

# Play-Based Learning as a Strategy to Prepare Grade R Learners for Formal Education in Waterberg District of Limpopo, South Africa

Masemola Tshoswane Irene, Maile Simeon, Mashaba Ernest, Ntsana Margaret

Tshwane University of Technology, Tshwane, South Africa

Email: margaretnsn@gmail.com

**How to cite this paper:** Irene, M. T., Simeon, M., Ernest, M., & Margaret, N. (2022). Play-Based Learning as a Strategy to Prepare Grade R Learners for Formal Education in Waterberg District of Limpopo, South Africa. *Creative Education*, 13, 3225-3237.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2022.1310206>

**Received:** August 19, 2022

**Accepted:** October 16, 2022

**Published:** October 19, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

---

## Abstract

Current studies reveal that Grade R teachers in quintile 1 and 2 schools struggle to implement play-based learning for various reasons mainly associated with socio-economic factors such as lack of facilities and resources. The purpose of this study was to investigate foundation phase teachers' ability to implement play-based learning. The context of the investigation was schools experiencing poverty categorized as quintile 1 and 2 according to the Department of Basic Education. The context embodies socio-economic factors associated with poverty. We invoked Montessori's individuality and Piaget's theory to analyze discourses on play-based learning and utilized qualitative approaches to collect data from four qualified teachers in Grade R and eight practitioners participated in the study, and were all from quintiles 1, 2 and 5 located in Waterberg District of Limpopo province. The results suggest that Grade R teachers' immense pressure from school managers to adapt their lessons to make them appear like Grade 1 lessons. We concluded that, while Foundation phase teachers' struggles with improvisation and mitigation of challenges of poverty, their attempts to implement play-based learning is hindered by managers who want to turn Grade R into Grade 1.

## Keywords

Childhood Development, Play-Based Learning, Foundation Phase, Grade R, Poverty

---

## 1. Introduction

Play-based learning is a type of early childhood education based on child-led, open-ended play and sometimes teacher or adult guided activity. Play-based

learning can be regarded as a powerful tool for learning it is actually the foundation for learning. Play-based learning is at the core of early childhood education and teachers and practitioners must foster play-based learning. It is also very important to differentiate between free play and one that is adult initiated. Piaget believed that children develop understanding of the world through play and that adults could encourage this development by relevant intervention. He viewed play-based learning as a means of socially assisted learning and scaffolding. Play can be in a practice of free play (natural and directed by a child) and guided play (child directed but the teacher is involved as a co-player). Free play and guided play has both benefits for children learning. Play creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning later in life (Lester & Russel, 2008).

Children's play unlocks their creativity critical thinking imaginary and develops reading, thinking and problem-solving skills as well as further develops motor skills. It really provides base for foundation for learning. During play with other children vocabulary and language skills are adopted (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2000). Children listen and learn the language she/he hears without realizing what is taking place. They learn to use the language to communicate and learning new vocabulary. When they are playing with their cars or dolls you are likely to hear your words as a teacher or parent. By providing boundless chances for children especially during free play they develop their creativity. Children who are not exposed to play might have difficult time engaging themselves as they won't know what to do without guidance. During play children can solve difficult problems that arise as they engage in play. Puzzles and blocks are excellent basics to provide learners/children with many chances to nurture these important skills.

Children who are intellectually competent tend to be experts' players. Their cognitive abilities lead to more complex play themes and more symbolic pretend performances. The act of playing enhances intellectual growth. Those who play often become intellectually competent. Research points out that children need to play and in doing so reveal their ongoing needs, which then shape the curriculum offered. Play is considered as an educational powerful process that learning will occur spontaneously, even if an adult is not present. Play reveal children's intellectual and emotional needs and play has an educational and developmental function as it enables children to control their behavior and accept the limitations of the real world and furthers the development of the ego and a sense of reality (Southwood, White et al., 2021).

Play activities such as painting water play, sandpit, cutting, drawing and threading beads will be helpful to children in developing fine motor skills that will lead to school readiness. No one can push readiness level, and writing should be not be pushed. Children need to be exposed to play activities, children need to be given chance to develop fine and gross motor skills at a very early age. If children have a good control of their gross motor skills and fine motor skills

they will be able to write and ready in a natural way.

