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CONSCIENTIOUS APPROACH IN ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

The study brought out in the open misconceptions about the Kindergarten Education Program (KEP) in terms of instruction and assessment. This is in the interest of contributing to the general effort to push the KEP in the direction it is mandated to go.

The descriptive survey method was employed in the study involving 24 kindergarten teachers, 44 grade one teachers, and 16 elementary school heads in public elementary schools in Plaridel District under Schools Division of Bulacan.

The researcher sought out elementary school heads and grade one teachers to determine their expectations on the learning competencies that kindergarten pupils are supposed to acquire.

The study revealed that for elementary school heads and grade one teachers, the learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in terms of phonological awareness was “*less than expected.*” However, kindergarten pupils’ learning competencies in terms of alphabet knowledge “*matched expectation*” of elementary school heads and grade one teachers.

Furthermore, the study identified common misconceptions held by elementary school heads and grade one teachers about KEP in terms of instruction particularly play-based teaching

strategy and assessment. They erroneously believe that kindergarten pupils should spend less time in play and more time in academics in preparation for formal school system; that kindergarten pupils learn more through teacher- directed strategy than play- based teaching strategy; that school should be a place for learning because there is plenty of time for play at home; that test scores should be used to make significant decisions about kindergarten pupils' education (e.g., promotion, retention, and placement in gifted or special education classes); and that the higher the test scores of kindergarten pupils, the more intelligent they are. All these notions are untrue.

The study came up with proposed ways to clarify and address these misconceptions through a conscientious approach. These are the following: (1) engage elementary school heads and grade one teachers in discussion of role of play in kindergarten so that they can advocate play-based activities, (2) make grade one teachers and school heads aware about the content of Standards and Competencies for Five-Year-Old Filipino Children, (3) create a national movement for play in school and communities, (4) conduct more In-Service Training (INSET) about assessment of young children, and (5) disseminate properly the information about assessment in kindergarten not only to kindergarten teachers but also to elementary school heads, grade one teachers, and colleagues.

Based on the above findings, some implications were identified and recommendations were made for further research and improvement.

Keywords: kindergarten, learning competencies, phonological awareness, play-based teaching, assessment

Introduction

Prior to the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, kindergarten was just an option exercised by parents for their preschool kids. But kindergarten became mandatory in 2012 with the passage of Kindergarten Education Act, Republic Act (RA) 10157 entitled "An Act Institutionalizing the Kindergarten Education into the Basic Education System and Appropriating Funds Therefor." The law made it mandatory and compulsory to offer kindergarten to all five-year old Filipino children.

The Kindergarten Education Act effectively promotes physical, social, cognitive, emotional skills stimulation and values formation in children at their level to sufficiently prepare them for grade one. During the kindergarten age, children are known to make "considerable cognitive development," thus making kindergarten education a vital stage in their academic and intellectual development. This is recognized by Section 2 of RA 10157. Provision for Kindergarten Education is implied in the 1987 Philippine Constitution which holds that the state

shall give priority to education and that the state shall take appropriate steps to guarantee that education is accessible to all.

The Kindergarten Education Program (KEP) seeks to achieve the standards and competencies expected of five-year old children, taking into account their diverse backgrounds, prior knowledge and experiences, skills, attitudes, personal traits, and interest. Wherefore, through play-based activities, kindergarten pupils naturally acquire the competencies to develop holistically and gradually become literate. In addition, play-based activities lead kindergarten pupils to become willing risk takers and ready to tackle formal school work.

As a matter of fact, the Department of Education (DepEd) developed a document to be used by kindergarten teachers- the Standards and Competencies for Five-Year-Old Filipino Children also known as the K to 12 Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (KCG). This document provides kindergarten teachers with information on necessary readiness skills of five- year- old Filipino children in seven developmental domains to traverse successfully from kindergarten to grade one. The guidelines were developmentally appropriate, that is, age appropriate, individually appropriate and socio- culturally appropriate.

The seven developmental domains listed in KCG are socio-emotional development, values development, physical health and motor development, aesthetic/ creative development, mathematics, understanding of the physical and natural environment, and language, literacy, and communication. The guidelines were developed by a committee of DepEd professionals, specialists, experts, practitioners, and advocates. The KCG is the basis for the daily activities spelled out in the Teacher's Guide (TG) formerly known as National Kindergarten Curriculum Guide or the Forty-Week Curriculum. TG contains suggested play- and theme- based activities for different blocks of time per day within a week in the span of 40 weeks.

