EVALUATION OF PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS` OPINIONS ON TEACHING WITH GAMES

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Abstract:

For the development of preschool children, games are generally very beneficial and effective. When we look at the education systems of the developed countries in recent years, it is seen that the concept of game is an important activity in terms of children's development. For most of the scientists, game is the best way to get to know and observe the child. And it is the best way to analyze. Children gain many skills while playing. They often learn behavior during playing such as learning, making effective decisions, cooperation, honesty, sharing, respecting the rights of others, liking friends, helping others. By observing the skills during the transition period to adulthood, the child practice and perfect them through the games. This study was conducted in order to determine the views of pre-school teachers about the teaching with games method. In the study, it was tried to determine the general views of preschool teachers on teaching with games, if they prefer teaching with games method, effects of game on learning, game types used in education, until what age children are supposed to play games, which games girls and boys play, which problems teacher encounter while having children play games and suggestions of preschool teachers on teaching with games method. Using the interview method which is one of the qualitative research methods in the research, the data obtained from 50 preschool teachers working in the kindergartens in Gaziantep province were analyzed by content analysis method. As a result of the study, it was found that most of the preschool teachers believe games contribute to motor, cognitive and social development of children, they are also helpful

in terms of expressing themselves, they are effective since the learning is fast and permanent with games and children adopt the rules. It was also concluded that children have a strong memory along with their gaming activities, they develop intelligence, children love their school and friends, and that their creative features have improved. Therefore, it can be said that the teaching with games is an important method that contributes to children in almost all dimensions within the development process. However, in terms of teachers' views, physical and environmental conditions should be improved and the necessity of providing in-service trainings in the field of play education has emerged.

Keywords: preschool, teacher, game, teaching with games

1. Introduction

The first periods of human life are defined as critical periods by educators. The child's definition and meaning of the outside world usually begins at this period, and the child makes this process compatible through games (Alıncak, 2016a; 2016a). Especially in the education and development of the children in the pre-school period, game is an indispensable part of life for the child. Although the game is perceived differently by adults, game is the most important and most serious pastime for the child. Therefore, it is necessary to create a comfortable and safe game environment for children in terms of their development (Gül, 2006; Aydın, 2008; Alıncak and Tuzcuoğulları, 2016).

From the existence of humankind to this day, the concept of game is one of the most satisfying sources that have continued and developed along with some changes (Tuğrul, 2010).

According to other learning techniques, teaching with games technique is more effective on children. For this reason, the game is a very important educational tool for the development of the child (Aytekin, 2001; Gazezoğlu, 2007). Game activities are a necessity for the child. The children express themselves more comfortably thanks to games. Everything that is gained in the game process provides continuity. Therefore, any kind of gains given to the child should be given through play (Sel, 1974). Game activities are an effective means of coping with adverse events in the environment, according to psychoanalytic theory (Barnett, 2013).

In Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, game is seen as an important tool in improving the child's skills, in self-renewal, and in practicing their skills. According to this theory, the game the child plays is a sign of their cognitive development (Piaget, 1962). According to Montessori, the game is one of the most important tools for the development of the child (Kayılı, 2010).

Dansky and Silverman (1973) describe the game as any behavior that is characterized by the assimilation`s supremacy over conformity. (Gunsberg, 1983) argue that creative features can emerge in a significant way and lead to an increase, allowing children to play games to express themselves. The child is introduced to the concept of game in every way (Timmons, 2003). Educational games develop some motoric features and psychological and social behaviors inherent in the game (Ayan et al., 2015; Alıncak, 2016a; 2016a; Zengin et al., 2016; Yıkılmaz et al., 2015). According to Marsell (2009), game is the most important way to prepare the child for the future adulthood.

In all parts of the world, especially in the early childhood period, game is seen as the center of direct education programs and is regarded as the most effective tool in the implementation and planning of the process. One of the most basic principles of pre-school education in our country is game-based, as it is in many countries. According to the Ministry of National Education's Pre-School Education Program, "*The child learns through the game, recognizes the world they are in through the play, expresses himself during the game, and acquires a number of creative features and skills while playing the game*" (MEB, 2013).

Learning through game is seen as an indispensable element of pre-school education. *"According to many researchers conducted, it is said that carrying out the learning process together with the game increases the efficiency of the children in a great way. The child is often able to explain his / her needs and the emotional state in which he / she is in the game, and has the ability to cope with problems. Thus, the child learns to communicate with the outside world in a healthy way"* (Aytekin, 2001; Durualp, 2009). Game activities are an activity process that ensures that children are satisfied with their needs (Lindon, 2001).