Fine motor skills children will be able to trace and form letters and write firmly. For learners to be able to write between the lines they must have a good control of the small muscles without tiring easily and be able to complete school work. Fine motor skills require children to concentrate on their work (De Witt, 2016). Gross motor skills complex and rely, on the muscles and neurological system working in harmony. Influences balance coordination and form the basis for fine motor skills. Poor cross motor skills is not always a medical issue, children given chance to balance, catch up can't ride a bicycle going up and down , poor eye hand coordination example lack of rhythm, difficulty changing directions.

This study originates from the recognition of problems encountered by Grade 1 learners in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) of mathematics and language (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2013). The Foundation Phase is the first phase of formal schooling in South Africa, and part of the GET band that is very important in establishing the basis on which learners will grow in formal schooling. Learners who do well in Foundation Phase, in general tend to do well in the later phases (Robertson, Morrissey, & Rouse, 2018). Grade R is a year of informal schooling before Grade 1. The Grade R curriculum was first outlined in the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grade R to 9, 2002 as part of Foundation Phase. In 2012, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement document was implemented for Grade R as first class before formal schooling in the Foundation Phase. It is now regarded as part of Foundation Phase by DBE, CAPS (2012), and it is the part of DBE National Curriculum (Essack, 2011; Davin, 2015).

It's believed that the best way to accomplish the objectives of Grade R teaching and learning is through play, where teachers and practitioners support learners so that they can develop by themselves. I will argue that it is very critical for Practitioners, teachers, school management teams and School governing body to understand how a grade R child learn and develop.

## 2. Literature Review

Literature on play-based learning abounds and describes knowledge on different aspects and theories related to play-based learning. In researching about this phenomenon we begin with reference to current policies outlining the constitution of Grade R. The age of a child entering Grade R is age four turning five by 30 June in the year of admission (South African Schools Act no 84, 1996). Premature entry into the school may result in emotional and learning problems, which may have an effect on the child's entire school career (Gordon & Browne, 2016). According to Davin (2015), the Grade R class may provide the child with the necessary experiential background and sincere desire and willingness to undergo formal instruction. The admission age to an independent school for Grade 1 is age 5 turning six by 30 June in the year of admission, or by the latest in the

year in which the child turns seven. There are two exceptions allowed in the South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996.

Research on grade R begins with early brain development and shows that a child's brain is not fully formed at birth (Trawick-Smith, 2013), and that the brain develops during childhood, but the foundation is laid in the first three years, because the basic structures of the brain must still develop (Maree, 2016). All children are internally driven to learn (Gordon & Browne, 2016). Trawick-Smith (2013) utilizes maturation theory, the oldest theories of development, to explain how children learn and behave as they do because they have inborn tendencies to do so. Environment plays an important role, whereas behaviorist's theory offers a very different perspective on child development by saying most of what children are and will become is derived from experience regarding the child's mind as "blank slate" or an "empty vessel" to be gradually filled by the environment. Development in all areas from personality type, ability to read, to career preferences is a result of environmental influence (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2000).

Another set of literature deal with the development of motor skills. Children at this age 3 - 5 have greater gross motor skills for example they can walk, they can kick, throw and they have improved fine motor skills but they still need help teachers and practitioners need to assist learners to develop fully. The four year olds are developing confidence in their physical ability. They still need to be supervised during active play. They are learning more about their body and how to control it. In play based learning learners will be able to do things they hadn't been able to do before, their balance will get better with time. Motor skills help children to gain strength and confidence in their bodies (Blom, Parker, & Keevey, 2007). Children are able to perform everyday functions like play and able to navigate space. Gross motor skills help children on how to coordinate and control their body movement and lay the foundation to be able to complete fine motor skills movement such as pinching/grasping. How they hold their pencils hands/fingers there will be better control over a pencil confidence improve in them (Wadley, 1974). Play dough pushing with your thumb and fingers, build strength roll it, squash pinching using index and thumbs squeezing by using a peck, moving an objects from one container to another they can also improve fine motor skills by tying the shoe laces. Eye hand coordination skills, it is hard for them to grasp smaller objects, toothpicks and more challenging visual motor skills and motor flow focusing with eyes neck hands molding their mouth.