But if we look closely at what is really going on, all is not that well with the kindergarten system today. It is because kindergarten teachers feel pressured to push pupils to master skills that they are not yet ready for. Kindergarten teachers unduly focus on teaching and testing for literacy and other academic skills and because of this, kindergarten pupils are similarly pressured, which is not what the system is all about.

For some reason, there is an underlying assumption in public elementary schools that children must be taught reading as early as kindergarten to help them become good readers in the long run. This assumption leads many kindergarten teachers to resort to inappropriate didactic methods combined with frequent testing. However, no significant research claims long-term gains from learning to read in kindergarten (Almon, 2013). Still, elementary school heads and grade one teachers expect kindergarten pupils to achieve academic goals best suited to grade one pupils such as becoming early readers who read texts with purpose and understanding. This

unrealistic expectation from kindergarten pupils leads to instruction and assessment activities which are unfit for them.

DepEd promotes “Every Child A Reader Program” (ECARP) that aims to enable every Filipino child to communicate proficiently both in English and Filipino through effective reading instruction. Somehow, the ECARP effects are expected to trickle down to kindergarten. As a result playtime in kindergarten is diminished as children prepare to do well in reading.

Whether reduced play activities benefit the child is not clear. What is clear that the benefits of play extend to every aspect and time in a child’s life- physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially. DepEd recognizes the value of play through DepEd Order 47 series 2016 which holds that play is necessary to build children’s confidence, develop skills in problem solving and cooperative learning that prepare them for lifelong learning. Furthermore, play gives children opportunities to learn about and understand their world and practice newly acquired skills. But despite the benefits derived from play, children today receive less support for play because of increased attention to academics. Kindergarten teachers are thus challenged to include play-based learning in their daily activities.

Classroom assessment is the process of identifying, gathering, organizing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative information about what learners know and can do. Assessment being an integral part to the learning and teaching process, the DepEd issued Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program through DO 8, s. 2015 providing the basic direction on how assessment in public elementary and secondary schools should be conducted. Accordingly, the use of qualitative and non-numerical grading and measuring the performance of kindergarten pupils and tracking their expected learning outcome is prescribed.

Similarly, authentic assessment to measure the child’s abilities and skills that is based on the KCG (e.g., anecdotal records, checklists and portfolio) is required. This leads to problems and unintended shortcomings in everyday classroom assessment practice in Kindergarten. Until now, we see children in silence bewildered and seemingly lost with paper and pencil during assessment. The children’s worth is unfairly determined by their test scores. This causes kindergarten teachers to draw inaccurate conclusions about children’s actual ability, which unfortunately can limit the children’s future opportunities.

This study was conceived to bring to light the misconceptions about KEP in terms of instruction particularly play-based teaching strategy and assessment. Because as Gooding and Metz (2011) posited, the longer a misconception remains unchallenged, the more likely it is to become entrenched and fossilized in the system. When misconceptions are unknowingly created and reinforced by lack of action, when misconceptions are not addressed, clarified and corrected,

they will give rise to other mistaken notions or misguided policies hence continuing the vicious cycle.

This study was conducted primarily to call public attention to the misconceptions about the KEP and to spur collective action to address them and prevent possible damage to children. The goal of this study was to build fact-based beliefs and practices about instruction particularly play-based teaching strategy and assessment in the context of the KEP being implemented nationwide.

Statement of the Problem

The general problem of the study is: How could the misconceptions on the Kindergarten Education Program be transformed into positive and constructive concepts?

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following:

1. What are the expectations of elementary school heads and grade one teachers regarding learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge?
2. What are the misconceptions about the Kindergarten Education Program in terms of:
 - 2.1. play- based teaching strategy; and
 - 2.2. assessment?
3. What is the conscientious approach of kindergarten teachers in addressing the misconceptions about Kindergarten Education Program?
4. What are the implications of the findings of this study on the Kindergarten Education Program?

Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey method of research. Best (1997), emphasized that “descriptive research describes what is.” It involves the description, recording, analysis and interpretation of conditions that now exist. It involves some type of comparison and contrast and may attempt to discover relationships between existing non-manipulative variables.

According to Good (1966), the purposes of descriptive survey investigation may be: (1) to secure evidence concerning an existing situation or current condition; (2) to identify standards or norms with which to compare present conditions in order to plan the next step; and (3) to determine how to make the next step, having determined where we are and where we wish to go.

Mouly (1964), posited that survey is a realistic method to investigate a phenomenon in a natural setting because it is flexible and versatile.

For educational researches that investigate a phenomenon in terms of beliefs, conditions, relationships, resources, practices, processes and effects of traits, this method of research is most commonly used.