Huizinga (1995) states that children's chances of playing games are decreasing day by day. The game, which is basically fun, became a trade and a competition day by day. The "private" playground is being built when most of the children's outdoor games require a "public" space. For this reason, most children do not have the chance to recognize and use the external environment without parental supervision (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997).

According to Adler (1997), and Stanley (2009), teaching with games is an effective way to increase the academic success of children while at the same time providing an enjoyable learning process for children. Thomas, Howard, and Miles (2006) point out that activities carried out with game label in preschool education is more successful for the children in their study.

In another study (Howard and McInnis, 2012), it was found that children are more successful in attending and maintaining attention than other activities labeled "like a game", and these are more motivationally beneficial. McInnis, Howard, Miles,

and Crowley (2010), found the conclusion that children can distinguish between play and non-play activities.

The influence of the play on the child and its teaching can undoubtedly not be discussed. In general, when we look at the game concept, we see that it is not a learning tool for children, the children do not play to learn, but learn while playing; this is achieved by the experience (Yavaşoğlu, 2005).

This study was prepared in order to determine the views of pre-school teachers about the teaching with games method. For this purpose, answers of following questions were sought.

Preschool teachers`;

1. What are the general views regarding the method of teaching with games?
2. Do they use teaching with games method?
3. What are the thoughts about the effects of the game on learning?
4. What are the kinds of games they use in teaching with games?
5. Until what age should children play games?
6. Which kind games do the girls prefer?
7. Which kind games do the boys prefer?
8. What are the problems you encounter while having the children play games?
9. What are their suggestions on teaching with games?

2. Method

In the study, the case study of qualitative research methods was used. Qualitative research is a method that provides a flexible approach to the researcher compared to quantitative research and offers different approaches to data collection, analysis and research design (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2006).

A case study is a research design that is used in situations where there is more than one evidence or data source, the boundaries between the case and the environment is not definite and that studies the case within its own environment (Yin, 1984; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

2.1. Research Group

The open-ended questionnaire prepared to determine the views of pre-school teachers about the method of teaching with games was applied to 50 pre-school teachers working in official kindergartens under Gaziantep provincial National Education Directorate. The data related to the research group are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal Characteristics of the Research Group (N = 50)

Variables	Groups	n	%
Tenure	1 – 5 Years	17	34
	6 – 10 Years	18	36
	11 – 15 Years	11	22
	16 – 20 Years	2	4
	21 – 30 Years	2	4
Sex	Female	39	78
	Male	11	22
Education	Bachelor	46	92
	Postgraduate	4	8

N:50

Table 1 gives some personal characteristics of the research group. When we look at the tenures of teachers participated in the study, it is seen that tenures of teachers are; 1-5 years for 17 (34%) teachers, 6-10 years for 18 (36%) teachers, 11-15 years for 11 (22%) teachers, 16-20 years for 2 (4%) teachers, 21-30 years for 2 (4%) teachers. Looking at the sexes, it can be seen that 39 (78%) of teachers are female and 11 (22%) of teachers are male. Education levels are found as follows; 46 (92%) of the teachers have bachelor`s degree and 4 (8%) of the teachers have postgraduate degrees.

2.2. Preparation and Application of Open-Ended Question Form

In order to create the interview form to be used in the study, 105 pre-school teachers were asked to write a composition about their views about teaching with games method face-to-face. As a result of the collected compositions and the information obtained from the related literature, a draft of the interview form was obtained. One of the logical ways to test the validity of the scope of the measurement tool prepared for the research is to ask for an expert`s opinion (Büyüköztürk, 2006). The interview form was presented to the experts and the necessary corrections were made in line with the opinions received and the final form was given to the interview form consisting of 3 personal characteristics and 9 open ended questions. The prepared questions are as follows; Preschool teachers`;

1. What are the general views regarding the method of teaching with games?
2. Do they use teaching with games method?
3. What are the thoughts about the effects of the game on learning?
4. What are the kinds of games they use in teaching with games?
5. Until what age should children play games?
6. Which kind games do the girls prefer?
7. Which kind games do the boys prefer?

8. What are the problems you encounter while having the children play games?
9. What are their suggestions on teaching with games?

The final version of the prepared interview form was applied a total of 50 pre-school teachers working in Gaziantep and the data were thus collected. During the application, the aim of the research was explained to participants and informed about the importance of their answers. As a result of the participants' responses to the measurement tool, multiple expressions were collected under common themes.