Play is very important for children to use large cross motor skills in everyday situations. Movement with the coordination of the arms, legs torso and other large body parts and movement. Learners need to be given chance to play in order to develop their cross motor skills or large skills. Opportunity must be given to children in an open area where they will be running it can be in a form of playing a game, hopping on one form or leaping the activity will help children to develop their control and coordination of their bodies (Wadley, 1974). Well controlled Gross motor skills provide the core strength important for fine motor

skills which is referred to small muscles. The fine motor skills refer to small movements in the hands, fingers, toes, feet, wrists, lips and tongue. If the skills are not practiced properly at the right age a child can suffer from developmental delays (Wadley, 1974).

Children need to develop holistically which includes physical, emotional, cognitive social and physical development. Skills do not develop independently in the body. All parts of the body work together and affect each other to give an example for a child to catch a ball the eye muscles and the hands must work together for children to be able to write the child need to be able to control the pencil and track the eyes moving from left to right and eyes be able to cross the midline. Both fine and gross motor skills development is very important because academic success relies on a child having good control of their muscles (Wadley, 1974). Children need good posture to sit on a chair without getting tired, children must be able to grip the pencil when writing or coloring, eyes must be able to track the words and sentences while reading. Children will be able to form letters when writing. Well-developed gross motor skills and fine motor skills will give learners level of independence. Children must be able to wear their shoes tie the shoes, dress themselves, brush their teeth and be able to cut on the dotted line and be able to comb their hair (Blom, Parker, & Keevey, 2007).

Literature is indicating that children grow and develop at different rates. According to Gordon and Browne (2016: p. 100), each child has an inner timetable that is irreplaceable, which means that each child is ready to learn according to his or her maturation process. The readiness factor is to be respected and may or may not match with the rest of the children in the class. This is what makes teaching thrilling and challenging. Schissel, Leung, López-Gopar and Davis (2018) stated that development is the term used to describe the changes in a child's physical growth, and ability to learn social, emotional behaviour, thinking, and communication skills needed for life. All of these are linked and each depends on and influences the other domains. The brain of the child develops faster in the first five years as supported by Erikson's theory, which is viewed as one of the most comprehensive (Maree, 2016) and that covers human development from birth through old age. Every child is unique and each one is a sum of a multitude of parts, and as such they are different from anyone else in terms of development and learning while playing.

Play is the work of children, and exploration is integral to children's science learning. Moyles (2005) indicates that play is very distinctive of children in the age range of two to six and is beneficial in development. Giving children time to explore and play with new materials is an important part of the learning cycle. Time of play and inquiry foster rooted learning, which is secondary and biological in the play practices and provides the foundation for obvious intentional learning (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Ginsburg (2007) states that play allow children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, handiness, physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy development, as it is through play that children at an early age engage and interact in

the world around them. Play allows children to create and explore a world they master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles. It is through play that children develop skills they will use in their school years. Both gross and motor development occurs through play and if they feel comfortable and supported, they will push themselves to new experiments and motor skills.

Pyne (2014) stresses that children learn by doing while their doing fall short of actual world work. Blaskova et al. (2020) stated that play gives children an opportunity to develop skills, to learn, to solve problems, and grow healthy connections. If they are physically active during play, it also brings healthy well-being. Children increase their problem solving skills and learn to think critically, recollect, and gain more understanding through play. They also gain abilities through games and puzzles, and it gives children the opportunity to test their beliefs about the world (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010). According to Robertson, Morrissey, and Rouse (2018), during play, children learn important lessons in life, like sharing, fair play, interpersonal communication, respect, and getting along when playing with children of the group. He further stresses that in order to bring up kids with good values and respect, it is essential to understand the importance of play in early childhood. It is from play that every child comes to form his or her individuality and role in the community. Excell and Linington (2015) say play gives young children the freedom to address their needs and follow their interests through exploration and discovery. They further stresses that play is the main vehicle through which children integrate knowledge in a meaningful way, learn self-expression, and gain a sense of competence.