Applying these concepts, the researcher employed the descriptive method in the form of questionnaire – survey to determine the level of expectation of elementary school heads and grade one teachers regarding the learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in terms of phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge. She utilized the descriptive method to factually determine if there are misconceptions about the kindergarten education program as widely observed and believed. After the existence of misconceptions was confirmed, the researcher once more utilized descriptive survey method, this time to determine how kindergarten teachers address these conceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy and assessment.

Population of the Study

The study was focused on finding out how kindergarten teachers, teach and guide their pupils. The respondents were public elementary school heads, grade one teachers, and kindergarten teachers who were directly involved in the implementation of the kindergarten education program in Plaridel District under SDO Bulacan namely Banga Elementary School, Bintog Elementary School, Culianin Elementary School, Dampol Elementary School, Don Nemencio Clemenia Memorial School, Lagundi Elementary School, Lalangan Elementary School, Lucas N. Domingo Elementary School, Lumangbayan Elementary School, Parulan Elementary School, Plaridel Elementary School, Rueda Elementary School, San Jose Elementary School, Sipat Elementary School, Sto. Nino Elementary School, and Tabang Elementary School. They are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the number of respondents per public elementary school in the Plaridel District under SDO Bulacan, involving 44 Grade One teachers, 16 elementary school heads and 24 kindergarten teachers.

Table 1

Population of the Study

Name of School	Grade One		Kindergarten
	Teacher	School Head	Teacher
1. Banga Elementary School	6	1	3
2. Bintog Elementary School	2	1	1
3. Culihanin Elementary School	2	1	1
4. Dampol Elementary School	2	1	1
5. Don Nemencio Clemenía Memorial School	2	1	1
6. Lagundi Elementary School	2	1	1
7. Lalangan Elementary School	1	1	1
8. Lucas N. Domingo Elementary School	1	1	1
9. Lumangbayan Elementary School	2	1	1
10. Parulan Elementary School	3	1	2
11. Plaridel Elementary School	7	1	4
12. Rueda Elementary School	1	1	1
13. San Jose Elementary School	3	1	1
14. Sipat Elementary School	2	1	1
15. Sto. Nino Elementary School	4	1	2
16. Tabang Elementary School	4	1	2
Total	44	16	24

Research Instrument

The primary source of data was a questionnaire originally constructed and developed by the researcher and validated through the combined efforts of the adviser

and critic. She drafted the questionnaire bearing in mind the scope of her work, its contents and specific questions to be answered. The survey questionnaire was tested in

five out of 16 public elementary schools in Plaridel District under SDO Bulacan for validation purposes.

After validation, the researcher gave the questionnaire one last look, and assisted once more by her adviser and critic, she put in improvements on weak points. After the improvement, the final drafts of the two survey questionnaires were approved for use in gathering data needed for the study. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents. In addition, she conducted personal interviews with the kindergarten teachers, grade one teachers, and school heads to corroborate the validity of the responses in the questionnaires.

The researcher made use of two questionnaires which she herself constructed. The first questionnaire, consisting of two parts, was administered to the elementary school heads and grade one teachers. Part I sought to determine the level of expectations of these two sets of respondents on learning competencies of kindergarten pupils regarding phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge. These fall under literacy and communication which, along with other developmental domains, are spelled out in the K to 12 Kindergarten Curriculum Guide. Part II sought to determine the misconceptions, if there are, of elementary school heads and grade one teachers about the kindergarten education program regarding play-based teaching strategy and assessment. It sought to confirm and validate the misconceptions.

The second questionnaire was utilized to develop a conscientious approach of kindergarten teachers in addressing the misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of play- based teaching strategy and assessment.

Results and Discussion

Level of expectation on learning competencies of kindergarten pupils

According to Alvarez (2015), the expectation for children to read after completing Kindergarten has scaled up. From mere letter recognition and sounds, kindergarten pupils are now expected to decode words. This push unnecessarily stresses out kindergarten teachers and their pupils.

Just as worrisome, teachers are anxious to make kindergarten pupils readers because of the notion that this is necessary for them to be better readers in high school. In the name of high achievement, play-based learning has been replaced by structured classwork with the end goal of academic achievements, unwittingly relegating social, physical, and psychomotor development to the background.

Table 2 shows the level of expectation of elementary school heads on learning competencies of kindergarten pupils regarding phonological awareness. Examination of the data yields the following results: (1) *Identify the sounds of letters orally given* got a mean score of 1.75 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (2) *Identify whether or not two spoken words begin with the same sound* got a score of 2.00 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (3) *Select from three spoken words those that begin with the same sound* scored 1.94 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (4) *Tell whether a pair or set of spoken words rhyme* got a score of 1.88 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (5) *Give a word that rhymes with a spoken word* got a score of 2.12 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (6) *Identify several words that begin with the same sound as the spoken word* got a score of 2.00 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; and (7) *Tell the number of syllables in a given spoken word* got a score 1.94 with verbal interpretation “less than expected.”

