

Social pedagogy as foundation of play

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Social Pedagogy as Foundation of Preschoolers' Play for Achieving Kindergarten Readiness of the of the Department of the University Name of the Course Name of the Supervisor The Month and Year of Submission Social Pedagogy as Foundation of Preschoolers' Play for Achieving Kindergarten Readiness Introduction Early childhood education places an emphasis on developmentally appropriate pedagogy, with a focus on different types of play activities, amusing interactions such as through story time, and a generally “playful, whole-child social approach” (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk, et al, 2008, p. 17). Social pedagogy is a child-centred educational system which considers a playful learning environment to be of utmost value to prepare preschool children to meet the challenges in the kindergarten setting. Social pedagogy promotes preschoolers' acquisition of greater social skills, which will subsequently help them in kindergarten to form and maintain friendly bonds with peers, and to manage the introduction of academics without any difficulty. On the other hand, Bodrova and Leong (2007) who promoted the Vygotskian approach linking play and early literacy, state that there is a disappearance of play from the early childhood classroom. The European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) is an academic forum in Europe which promotes, develops and disseminates high quality multi-interdisciplinary research on early childhood education (Spodek & Saracho, 2005). Thesis Statement: The purpose of this paper is to investigate Social Pedagogy as the foundation of preschoolers' play for achieving kindergarten readiness. Social Pedagogy Forms the Basis for Preschoolers' Play Promoting Kindergarten Readiness Play remains the main medium and indicator of children's growth. “Play enables children to progress along the developmental sequence from the sensorimotor

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intelligence of infancy to preoperational thought in the preschool years to the concrete operational thinking exhibited by primary school children” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 3). Besides promoting cognitive development, play also supports essential functions in children’s physical, emotional, and social development. Hence, play that is child-initiated, child-directed, and teacher-supported is an important feature of developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987). Thus, discourses of developmental psychology are evident in Bredekamp’s above perspectives associated with social pedagogy. Similarly, he refers to Piaget’s stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, and concrete operational (Allwood, 2002). He also focuses on the beneficial outcomes of play in social, emotional and physical development. The author’s reference to ‘teacher-supported’ play is related to the Vygotskian notion of zone of proximal development. Allwood (2002) reiterates that in early childhood education, this is commonly termed as co-construction, where the teacher and child construct knowledge together. Kindergarten readiness based on emotional competence is indicated by play activities. A study conducted by Denham, Mason, Caverly, et al (2001) investigated emotional competence as a contributor to preschoolers’ social success, since this attribute would strengthen their kindergarten readiness. The research study examined “ 145 predominantly Caucasian/ middle income 3 and 4 year-olds, in their classrooms during unstructured play” (Denham et al, 2001, p. 290). The participants’ and their playmates’ expressions of emotions, as well as emotional responsiveness were categorized as positive and negative playgroup types. The participants’ social competence was assessed with the help of information from peers, teachers, and parents. Evidence from the research study indicate that

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kindergarten readiness was promoted by the play activities through increased security of attachment and externalising of temperament commonly found in such playgroups. At the same time, particularly among boys, a year later a lack of social competence was evaluated among those preschoolers who had displayed anger and negative emotional responsiveness while playing. In the United Kingdom, pedagogical practices are child-centred, offering children opportunities to choose their play activities; secondly social pedagogy focuses on play as the medium of learning for children (Stephen, 2010). However, Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) conducted a research study on the relationship between the extent of child-initiated and adult-initiated activity in a preschool situation, and its effectiveness in terms of cognitive, social and dispositional outcomes in the child. They found that the most effective results emerged from a balance between the child-initiated and teacher-initiated learning activities. Bowman, Donovan, and Burns (2000) support this view, and emphasize on the significance of sensitive and responsive support from practitioners who should skilfully manage the cognitive challenge experienced by children, and reinforce sustained, shared thinking among their young charges. Similar to the contradictions to child-centredness and social pedagogy, the key role of play in the preschool setting has been challenged by some researchers such as Bodrova (2008) who states that any kind of play will not serve the purpose. He considers it necessary that the play activity meets specific criteria, such as the children creating an imaginary situation, and acting out roles in compliance with the requirements of the role. Contrastingly, Bennett, Wood and Rogers (1997) have argued on the basis of their research evidence that there are limitations to the play experiences of children, and <https://assignbuster.com/social-pedogogy-as-foundation-of-play/>

the pedagogical role of the teacher in children's preschool play has to be more developed. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) Early Years Special Interest Group (2003) question the effectiveness of 'free play' arguing that play in practice is problematic, that there is a lack of adequate evidence supporting the relationship between play and learning, and that play activities can be stereotypical and devoid of challenge. They have asserted that although play forms the foundation of early learning, social pedagogy related to preschoolers' learning through play is not clearly articulated. Further, more systematic empirical research studies are required to reinforce the dominant ideology; moreover, studies have identified the considerable gaps between the rhetoric and reality of practice (BERA, 2003).

Conclusion This paper has highlighted Social Pedagogy as the foundation of preschoolers' play, which in turn helps children achieve kindergarten readiness through cognitive, physical, emotional, and other ways. Some scholars' arguments against social pedagogy's child-centredness, and those opposing the centrality of play activities in helping preschoolers learn, have been examined. However, the critical perspective against play does not indicate a rejection of play as a vital component in the learning environment. Stephen (2010) reiterates that the beneficial effects of play help to strengthen its place as a medium for learning. This also ensures that the play opportunities offered to children are playful and of interest to them; and it ascertains that there is development of "a more nuanced and evidence-based rationale for play in the learning environment" (Stephen, 2010, p. 4). Significantly, social pedagogy and the value of play activities are strongly supported by developmental psychologists such as Piaget and Vygotsky. After reviewing both sides of the argument, it is concluded that the evidence

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is sound supporting child-centred social pedagogy with its emphasis on play for helping preschoolers achieve kindergarten readiness. Future research should focus on large-scale studies on the benefits of play in preschoolers' development, in order to strengthen evidence-based practice.

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