Children are naturally motivated to play, and play-based programmes build on this motivation, using play as a context for learning. In play, children explore and experiment, discover, and solve problems in visionary and playful ways. Excell and Linington (2015) posit that play is voluntary, it is pleasurable, it offers a sense of engagement, and it cultivates relationships with oneself and others. United Nations High Commission on Human Rights declared play as a fundamental right of every child, whereas (Cople & Bredekamp, 2009) called play a central component in developmentally appropriate preparation. The curriculum in Grade R is realised through daily programmes (DBE, CAPS, 2012). Daily programme is specially planned to foster, develop and enhance each child creativity, independence, emotional, social development as well as motor skills and adjusting to school routines. The South African curriculum for Grade R is divided into three sections: teacher guided activities, child-led activities, and routines.

Extensive literature demonstrates the major importance of play as development. First, it is indicated that play-based learning is necessary for holistic development which means the development of the physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and social abilities in a young child so that she/he is capable of facing the demands and challenges of everyday life. When these areas are combined, it enables the young child to live to its happiest and fullest. Learning about child development involves studying patterns of growing up.

Through play-based learning, the child develops greater awareness of their

emotions, awareness of feelings such as fear, joy, and happiness, as well as an enhanced ability to self-regulate these emotions. According to [Excell and Linington \(2015\)](#), emotional development is influenced by many factors in a child, such as educational experience, socio-economic status, role of the community, and socio cultural background. [McIlroy \(2020\)](#) agrees by saying emotional development is seen as learning to deal with difficulties and adversity. Listening, negotiating, and compromising are challenging to 4 to 5 year olds; working with others can help them develop awareness of different people around them. Play also helps to build positive leadership qualities for children who are naturally inclined to direct and control their impulses. Play teaches children social skills and also helps young brains to develop. If learners are playing together, they learn to appreciate each other and social emotional development strengthens ([McIlroy, 2020](#)).

Play-based learning can be regarded as the foundation for all learning for young children, and giving a child the time and a few basic toys can provide a variety of valuable learning opportunities. Play is how children begin to understand and process their world; [Anderson-McNamee and Bailey \(2010\)](#) concur, indicating that children gain knowledge through play. They learn to think, remember, solve problems, and this gives children the opportunity to test their beliefs. During play, children learn important social skills like cooperation, negotiation, teamwork, and conflict resolution ([McIlroy, 2020](#)). During play they learn emotional skills like self-confidence, self-motivation, independence, and perseverance.

Play-based learning is also necessary for cognitive development which is regarded as intellectual functions of the young child which includes creativity, perceptions, linguistics development, thinking, reasoning, communication, collaboration, and intelligence ([Excell & Linington, 2015](#)). Other researchers describe cognitive development as intellectual creativity and acquiring skills for learning, whilst others are saying it is how young learners think, explore, and figure out things. It is the development of knowledge, skills, problem solving, and personalities, which help children to think about and understand the world around them. We always need to promote a child's cognitive development by engaging in quality communications on a daily basis. Developing a child's cognitive skills comes with the exposure to play and learning real concepts to focus on in early years. Play is an aspect of learning that children enjoy because it is non-threatening and the environment surrounding play is engaging ([McIlroy, 2020](#)).

Most importantly, play-based learning is critical for physical development. Physical development refers to the whole body, gross and fine motor skills. It is a vital part of growing up as children learn to master control of their body for example walking and sitting etc. Fine motor skills are abilities usually acquired during the childhood as part of motor learning. By the time learner reach two years of age, almost all children are able to stand up, jumping, walking, skipping, climb etc. These skills are build upon improved and better controlled throughout early childhood and continue in refinement throughout. Gross motor skills



require a high degree of control and precision in small muscles of the hand. Using larger muscles in the body to allow for balance, coordination and physical strength.

Research (McIlroy, 2020) shows that where there is movement there is learning. More activities must be focused on cross motor skills. We learn from head to toe. Learners first gain control of their body, they start to build strength in their bodies. Learners between the ages of 3 - 5 need lots of opportunities to practice movement to play. That is how they learn and grow.

Current research (Yazigy, 2022; Southwood, White et al., 2021) shows that play-based learning fosters social development in children. Social development refers to how young children interact with others and communicate with the world. It is an important part of a person's overall health, wellbeing, and happiness throughout his/her life, and part of the development of the child's awareness of their social side. Children enjoy playing accommodatingly with other children and easily develop friendships. They engage in simple games or activities that require them to practice patience and language. Research finds that children who enter school with poor vocabularies often experience difficulties in learning to read.