Table 2

Level of Expectation on Learning Competencies on Phonological Awareness as Perceived by Elementary School Heads

No.	Items	Frequency					Mean	Verbal Interpretation
		5	4	3	2	1		
<i>The kindergarten pupils can:</i>								
1	identify the sounds of letters orally given	0	0	2	8	6	1.75	Less than expected
2	identify whether or not two spoken words begin with the same sound	0	0	3	10	3	2.00	Less than expected
3	select from three spoken words those that begin with the same sound	0	0	2	11	3	1.94	Less than expected
4	tell whether a pair or set of spoken words rhyme	0	0	1	12	3	1.88	Less than expected
5	give a word that rhymes with a spoken word	0	0	5	8	3	2.12	Less than expected
6	identify several words that begin with the same sound as the spoken word	0	0	3	10	3	2.00	Less than expected
7	tell the number of syllables in a given spoken word	0	0	2	11	3	1.94	Less than expected
Total mean							1.95	Less than expected

Table 3 shows the level of expectation of grade one teachers on learning competencies of kindergarten pupils regarding phonological awareness. These are the findings: (1) *Identify the sounds of letters orally given* attained from grade one teachers a mean score of 1.89 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (2) *Identify whether or not two spoken words begin with the same sound*, got a score of 1.98 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (3) *Select from three spoken words those that begin with the same sound* scored 1.98 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (4) *Tell whether a pair or set of spoken words rhyme* scored 1.89 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (5) *Give a word that rhymes with a spoken word* scored 2.02 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (6) *Identify several words that begin with the same sound as the spoken word* scored 1.95 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; and (7) *Tell the number of syllables in a given spoken word* scored 2.00 with verbal interpretation “less than expected.”

Table 3

Level of Expectation on Learning Competencies on Phonological Awareness as Perceived by Grade One Teachers

No.	Items	Frequency					Mean	Verbal Interpretation
		5	4	3	2	1		
<i>The kindergarten pupils can:</i>								
1	identify the sounds of letters orally given	0	0	7	25	12	1.89	Less than expected
2	identify whether or not two spoken words begin with the same sound	0	0	10	23	11	1.98	Less than expected
3	select from three spoken words those that begin with the same sound	0	0	10	23	11	1.98	Less than expected
4	tell whether a pair or set of spoken words rhyme	0	0	8	23	13	1.89	Less than expected
5	give a word that rhymes with a spoken word	0	0	11	23	10	2.02	Less than expected
6	identify several words that begin with the same sound as the spoken word	0	0	9	24	11	1.95	Less than expected
7	tell the number of syllables in a given spoken word	0	0	10	24	10	2.00	Less than expected
Total mean							1.96	Less than expected

Table 4 presents the level of expectation of elementary school heads on learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in terms of alphabet knowledge as follow: (1) *Recognize one’s given name by sight*, got from elementary school heads a score of 2.81 with verbal interpretation “matched expectation”; (2) *Identify the letters of one’s given name* scored 2.88 with verbal interpretation

“matched expectation”; (3) *Identify the letters of the alphabet (mother tongue and orthography)* got a score of 3.00 verbal interpretation “matched expectation”; (4) *Give the sound of each letter (mother tongue, and orthography)* had a score of 1.88 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (5) *Match its letter sound to its letter form* scored 1.94 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (6) *Name the beginning letters of their friends’ names, their family members’ and common things they use* scored 2.06 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (7) *Match an upper to its lower- case letter* scored 2.81 with verbal interpretation “matched expectation”; (8) *Trace, copy, and draw familiar figures* scored 2.25 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (9) *Trace, copy, and write different strokes: scribbling (free hand), straight lines, slanting lines, combination of straight and slanting lines, curves, and zigzag* scored 1.88 with verbal interpretation “less than expected”; (10) *Trace, copy, and write the letters of the alphabet: straight lines (A, E, F, H, I, L,T), combination of straight and slanting lines (K, M, N, V, W, X, Y, Z) , combination of straight and curved lines (B, C, D, G, J, O, P, Q, R, S, U), rounded strokes with slopes* scored 1.93 with verbal interpretations “less than expected”; (11) *Write one’s given name* scored 3.00 with verbal interpretation “matched expectation”; and (12) *Write the lower case for each upper case or vice versa* scored 2.81 with verbal interpretation “matched expectation.”

