Effectiveness of Play-Way Method in Teaching of Environmental Studies at Elementary Level

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Abstract

Play is the natural instinct of a child for development. Through the process of education, a child can develop to its fullest potential. When coming to education, play-way method as a strategy instills and inculcates creativity, interest and psychomotor values in the child. This is greatly emphasized in the young days of the child. Environmental studies is the scientific study of our environment and our position which requires a multidisciplinary approach. But often classroom practices that adopt the traditional mode will kill the spirit of the subject. Introducing play-way method as a strategy in teaching environmental studies will produce, openness towards learning, enthusiasm and strong observation skills. The paper focuses on the effectiveness of play-way method in teaching of environmental studies at elementary level.

Keywords: *Play-way method, Environmental Studies, Elementary level, Effectiveness*

Education opens up the mind, expands it and allows us to improve our life in many ways provided one learns to embrace the means of achieving this aim. It was Plato who rightly stated that the environment one prepares determines the journey the mind would desire to take. For him, education was not imposing something from outside but something developed from within the child. To quote; “Do not train children to learn by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds. So that you may be better able to discover with accuracy, the peculiar bent of the genius of each”. According to Froebel, self-activity is the expression of the innate urges and impulses of the child, and is essential for his harmonious development. Childhood is a period of play and not of work. Activities like dramatization, rhymes, songs and games involve physical participation of the children in something which is fun for them. These should not only be joyful and interesting but need to be well planned by teachers.

Importance of Play-Way Method

Play is a serious matter for a child. It is life itself, cognition and work; it is overcoming of the self. Play-way method of learning is a complete package that enables overall development of the child, in terms of feeling, intellect and skill parameter. It not only focuses on subjective development but also the emotional development of the child as well.

Play develops the feeling of satisfaction among children. Every child is given equal chance and ample of opportunities for learning and participation. Along with knowledge, it inculcates comfort and help children to create a bond with peers and teachers easily. Play gives pleasure, voluntary acceptance with involvement, physical work turns into enjoyable experience, more concentration but no tiredness. There is more freedom.

Theories behind Play-Way

The following are the theoretical principles of play-way method.

a. Learning by doing

Learning by doing some activity is more in agreement with the fundamental urges of the child. This not only leads to a desirable sensory training but also provides opportunity for the satisfaction of urges like self-expression, self-assertion and creativity.

b. Related to life

If we relate the activities in the class room with the life of the child, the child does not feel that he is living in an artificial atmosphere at school and therefore the tendency to avoid the school does not arise.

c. Methods of teaching

Rigid, formal and bookish methods should be replaced by activities natural to the child. These should be based on the needs and interest of the child. Varied methods of teaching avoid monotony.

d. Free Expression

Opportunities should be provided for free expression in any form which may be of interest to the child. This will create a child friendly atmosphere with freedom of expression.

e. Individual difference

The teacher should realize that interests and needs of children are seldom alike. Therefore, while planning education through play-way he should cater to the needs of each child individually.

Advantages of Play-Way

The play-way method has a number of advantages. They are:

a. Natural motivation

Play-way brings the natural urge of the child. He takes keen interest in it. Play gives him happiness and satisfaction. Education is a byproduct of the play-activities.

b. Whole-hearted response

In play-way method there is whole-hearted response of the child and he becomes serious in his work.

c. Balanced development of personality

Play-way provides means for the social, emotional and moral development of the child besides giving individual training.

d. Self-discipline

When the child is engaged in an activity of an interest, he does not need any external control. He leaves according to the self-improved regulations. It becomes self-disciplined.

e. Self-advancement

Play-way ensures self-advancement through self-education

f. Training of the sensory organs

Training of the sensory organs is most considered. This increases the power of observation and sensory learning.

Various Play-Way Activities**a) Dramatic play**

Dramatic play is basically an exercise of the imagination; at the same time, it can also be a valuable learning experience. To a young child, a doll is not just a doll. It is like a real person. A toy telephone can be used to call and talk with someone. Dramatization has immense educational potentialities. It is said that learning takes place best in an emotional situation and dramatization provides for such situations. The emotional catharsis provided in dramatization makes teaching a colourful, lively and joyous activity.

b) Games

Games may be simple games, guessing games or more lively game such as musical chair, simon says, etc. Several types of inexpensive educational games are available in the market. They include matching board, flashing card, passing an order, word building spelling games, making sentences, finding the strange, picture games, jigsaw puzzle etc.

c) Watching the Television

Television programmes can be educational-cum-recreational. Conducting of quiz programmes on a variety of topics is very helpful in enriching the experiences of students.

d) Celebration of Days

Celebration of literacy day, girl child day, aged day, prohibition day, cleanliness day, republic day etc. aim at providing rich educational experiences.