2.3. Analysis of Data

The data obtained from the interview form used in the study were analyzed by the content analysis method used in the qualitative researches. In the qualitative research, content analysis is used by creating themes indefinite in terms of theoretical sense and sub-themes, if any, to obtain the analysis (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). The obtained data are separately recorded, grouped and coded. These groupings and encodings are presented to the experts in the field and they are prepared and analyzed according to the evaluations of the experts. With the content analysis made, the themes were determined for each question and the frequency and the percentages of the given themes were calculated and the tables were created. Descriptive analysis was used in the evaluation of the data. Finally, reporting was made and findings were presented.

3. Findings and Comment

This section includes the findings of interviews conducted with teachers in order to determine the views of preschool teachers working in kindergartens under the Ministry of National Education on teaching with games.

Table 2: The distribution of general views of the research group
on teaching with games

Themes	n	%
Learning and knowledge becomes permanent	34	16.8
Learning is faster and easier	33	16.3
Learning is fun and enjoyable	27	13.3
Beneficial in terms of child development	18	8.9
The child likes the school and their friends thanks to games	13	6.4
Thanks to game, language and speaking skills of the child develops	12	5.9
Game is indispensable for the child	11	5.4
Game improves the inner world of the child	10	4.9
Game develops the create characteristics of the child	10	4.9

Game improves the attention and motivation of the child	10	4.9
Game socializes the child	10	4.9
Other courses should also be taught with games	8	3.9
The child learns the rules thanks to games	7	3.5
Total	**203**	**100**

In the table 2, the distribution of general views of the research group on teaching with games is given. When considering the participants' general views about the method of teaching with games, there are 13 themes. Participants were seen to express more than one theme.

These themes are, according to their percentages; learning and knowledge becomes permanent (16.8%), learning is faster and easier (16.3%), learning is fun and enjoyable (13.3%), beneficial in terms of child development (8.9%), the child likes the school and their friends thanks to games (6.4%), thanks to game, language and speaking skills of the child develops (5.9%), game is indispensable for the child (5.4%), game improves the inner world of the child (4.9%), game develops the create characteristics of the child (4.9%), game improves the attention and motivation of the child (4.9%), game socializes the child (4.9%), other courses should also be taught with games (3.9%) the child learns the rules thanks to games (3.5%).

Table 3: The distribution of opinions of research group on their preferences
about teaching with games

Themes	n	%
We always teach with games	39	78
We sometimes teach with games	7	14
We teach with games depending on the subject	4	8
Total	**50**	**100**

In Table 3, the distribution of opinions of research group on their preferences about teaching with games is given. 3 themes are found in the distribution of opinions of participants on their preferences about teaching with games. According to this, it is found that 39 teachers (78%) always teach with games, 7 teachers (14%) sometimes teach with games and 4 teachers (8%) teach with games depending on the subject of the course.

Table 4: The distribution of views of research group
on the effect of games on learning

Themes	N	%
Yes, game has effects on learning	50	25.3
In some courses, learning becomes permanent and effective	46	23.3
Learning is faster and easier	42	21.3
Learning is done through fun	35	17.6
It develops intelligence	7	3.5
It improves the fantasy world of the child	7	3.5
It increases attention and motivation	6	3
It increase thinking skills	5	2.5
Total	**198**	**100**

In the table 4, the distribution of general views of the research group on effect of games on learning is given. 8 these were found from the views of participants on effects of game on learning. Participants were seen to express more than one theme.

According to the percentages of these themes; yes, game has effects on learning (25.3%), in some courses, learning becomes permanent and effective (23.3%), learning is faster and easier (21.3%), learning is done through fun (17.6%), it develops intelligence (3.5%), it improves the fantasy world of the child (3.5%), it increases attention and motivation (3%), it increase thinking skills (2.5%) are found to be highlighted.

Table 5: The distribution of views of research group on games types used in teaching

Themes	N	%
Games with rules	27	10.5
Group games	26	10.1
Drama and role playing games	26	10.1
Games with music and songs	26	10.1
Traditional games	23	8.8
Games with balls	22	8.5
Finger games	22	8.5
Thinking and thinking-boosting games	21	8.1
Relaxing games	11	4.2
Games played in classroom and garden	11	4.2
Teaching and fun games	9	3.4
Memory games	8	3
Improvisatory games	8	3
Competitive games	8	3
Cluster games	4	1.5
Individual games	4	1.5
Rhythmic counting games	4	1.5
Total	**260**	**100**

In Table 5, the distribution of views of research group on games types used in teaching is given. 17 these were found from the views of participants on game kinds used in teaching. Participants were seen to express more than one theme. These themes are found as following, according to their percentages; games with rules (10.5%), group games (10.1%), drama and role playing games (10.1%), games with music and songs (10.1%), traditional games (8.8%), games with balls (8.5%), finger games (8.5%), thinking and thinking-boosting games (8.1%), relaxing games (4.2%), games played in classroom and garden (4.2%), teaching and fun games (3.4%), memory games (3%), improvisatory games (3%), competitive games (3%), cluster games (1.5%), individual games (1.5%), rhythmic counting games (1.5%).