Table 4

Level of Expectation on Learning Competencies on Alphabet Knowledge as Perceived by Elementary School Heads

No.	Items	Frequency					Mean	Verbal Interpretation
		5	4	3	2	1		
<i>The kindergarten pupils can:</i>								
1	recognize one’s given name by sight	0	0	13	3	0	2.81	Matched expectation
2	identify the letters of one’s given name	0	0	14	2	0	2.88	Matched expectation
3	identify the letters of the alphabet (mother tongue, orthography)	0	0	16	0	0	3.00	Matched expectation
4	give the sound of each letter (mother tongue, orthography)	0	0	3	8	5	1.88	Less than expected
5	match its letter sound to its letter form	0	0	4	7	5	1.94	Less than expected
6	name the beginning letters of their friends’ names, their family members’ and common things they use	0	0	6	5	5	2.06	Less than expected
7	match an upper to its lower- case letter	0	0	14	1	1	2.81	Matched expectation
8	trace, copy, and draw familiar figures	0	0	7	6	3	2.25	Less than expected
9	trace, copy, and write different strokes: scribbling (free hand), straight lines, slanting lines, combination of straight and slanting lines, curves, combination of straight and curved and zigzag	0	0	3	8	5	1.88	Less than expected
10	trace, copy, and write the letters of the alphabet: straight lines (A, E, F, H, I, L,T), combination of straight and slanting lines (K, M, N, V, W, X, Y, Z) , combination of straight and curved lines (B, C, D, G, J, O, P, Q, R, S, U), rounded strokes with slopes	0	0	4	7	5	1.93	Less than expected
11	write one’s given name	0	0	16	0	0	3.00	Matched expectation
12	write the lower case for each upper case or vice versa	0	0	14	1	1	2.81	Matched expectation
Total mean							2.43	Less than expected

Table 5 presents the level of expectation of grade one teachers on learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in terms of alphabet knowledge as follow: (1) *Recognize one's given name by sight* got a score 2.86 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (2) *Identify the letters of one's given name* scored 2.93 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (3) *Identify the letters of the alphabet (mother tongue and orthography)* got a score of 2.89 verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (4) *Give the sound of each letter (mother tongue, and orthography)* had a score of 2.65 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (5) *Match its letter sound to its letter form* scored 2.75 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (6) *Name the beginning letters of their friends' names, their family members' and common things they use* scored 2.57 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (7) *Match an upper to its lower- case letter* scored 2.66 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (8) *Trace, copy, and draw familiar figures* scored 2.86 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (9) *Trace, copy, and write different strokes: scribbling (free hand), straight lines, slanting lines, curves, combination of straight and curved and zigzag* scored 2.86 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation"; (10) *Trace, copy, and write the letters of the alphabet: straight lines (A, E, F, H, I, L,T), combination of straight and slanting lines (K, M, N, V, W, X, Y, Z), combination of straight and curved lines (B, C, D, G, J, O, P, Q, R, S, U), rounded strokes with slopes* scored 2.86 with verbal interpretations "matched expectation"; and (12) *Write the lower case for each upper case or vice versa* scored 2.77 with verbal interpretation "matched expectation."

Table 5

Level of Expectation on Learning Competencies on Alphabet Knowledge as Perceived by Grade One Teachers

No.	Items	Frequency					Mean	Verbal Interpretation
		5	4	3	2	1		
<i>The kindergarten pupils can:</i>								
1	recognize one's given name by sight	0	0	40	2	2	2.86	Matched expectation
2	identify the letters of one's given name	0	0	41	3	0	2.93	Matched expectation
3	identify the letters of the alphabet (mother tongue, orthography)	0	0	40	3	1	2.89	Matched expectation
4	give the sound of each letter (mother tongue, orthography)	0	0	32	9	3	2.65	Matched expectation
5	match its letter sound to its letter form	0	0	35	7	2	2.75	Matched expectation
6	name the beginning letters of their friends' names, their family members' and common things they use	0	0	32	5	7	2.57	Matched expectation
7	match an upper to its lower- case letter	0	0	32	9	3	2.66	Matched expectation
8	trace, copy, and draw familiar figures	0	0	40	2	2	2.86	Matched expectation
9	trace, copy, and write different strokes: scribbling (free hand), straight lines, slanting lines, combination of straight and slanting lines, curves, combination of straight and curved and zigzag	0	0	40	2	2	2.86	Matched expectation
10	trace, copy, and write the letters of the alphabet: straight lines (A, E, F, H, I, L,T), combination of straight and slanting lines (K, M, N, V, W, X, Y, Z), combination of straight and curved lines (B, C, D, G, J, O, P, Q, R, S, U), rounded strokes with slopes	0	0	40	2	2	2.86	Matched expectation
11	write one's given name	0	0	42	2	0	2.95	Matched expectation
12	write the lower case for each upper case or vice versa	0	0	37	4	3	2.77	Matched expectation
Total mean							2.80	Matched expectation