Significance of Play

Play is said to be the language of the child. Play facilitates and encourages sensory and perceptual experience and within the limits of individual endowment, leads to the apprehension of the manipulative and constructive possibilities of both animate and inanimate objects.

“Play” in the words of Froebel, “is the highest phase of child development of human development.... play is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage, and at the same

time, typical of human life as a whole – of the inner hidden natural life in man and all things. It gives, therefore, joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, place with the world. It holds the source of all that is good”.

Playing is a natural process. So, a child actively involves in it. It gives pleasure and satisfaction. Learning takes place naturally through play-way method. It paves way for self-discipline. It gives more opportunities for children’s learning with perception.

Thus, if play is capitalized in a proper manner, we can help the child to release through play-a natural activity of the child-his tension, frustrations and fears as well as his joys and hopes. This can only be done if play activity is purposeful and directed. Without rational, conscious guidance, childish activity degenerates into aimless play instead of preparing for future tasks.

The Play-way in Education

Play being the natural need of the child, Caldwell Cook is the first person, who advocated “way of play” for educating the child. He said “Caldwell Cook believed that proficiency and learning come not from reading and listening but from actions, from doing and from experience, “that good work is more often the result of spontaneous effort, and free interest than of compulsion and forced application. “He regarded play as a means of training individuals and a wonderful method of making school education interesting, and practical. He asserted “only that child learns best, who learns with interest and with a purpose, and sees significance in what he does. “Thus, Caldwell Cook introduced a new way in education popularly known as play-way.

Underlying principles

The play-way method is based on the following principles:

1. Learning process to be conducted through playful activities because they are soothing, purifying and interesting
2. Learning should take place in an atmosphere of freedom without any restraints.
3. Method of imparting should be informal and natural to suit the interest and needs of children.
4. Attitude of teachers should be such as to encourage free expression on the part of the pupils. Enough opportunities should be provided to children for expression.
5. Children should fully enjoy the learning process. They should be active participants in it and responsible for their own progress and development.

Play-Way and Soft Pedagogy

Emphasis on play has evoked a lot of criticism. Emphasis on play means absence of serious work and that education is a tough process where drudgery is a natural part of it. But it must be remembered that play has been advocated only as a ‘way’ of teaching, it does not mean that play will take the place of work and thus eliminate the importance of work. On the other hand, it is an attempt to do the difficult and boring tasks which have to be done in an interesting and joyous way.

Significance of the Study

Environment is a part and parcel of every man's life. There is nothing in this world that is not affected by the environment. Our daily life starts with environmental awareness and ends with environmental awareness. Most of the living and non-living things relate with our environment. Environmental studies influence agriculture, medicine, food etc. In our daily life environmental studies has an important role.

With the introduction of new system of Environmental Studies syllabus at different stages, this subject has undergone tremendous changes. The investigator observed that in this subject in upper primary schools, high schools as well as in teacher's training institutes, more emphasis was laid on theory than on experimentation. It was also seen that the students find it difficult to learn environmental studies as it is taught in a very general (traditional) and uninteresting way. It covered only knowledge aspect of learning and there was no change for the concept formation or generalization, which are the basis of science teaching.

To overcome the above stated problem and also to make EVS teaching and learning more interesting, it became absolutely necessary for the investigator to think of alternative methods. This led to the adoption of the play-way method of teaching environmental studies.

For an effective learning, play is one such wonderful tool to teach pupil to learn environmental studies. It is very essential to teach environmental studies in lower primary schools as it has all the qualities of science and children can learn easily from their routine activities. Testing the effectiveness of play-way methods in the teaching of environmental studies and the extent to which they apply their theoretical knowledge to games assumes greater significance in this context.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study were:

1. To determine the effect of play-way method on achievement in environmental studies at elementary level.
2. To compare the effect of play-way method on achievement in environmental studies at elementary level, with that of activity method.
3. To determine, the effect of play-way method at elementary level, with respect to the following instructional objectives.
 - a. Knowledge
 - b. Understanding
 - c. Application
 - d. Skill

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. The achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method will be high.