They also report that the size of a child's early vocabulary predicts the child's later academic achievements (Yazigy, 2022; UNICEF, 2006). Researchers are saying children develop higher form of language than normal during play hence play is regarded as critical for developing the oral language skills that children need. Play is making a very big difference in the lives of the children. They develop a sense of self as a social being in social world that includes a broader community. Social development involves children's ability to interact with others and regulate their behaviour. It is closely linked to emotional and cognitive development. At the pre-operational stage, children start to gain a greater awareness of their own individuality.

Yazigy (2022), Southwood, White et al. (2021) point out that children learn morals from play-based learning as they begin to understand what is good and what is wrong, acceptable, and unacceptable behaviour. Learners must be able to appreciate and care for the world they live in. It is an activity that must be guided by the teacher or parents so that young learners can make informed choices, and can take responsibility for their choices (Yazigy, 2022). According to Piaget (1952), children between the ages of 5 to 10 see the world through a subjection morality, meaning they think that authority figures such as parents and teachers have rules that they must follow absolutely. According to Kohlberg (1974), young children at this age base their morality on punishment and obedience orientation. He believes that young children behave morally because they fear authority and try to avoid punishment.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by theories of teaching and learning. Maria Montessori



and Piaget trap the research within the cognitive development and child development theory. The theorists aim at how young children learn and develop. The theory of cognitive development by Piaget describes the structure and development of human thought processes and how those processes affect the way a person understands and perceives the world. The child development theory by Maria Montessori emphasizes individuality and independence in learning where children are seen as inherently curious and learning driven. Learning is a holistic approach emphasizing all aspects of development, rather than on attaining specific pieces of information (Lilliard, 2017).

The stages of development were looked at in relation to play-based learning in enhancing learning in Grade R classes. Factors influencing this research study such as play, benefits of play, whole child, and development are also reviewed since they form an integral part of learning. An attempt was made to analyze to what extent Grade R practitioners and teachers adapt the environment to meet the learning needs in the reception class (Grade R).

The stages of Piaget and Montessori were used as point of departure in this research study. Piaget in Santrock (1994: p. 199) observed the development of thoughts in his own children and used this observations to investigate how children think. Piaget believed that children think basically different from adults. Piaget's theory relies on both maturational and environmental factors. It is called maturational because it sets out sequence of cognitive stages that is controlled by heredity and heredity affects our daily learning. Montessori stresses that play content should come from the child's own imagination and experience.

#### 4. Research Methodology

We chose qualitative research approach for this study. The main reason was to analyse of teachers' individual and collective social actions, thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions. We primarily wanted to understand the phenomena from the participants' perspectives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Through qualitative research we were able to interact with the informative participants and gained deeper insight regarding play-based learning. A sample of eight teachers (8) selected from three schools in Waterberg District, Limpopo Province was studied to understand the population from which it was drawn. The three schools that formed part of the study were from quintile 1, 2, and 5 schools. Two of the quintile schools did not perform as expected during Annual National Assessments (ANA), and one of the quintile schools performed very well during ANA.

We used open-ended interviews to collect data from the selected participants. The techniques employed allowed participants to give their views within the scope of the questions asked. In this way a variety of opinions were drawn from participants reflecting information driving their experiences. We continued with the interviews until new themes no longer emerge from the collected data and this process is termed data saturation (Creswell, 2007). We coded data and presented it in themes.

## 5. Results

### ***Theme 1: Basic understanding of play-based learning***

The findings indicate that Practitioners in quintile 1 and 2 schools managed to show a basic understanding of play-based learning in Grade R classes. Schools in South Africa are organized in relations of “quintiles” with the poorest of schools being in quintile 1 and 2. These schools are mostly located in villages and in townships. The schools in quintiles 1 and 2 are mostly under-performing and lack resources. Most the practitioners indicated challenges faced by their schools regarding play-based learning. Practitioners indicated how powerful play-based learning is but unsuccessful they did not explain play-based learning in depth. They indicated that it brings fun, interest, within the classroom. It was also indicated that play gives learners confidence, they become creative especially when they are in a free play. Teachers in quintile 5 school managed to show moderate to comprehensive understanding of play-based learning within Grade R. This was a clear indication that more workshops from Department of Education are needed to capacitate teachers and practitioners.