Misconceptions about the Kindergarten Education Program

Bassok, Lathem, and Rorem (2016), tracked the level of academic focus in kindergarten from 1998 to 2010 in their study “Is Kindergarten the New First Grade?” Using nationally representative surveys of kindergarten teachers, they examined how instruction, assessment, expectations and even classroom practices have changed in kindergarten classrooms. They were surprised by the extent of increased attention given to reading and mathematical skills. Compared to late 1990s, academic skill building has really taken center stage in today’s kindergarten classrooms which was not the case before.

Play-based teaching strategy. The summary of data analysis in Table 6 presents the misconceptions of elementary school heads about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy.

The elementary school heads’ biggest misconception about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy is that kindergarten pupils should spend less time in play and more time in academic preparation for formal school system as shown in the score of 93.75% or 15 out of 16 elementary school heads. On the other hand, 6.25% or 1 out of 16 elementary school heads surveyed did not have this misconception.

The elementary school heads’ second belief about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy is that school should be a place for learning. There is plenty of time for play at home was the belief of 87.50% (14 out of 16); while only 12.5% (2 out of 16) elementary school heads did not harbor this misconception.

The elementary school heads’ third belief about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy is that kindergarten pupils learn more through teacher-directed strategy than play-based teaching strategy. 75% (12 out of 16) believed this notion while 25% (4 out of 16) did not.

Table 6

Elementary School Heads’ Misconceptions about Kindergarten Education Program in Terms of Play-based Teaching Strategy

No.	Items	With Misconceptions		Without Misconceptions	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Kindergarten pupils should spend less time in play and more time in academic preparation for formal school system.	15	93.75	1	6.25
2	Kindergarten pupils learn more through teacher- directed strategy than play- based teaching strategy	12	75.00	4	25.00
3	School should be a place for learning, there is plenty of time for play at home	14	87.50	2	12.50

The summary of data analysis in Table 7 presents the misconceptions of grade one teachers about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy as follows:

The Grade One teachers' top misconception about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy is that kindergarten pupils should spend less time in play and more time in academic preparation for formal school system. This was believed by 90.91% (40 out of 44); while 9.09% (4 out of 44) did not have this notion.

The grade one teachers' second belief about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy is that school should be a place for learning. There is plenty of time for play at home. This belief was shared by 88.64% (39 out of 44); while 11.36% (5 out of 44) did not believe this.

The grade one teachers' third belief about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy is that kindergarten pupils learn more through teacher-directed strategy than play-based teaching strategy with a total score of 84.09% (37 out of 44); while 15.91% (7 out of 44) did not have this misconception.

Table 7

Grade One Teachers' Misconceptions about Kindergarten Education Program in Terms of Play-based Teaching Strategy

No.	Items	With Misconceptions		Without Misconceptions	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Kindergarten pupils should spend less time in play and more time in academic preparation for formal school system.	40	90.91	4	9.09
2	Kindergarten pupils learn more through teacher- directed strategy than play- based teaching strategy	37	84.09	7	15.91
3	School should be a place for learning. There is plenty of time for play at home	39	88.64	5	11.36

Assessment. A brief analysis of data presented in Table 8 shows the elementary school heads' misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of assessment, enumerated as follows:

Elementary school heads' first misconception is that standardized test scores should be used to make significant decisions about kindergarten pupils' education (e.g., promotion, retention, and placement in gifted or special education classes) with score of 93.75% (15 out of 16); while 6.25% (1 out of 16) did not have this misconception.

A close look at the data in Table 8 reveals that the elementary school heads' second misconception about kindergarten education program in terms of assessment is

that the higher the test scores of kindergarten pupils, the more intelligent they are with score of 75% (12 out of 16); while elementary school heads without this misconception numbered 25% (4 out of 16).

Table 8

Elementary School Heads' Misconceptions about Kindergarten Education Program in Terms of Assessment

No.	Items	With Misconceptions		Without Misconceptions	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Standardized test scores should be used to make significant decisions about kindergarten pupils' education (e.g., promotion, retention, and placement in gifted or special education classes).	15	93.75	1	6.25
2	The higher the test scores of kindergarten pupils, the more intelligent they are.	12	75.00	4	25.00

A brief analysis of data presented in Table 9 shows the misconceptions of grade one teachers about kindergarten education program in terms of assessment, enumerated as follows:

Grade one teachers' first misconception is that standardized test scores should be used to make significant decisions about kindergarten pupils' education (e.g., promotion, retention, and placement in gifted or special education classes) with score of 93.18% (41 out of 44); while grade one teachers without this misconception score 6.82% (3 out of 44).