2. There is no significant difference between achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method and those taught through activity method.
3. There is no significant difference between achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method and those taught through the activity method, with respect to each of the following instructional objectives
 - a. Knowledge
 - b. Understanding
 - c. Application
 - d. Skill

Methodology in Brief

In the present study, the investigator adopted quasi-experimental method. According to Best and Kahn (2000) "... this design is often used in classroom experiments when experimental and control groups are such naturally assembled groups as intact classes, which may be similar".

Population of the Study

The population for the present investigation includes all the students of standard III of Kerala State Syllabus Schools.

Sample of the study

The present study was conducted on a sample of two divisions of standard III of SCSLP School, Thiruvalla, Kerala State and the control group was taught through the activity method.

Variables

1. Independent Variables

The independent variable for the experimental study was taught through play-way method.

2. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, in the experiment was the pupils' achievement in environmental studies.

Tools

The following tools were used for the study:

1. Lesson plans based on play-way method (Investigator constructed the Lesson plan with the help of the Supervising Teacher and experts in the field)
2. Lesson plans based on activity method (Investigator constructed the Lesson plan with the help of the Supervising Teacher and experts in the field)
3. An achievement test in environmental studies.

Statistical Techniques Used

The statistical analysis of the data collected was done with the help of the following statistical techniques:

1. Descriptive Statistics
2. t test
3. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)

Findings and Conclusions of the Study

1. **To determine the effect of play-way method on achievement in environmental studies at elementary level.**

The achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method is high.

The calculated value of ' t ' is 5.88 which is greater than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. So, the hypothesis, *the achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method will be high*, is accepted

2. **To compare the effect of play-way method on achievement in environmental studies at elementary level, with that of activity method.**

There is a significant difference between achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method and those taught through activity method. The obtained t value is 5.86 and the table value for significant difference for df 36 is 2.58 at 0.01 level ($t = 5.86$; $p < 0.01$). It may therefore be conclusively interpreted that the Achievement in Environmental Studies of students taught through Play way methods is better than those of students taught through Prevailing Activity Oriented method. This clearly indicates that Play way methods is more effective in enhancing the Achievement in Environmental Studies of students when compared to the prevailing Activity Oriented method. So, the **hypothesis**, *there is no significant difference between achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method and those taught through activity method*, is rejected.

3. **To determine the effect of play-way method at elementary level, with respect to the following instructional objectives - Knowledge, Understanding, Application and Skill**

There is a significant difference between achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method and those taught through the activity method, with respect to each of the following instructional objectives Knowledge, Understanding, Application, and Skill. The obtained t value for Knowledge is 10.43, for understanding 10.34, for application 10.54 and Skills 4.84 are greater than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance.

So, the **hypothesis**, *there is no significant difference between achievement in environmental studies of learners taught through play-way method and those taught through the activity method, with respect to each of the following instructional objectives; Knowledge, Understanding, Application, and Skill* is rejected.

Educational Implications of the Study

The present study has several implications for students, teachers and curriculum constructors. The details are given below:

1. Implications for Students

The outcomes of the present investigation indicated that the students who were taught through play-way method scored high marks in achievement test. This indicates that play-way learning inspires and helps even low achievers and slow learners to boost well. Such students underwent tremendous change when play-way method was introduced for teaching-learning process. The learners enjoyed playing together and in turn through the play, they grasped concepts without any deliberate effort.

2. Implications for Teacher

The present investigation throws light on the fact that a teacher can adopt this method to make the learners active and attentive. Teacher can easily recognise the intention of learners from the response and provide motivation through games. While teaching and learning Environmental Studies, play-way method can be adopted to achieve the cognitive outcomes effortlessly. Every prospective teacher must be aware of this teaching-learning method.

3. Implication to Curriculum Construction

Education is the process of imparting knowledge, developing skills and inculcating proper interest, attitudes and values. The present study gives the following guidelines to curriculum constructors. The organization of topics and teaching-learning strategies must be based on modern psychological viewpoints. Curriculum must be revised to meet the needs of time and orientation must be given to teachers through in-service training. Science clubs should be compulsorily organized in every school and should cover a wide range of activities including games.

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