### ***Theme 2: Play-based learning as development***

Teachers managed to indicate fine motor and cross motor skills as critical during play as they are critical for writing. Some of the teachers indicated play based learning as development of a child holistically. Meaning learners develop socially, intellectually, emotionally, mentally and physically. Literature supports what practitioners and teachers are saying children use fine and motor skills in their play.

Teachers indicated that learners react to each other socially during process, they think about what they are doing or going to do, they use of language to talk to each other or to themselves and they respond emotionally to the play activity. The combination of these different types of these behaviours is key to cognitive development of young children. Until the age of nine children’s cognitive structures functions best in this united mode because children play draws upon all these behaviours, it is a very effective vehicle for learning.

### ***Theme 3: Pressure from school managers***

However, play-based learning is not implemented for the betterment of the learners. The following responses serve to illustrate these viewpoints.

*“Play-based learning is very important yes but only if children are allowed to play. My learners in my class are not allowed to play and this is due to management of the school. They are saying I must not waste time playing with learners outside learners must read and write”.*

Teachers indicated that it is not implemented in their schools and this is due to pressure from school management teams. They are not afforded an opportunity or supported in implementing play-based learning. This is what was indicated by some of the respondent:

*“According to me play-based learning is not there in our schools our policy is not clear regarding what to do in Grade R. I don’t have much to say about*

*play-based learning (smiling)*”.

#### **Theme 4: Forced academic learning**

From data it was clear that play-based learning is not fully implemented and learning is forced to Grade R learners. The only option for teaches it will be implementation of formal teaching and learning in Grade R classes which is called “*water down Grade 1*”, where learners are expected to do formal activities like writing reading and writing formal tests and yet they are not physically fully developed. Practitioners feel that they need to implement play-based learning as expected and as per policy. The issue of forcing Grade R learners to learn like Grade 1 must be avoided at all costs. Grade R should be aligned to pedagogical practice and not water down Grade R. Grade R requires active, child centred, participatory methods that are difficult to assimilate into school system. A South African study found that 65% of Grade R enter Grade 1 without the necessary skills.

## **6. Discussion**

This study indicates that the children who do not actively engage in play will not successfully improve the learning trajectory of children in terms of cross and fine motor skills which are regarded as physical development and vocabulary enrichment. Montessori believes in helping learners to reach their full potential. The method of Montessori is based on three key factors: the specialized training of the teacher, specially prepared environment and multi age grouping of children. Montessori has called for free activity within a prepared environment to allow the child to develop independence in all areas according to his 3 or her inner psychological directives. Montessori observed four distinct periods or planes in human development. She saw different characteristics, learning modes and developmental imperatives active in each of these planes and called for educational approaches specific to each period.

Piaget based his theory on the idea of mental maps that allowed a child to build cognitive structures as they responded to their experiences within physical environment and moved on from the reflexes of birth to the development of complex mental activities. Play has an important role in the physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development and it is a learning experience (DBE, CAPS, 2012) supported by (Aliza, Zahara and Rohaty, 2011). Play contributes to children’s general personality development allowing them the opportunity to practice their linguistic, cognitive and social skills. Play is associated with creativity, especially the ability to be less literal and more flexible in ones thinking and promotes focus and concentration. We strongly recommend that learners learn through play-based learning because it is a legitimate right in early childhood and one of the most natural pathways to exploration and play-based learning impacts the development of children social and cognitive abilities and academic skills.

## **7. Conclusion**

The emphasis of this article was on the importance of play-based learning as key

approach to teaching and learning in Grade R. The study was underpinned by Montessori and Piaget theories which support play-based learning. The study view play-based learning as a key vehicle to drive teaching and learning in Grade R. We need to know and understand that some children develop at different rates some children achieve milestones early while some children take several months to achieve the same milestones. Gross motor skills are an important part of early childhood development. It is very important to monitor and support the development of gross motor skills and fine motor skills. The way we prepare and expose learners has a direct impact on their future learning. Through play children learn to socialize, solve problems, think, collaborate, leadership skills, pleasurable, connects with their imagination, environment, and the world.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### References