A close look at the data in Table 9 indicates that the grade one teachers' second misconception about kindergarten education program in terms of assessment is that the

higher the test scores of kindergarten pupils, the more intelligent they are, with score of 88.64% (39 out of 44); while grade one teachers without this misconception score 6.82% (5 out of 44).

Table 9

Grade One Teachers' Misconceptions about Kindergarten Education Program in Terms of Assessment

No.	Items	With Misconceptions		Without Misconceptions	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Standardized test scores should be used to make significant decisions about kindergarten pupils' education (e.g., promotion, retention, and placement in gifted or special education classes).	41	93.18	3	6.82
2	The higher the test scores of kindergarten pupils, the more intelligent they are.	39	88.64	5	11.36

But given the aforementioned data, it is worth mentioning what experts say that kindergarten pupils' standardized test scores do not give enough information to kindergarten teachers, their school heads or the school system to determine the following: children's access to kindergarten;

placement in remedial, developmental, transitional, or special classes; and retention to kindergarten.

Furthermore, with the limited understanding of schools regarding early childhood assessment, the use of kindergarten assessment in this way is bound to yield inaccurate and unreliable results. Chances are, mislabeling and unfair categorizations of children can happen which may be harmful.

Conscientious approach of kindergarten teachers in addressing the misconceptions about kindergarten education program

Tuharyna (2012), believed that “the best way to address misconceptions is to confront them directly” provided that the misconceptions are clear. She proposes a five-step procedure to overcome misconceptions as follows first, make everybody aware of misconceptions. By asking “What do you think is happening?” and “Why?” you can generate informed discussion; second, address the misconceptions by providing structural arguments and making light of the scientific principles. For example, a response to someone’s explanation that reflects a misconception- “Great idea, but it is not entirely correct and here is why...” then, the new (correct) concept will be taught. This way, someone would be made aware of what he should be looking for; third, provide evidence for claims. Each concept being taught must be supported with evidences that would disprove the misconception and/ or support new (correct) concept or idea; fourth, summarize the idea in the form of a mind map. The Fujiwara, Friedman and Finkelstein (2002) of Private Universe Project case study first proposed the strategy which was found very effective in organizing and reinforcing the concepts learned by individuals who harbor misconceptions. Finally, address the original issue. The same questions that were asked at the beginning of the procedure could be repeated. This would encourage someone to reflect on how his conceptions have changed and why. It also reveals if the desired result was achieved.

Play- based teaching strategy. Table 10 presents the conscientious approach of kindergarten teachers to address the misconceptions on kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy. The kindergarten teachers opted for the first approach to engage elementary school heads and grade one teachers in discussion of role of play in kindergarten so that they can advocate for play. This approach got a score of 91.67% (22 out of 24); while 8.33% (2 out of 24) of kindergarten teachers do not share the same view.

A close look at the data in Table 10 reveals the kindergarten teachers’ second priority of concern is to make elementary school heads and grade one teachers aware about the content of Standards and Competencies for Five-Year-Old Filipino Children with score of 87.5% (21 out of 24); while 12.50% (3 out of 24) of kindergarten teachers do not share the same view.

Table 10

Conscientious Approach of Kindergarten Teachers in Addressing the Misconceptions about Kindergarten Education Program in Terms of Play-based Teaching Strategy

No.	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Engage elementary school heads and grade one teachers in discussion of role of play in kindergarten so that they can advocate for play with Kindergarten teachers.	22	91.67	2	8.33
2	Make elementary school heads and grade one teachers aware about the content of Standards and Competencies for Five-Year-Old Filipino Children.	21	87.50	3	12.50
3	Create a national movement for play in school and communities.	19	79.17	5	20.83

The kindergarten teachers' third conscientious approach to address the misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy is to create a national movement for play in school and communities with score of 79.17% (19 out of 24)); while 20.83% (5 out of 24) kindergarten teachers do not share the same view.

According to Wenning (2008), forgetting takes work. One needs to do certain things to weaken memory of undesirable or unwanted events. Enhanced recall of preferred understanding is important. To develop long lasting change in understanding, reinforcement is important.