Table 6: The distribution of data of research group on until what age children should play games

Themes	N	%
Games have no age limit	37	51.4
Anyone can play games at any age	19	26.4
Anyone can play games until they want	8	11.1
Games can be played until secondary school	8	11.1
Total	**72**	**100**

In table 6, the distribution of data of research group on until what age children should play games is given. 4 themes were found from the views of the participants on until what age children should play games. Participants were seen to express more than one theme. According to percentages of these themes; games have no age limit (51.4%), anyone can play games at any age (26.4%), anyone can play games until they want (11.1%), games can be played until secondary school (11.1%) themes are highlighted.

Table 7: The distribution of views of research group on what games girls prefer

Themes	N	%
Playing house	32	34
Games with music and songs	21	22.4
Stationary games	12	12.7
Drama and role playing games	11	11.7
Skipping rope	10	10.7
Hopscotch	8	8.5
Total	**94**	**100**

In Table 7, the distribution of views of research group on what games girls prefer is given. 6 themes were found from views of research group on what games girls prefer. Participants were seen to express more than one theme. According to percentages of

these themes; playing house (34%), games with music and songs (22.4%), stationary games (12.7%), drama and role playing games (11.7%), skipping rope (10.7%), hopscotch (8.5%) themes are highlighted.

Table 8: The distribution of views of research group on what games boys prefer

Themes	N	%
Competitive games	22	18.9
Detective games	21	18.1
Car games	18	15.5
Moving games	17	14.7
Football	16	13.8
Block games	14	12.1
Animal figured games	8	6.9
Total	**116**	**100**

In Table 8, the distribution of views of research group on what games boys prefer is given. 7 themes were found from views of research group on what games boys prefer. Participants were seen to express more than one theme. According to the percentages of these themes; competitive games (18.9%), detective games (18.1%), car games (15.5%), moving games (14.7%), football (13.8%), black games (12.1%), animal figured games (6.9%) themes are highlighted.

Table 9: The distribution of views of research group on problems encountered while playing games

Themes	N	%
Insufficient physical and environmental conditions	23	21.7
Children do not obey to the rules	22	20.8
Fear of losing while playing	18	16.7
Boredom and involuntariness while playing	12	11.3
Ambition to win	9	8.5
Ego centrism	8	7.6
I do not have any problems	8	7.6
Role distribution	3	2.9
Unwillingness to share	3	2.9
Total	**106**	**100**

In Table 9, the distribution of views of research group on problems encountered while playing games is given. 9 themes were found from views of research group on problems encountered while playing games. Participants were seen to express more than one theme. From these themes, according to their percentages; insufficient physical

and environmental conditions (21.7%), children do not obey to the rules (20.8%), fear of losing while playing (16.7%), boredom and involuntariness while playing (11.3%), ambition to win (8.5%), ego centrism (7.6%), I do not have any problems (7.6%), role distribution (2.9%), unwillingness to share (2.9%) these were found.

Table 10: The distribution of views of research group on their suggestion
on teaching with games

Themes	n	%
Physical and environmental conditions should be improved	23	24.4
In-service trainings should be given in physical training and playing fields	22	23.4
Games in the curriculum should be varied	20	21.3
Necessary course materials should be provided	18	19.2
Other courses should also be taught with games	11	11.7
Total	**94**	**100**

In Table 10, the distribution of views of research group on their suggestion on teaching with games is given. When considering the participants' suggestions about the method of teaching with games, there are 5 themes. Participants were seen to express more than one theme. According to percentages of these themes; insufficient physical and environmental conditions (24.4%), in-service trainings should be given in physical training and playing fields (23.4%), games in the curriculum should be varied (21.3%), necessary course materials should be provided (19.2%), other courses should also be taught with games (11.7%) themes are highlighted.

4. Results, Suggestions and Discussions

In this section of the study, the results obtained from interviews with pre-school teachers in the kindergartens of the Ministry of National Education on teaching with games are included.

When we look at the views of the research group on teaching with games, majority of them express that teaching and acquired knowledge are permanent thanks to games, and learning is faster and easier. The research group also stated that thanks to games, learning is fun and enjoyable, game is helpful in terms of child development, children like their school and friends by participating in game activities, playing games improves children`s language and speaking skills, game is indispensable for children, it improves children`s inner world and creative characteristics and increases their attention as well as socializing them, other courses should also be taught with games and the children learn the rules thanks to games.