- Aliza, A., Zahara, A., & Rohaty, M. (2011). Teaching and Learning through Play. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 14, 15-20.
- Anderson-McNamee, J. K., & Bailey, S. J. (2010). The Importance of Play in Early Childhood Development. *Montana State University Extension*, 4, 1-4.
- Blaskova, L. J., Le Courtois, S., Baker, S. T., Gibson, J. L., Ramchandani, P. G., O'Farrelly, C., & Fink, E. (2020). Participant Engagement with Play Research—Examples and Lessons Learned from the Centre for Play in Education, Development, and Learning. *International Journal of Play*, 9, 365-381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2020.1843804>
- Blom, R., Parker, B., & Keevey, J. (2007). *The Recognition and of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in South Africa*. Country Background Report Prepared for the OECD Thematic Review on Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning. SAQA (South African Qualification Framework).
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (2000). *How People Learn. Brain Mind, Experience and School* (Expanded ed.). Learning from Speculation to Science, National Academy Press.
- Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2009). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* (3rd ed.). National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Davin, R. (2015). *Handbook for Grade R Teaching*. Pearson Education South Africa Pty Ltd.
- De Witt, M. W. (2016). *The Young Child in Context: A Psycho-Social Perspective* (2nd ed.). Van Schaik Publishers.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2013). *Annual Performance Plan 2013-2014*. Department of Basic Education.
- Department of Education of Basic Education (DBE) & Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)* (2012).
- Essack, A. B. (2011). *An Exploration of Teacher Beliefs and Practices within a Context of*

- Effective Pedagogy in Grade R/Reception Year Classes in the Greater Durban Area of KwaZulu-Natal*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Excell, L., & Linington, V. (Eds.) (2015). *Teaching Grade R*. Juta (Pty) Limited.
- Ginsburg, K. R. (2007). The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds. *Pediatrics*, *119*, 182-191. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-2697>
- Gordon, A. M., & Browne, K. W. (2016). *Beginnings & Beyond: Foundations in Early Childhood Education*. Cengage Learning.
- Kohlberg, L. (1974). Education, Moral Development and Faith. *Journal of Moral Education*, *4*, 5-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724740040102>
- Lester, S., & Russell, S. (2008). *Play for a Change: Play Policy and Practice: A Review of Contemporary Perspectives*. Play England.
- Lilliard, A. S. (2017). *Montessori: The Science behind the Genius* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Maree, J. G. (2016). Career Construction as a Way of Resolving Career Indecision. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, *30*, 170-192. <https://doi.org/10.20853/30-3-665>
- McIlroy, T. (2020). *Empowered Parents*. <https://empoweredparents.co/about-tanja/>
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in Education: Evidence-Based Inquiry*. My Education Lab Series, Pearson.
- Moyles, J. (2005). *The Excellence of Play*. Open Press University.
- Piaget, J. (1952). *The Origins of the Intelligence in Children* (pp. 1-30). WWW Norton and Company. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11494-000>
- Pyne, J. (2014). The Governance of Gender Non-Conforming Children: A Dangerous Enclosure. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, *11*, 79-96.
- Robertson, N., Morrissey, A. M., & Rouse, E. (2018). Play-Based Learning Can Set Your Child up for Success at School and beyond. *Science Education News*, *67*, 50-51.
- Santrock, J. (1994). *Child Development*. Brown and Benchmark.
- Schissel, J. L., Leung, C., López-Gopar, M., & Davis, J. R. (2018). Multilingual Learners in Language Assessment: Assessment Design for Linguistically Diverse Communities. *Language and Education*, *32*, 167-182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2018.1429463>
- Southwood, F., White, M. J., Brookes, H., Pascoe, M., Ndhami, M., Yalala, S., Mahura, O., Mossmer, M., Oosthuizen, H., Brink, N., & Alcock, K. (2021). Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Vocabulary Development in Young South African Children. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, Article ID: 642315. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.642315>
- Trawick-Smith, J. (2013). *Early Childhood Development: A Multicultural Perspective* (pp. 271-283). Pearson Higher Ed.
- UNICEF [United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund] (2006). *The state of the World's Children. Reaching the Excluded and the Invisible Children of the World*. UNICEF for Every Child's Health, Library of Congress.
- Wadley, A. (1974) *Just Playing*.
- Yazigy, A. J. (2022). The Need for an Integrated Preschool EFL Curriculum in Lebanon. *BAU Journal-Society, Culture and Human Behavior*, *3*, Article No. 1. <https://doi.org/10.54729/CEBQ8069>