Addressing misconceptions in this way works effectively. Table 11 presents the conscientious approach of kindergarten teachers in addressing the misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of assessment. In this regard, all kindergarten teachers (24 out of 24) unanimously agree on the need to conduct more In-Service Training (INSET) about assessment on young children.

Table 11

Conscientious Approach of Kindergarten Teachers in Addressing the Misconceptions about Kindergarten Education Program in Terms of Assessment

No.	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Conduct more In-Service Training (INSET) about assessment on young children	24	100	0	0
2	Disseminate properly the information about assessment in kindergarten not only to kindergarten teachers but also to elementary school heads, grade one teachers, and other colleagues.	22	91.67	2	8.33

The data in Table 11 show that the kindergarten teachers' second conscientious approach to address the misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of assessment is to disseminate properly the information about assessment in kindergarten not only to kindergarten teachers but also to elementary school heads, grade one teachers, and other colleagues. This got a score of 91.67% (22 out of 24); while 8.33% (2 out of 24) kindergarten teachers do not share the same view.

Meisels cited by NAEYC and NAECS/ SDE posited that “Good intentions can backfire” (2009). In trying to meet expectation that kindergarten pupils learn to read by the year’s end, kindergarten teachers adopt teaching practices that are ill suited to the pupils’ characteristics and capabilities. Moreover, kindergarten teachers’ assessment practices do not match the pupils’ age and capabilities either.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Overall, the level of expectation of elementary school heads and grade one teachers on learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in terms of phonological awareness is “less than expected.” Therefore it is safe to conclude that elementary school heads and grade one teachers’ expectations on learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in terms of phonological awareness is greater than they are capable of. On the other hand, the level of expectation of elementary school heads and grade one teachers matches the learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in terms of alphabet knowledge. In short, the learning competencies of kindergarten pupils in terms of alphabet knowledge match the expectations of elementary school heads and grade one teachers.

The data in Table 6 and Table 7 convincingly show that elementary school heads and grade one teachers indeed harbor misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy. They erroneously believe kindergarten pupils should spend less time in play and more time in academics preparation for formal school system; kindergarten pupils learn more through teacher- directed strategy than play- based teaching strategy; and school should be a place for learning because there is plenty of time for play at home. Furthermore, the data in Table 8 and Table 9 convincingly show that elementary school heads and grade one teachers have misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of assessment. They believe that test scores should be used to make significant decisions about kindergarten pupils’ education (e.g., promotion, retention, and placement in gifted or special education classes); and the higher the test scores of kindergarten pupils, the more intelligent they are. On the other hand, from the data in Table 9, it is safe to conclude that kindergarten teachers do adopt conscientious approach in addressing the misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of play-based teaching strategy as follows: (1) engage elementary school heads and grade one teachers in discussion of role of play in kindergarten so that they can advocate play-based activities, (2) make grade one teachers and school heads aware about the content of Standards and Competencies for Five-Year-Old Filipino Children, and (3) create a national movement for play in school and communities. Moreover, data in Table 10, it is safe to conclude that kindergarten teachers adopt conscientious approach in addressing the

misconceptions about kindergarten education program in terms of assessment. They call for the following course of action: (1) conduct more In-Service Training (INSET) about assessment of young children, and (2) disseminate properly the information about assessment in kindergarten not only to kindergarten teachers but also to elementary school heads, grade one teachers, and colleagues.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are humbly offered to help the DepEd elementary school heads and school teachers in improving the instructional and assessment practices in kindergarten education program in Plaridel District under SDO Bulacan:

1. Recognize the differences between the kindergarten child who is an emergent reader and the first-grade child who has become an early reader. Do not expect kindergarten children to achieve academic goals best suited to grade one pupils.
2. Establish agreement to seriously implement and monitor the kindergarten education curriculum in order to achieve its goal of quality instruction.
3. Use conscientious approach of kindergarten teachers to address misconceptions about play-based teaching strategy and assessment.
4. Expand the early childhood research agenda to examine the long-term impact of kindergarten practices on the development of children from diverse backgrounds.
5. Investigate the association between developmentally inappropriate kindergarten practices and behavioral and psychiatric disturbances and other health issues among young children.
6. Develop an action plan that will address the problems encountered by teachers and elementary school heads in implementing the kindergarten education program. The format is hereby suggested: priority sector activity, targets, strategies/activities/programs/projects, persons involved, time frame, budget and expected outcomes.
7. Conduct a similar study to explore and clarify parent's beliefs and attitudes about kindergarten education program. If parents have misconceptions like elementary school heads and grade one teachers, they should be involved in the conscientious approach to address the misconceptions and hopefully, the erroneous notions will be cast aside before they become fossilized in the System.

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