of the immigrant population from India as Sikhs is the 5th largest religion in the world).

• Sampling Size: 5 participants

Results and Discussion

The results in this research study were quite similar to what was reflected in the literature. Overall, the participants shared opinions and demonstrated that they did somewhat understand the basics of play-based learning, however, there is a lack of understanding the full benefits of play-based learning and the important foundation it lays in a child’s life. Furthermore, another important factor in this study was examining the relationship participants had with their child’s educators; it was seen that 3 of the 5 participants (60%) were not satisfied with the relationship they have with their child’s current educators. The following pie graph demonstrates how the participants felt regarding this relationship and the contact they had with the educators.

Limitations

Another important finding was seen when participants were asked if they think the terms play and learning are related; 4 of 5 participants (80%) described the relationship between play and learning with the following words; shapes, colors, numbers, alphabet, and puzzles.