From these views, it can be said that games are helpful in terms of fast learning and permanent knowledge acquiring, it also contributes to children`s development, effective in terms of language and speaking skills` development and teach the children the rules of the society along with the games.

In the studies carried out on the preschool children, it was stated that game indexed educational programs contribute positively to the motor skills, language and cognitive-social development of children. (Çoruh, 2004; Gül, 2006; Özdenk, 2007; Gazezoğlu, 2007; Durualp, 2009; Kalaycıoğlu, 2011).

Ayan and Dündar (2009), argues that children express themselves easier while playing and they have a more free and creative personality in games, therefore use of games is indispensable in terms of children`s development for the development of creative skills of children in educational settings.

The majority of the research group (78%) stated that they preferred teaching with games methods in the classes. From these views, we can say that the teaching with games method facilitates teaching for teachers. A small proportion (14%) sometimes used the method of teaching with games and a few (8%) preferred the method of teaching with games depending on the subject.

All of the research group stated that the games have effect on learning, majority of them expressed that they have permanent effects on learning in some courses, learning is faster and easier and teaching is done through fun. Even at low ratios, some of the views suggest that the game develops intelligence and imagination, attention, motivation and ability to think. Therefore, from the views of the vast majority of the research group, it can be said that the game contributes greatly to the learning and it also benefits the personal development of the students.

Fırat (2007), stated that in foreign language teaching with games, students are highlighted and become active, they try to learn by application, each student voluntarily attends the courses and the students are able to learn the vocabulary memorize them without forgetting easily and answer the questions without any problems.

Ören and Avcı (2004), in their studies, concluded that teaching with games is more effective than traditional teaching in terms of increasing academic success in science class.

Tural (2005), has found that teaching with games and activities in mathematics teaching is more effective than traditional teaching in attaining behavior at the level of "rhythmic" counting, natural numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication (comprehension and application).

When we look at the game types that research group use in their teaching, they are as follows; games with rules, group games, drama and role playing games, games

with music and songs, traditional games, games with balls, finger games, thinking and thinking-boosting games. The teachers participated in the study also stated that they prefer games such as relaxing games, games played in classroom and garden, teaching and fun games, memory games, improvisatory games, competitive games, cluster games, individual games and rhythmic counting games.

When we look at the views of research group on until what age children should play games, majority of the participant stated that playing games has no age limit. Some teachers stated that anyone can play games at any age, anyone can play games until they want and games can be played until secondary school. From these views, it can be said that concept of game is effective and helpful in every dimension of human development.

When we look at the views of research group on which games girls prefer, it was observed that majority of them prefer playing house, games with music and songs while playing games. The teachers participated in the study expressed that female students play stationary games, drama and role playing games, jumping rope and hopscotch. Naturally, it can be said that girls prefer calming and emotional games instead of the ones requiring physical activities in the class.

When we look at the views of research group on which games male students prefer, it is seen that they mostly prefer competition games and detective games. The teachers participated in the study also stated that boys play car games, moving games, football, block games and animal figured games in the classes. From these views, it can be said that male students prefer games with physical activities more than female students and in addition, they also prefer strategic games.

When we look at the views of research group on the problems they encounter while playing games, it is seen that themes such as insufficiency of physical and environmental conditions, children not obeying to rules and fear of losing are highlighted.

When we look at the views of research group on their suggestion on teaching with games, majority of the participants suggested the improvement of physical and environmental conditions, providing in-service training to teachers in physical education and game fields and varying the games in the curriculum. The teachers participated in the study also remarked that necessary materials should be provided in the courses and other courses should also be taught with games.

The first studies relating the teaching with games were conducted in fields such as reading and writing teaching (Özenç, 2007), mathematics (Altunay, 2004; Kılıç, 2007; Yiğit, 2007), computer (Yağız, 2007), effect of game on child development in preschool stage (Aytekin, 2001, Kaya 2011). Kaytez and Durualp (2014), in their studies, stated that, by investigating the studies on teaching with games, preschool teachers and school

managers share the same views in terms of the effect of games on child development and concluded that game is an effective method to be used in special education.

As a result, it was found that most of the preschool teachers believe games contribute to motor, cognitive and social development of children, they are also helpful in terms of expressing themselves, they are effective since the learning is fast and permanent with games and children adopt the rules. It was also concluded that children have a strong memory along with their gaming activities, they develop intelligence, children love their school and friends, and that their creative features have improved. Therefore, it can be said that the teaching with games is an important method that contributes to children in almost all dimensions within the development process. However, in terms of teachers' views, physical and environmental conditions should be improved and the necessity of providing in-service trainings in the field of play education has emerged.

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