

Capturing Early Childhood Educators' Learning Process in the New Normal: A Case Study of a Group Childcare Center in British Columbia, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Childhood educators are adjusting as they transition from the global pandemic to the new normal. This qualitative study explored the learning processes facilitated by teachers for children in a group childcare center in British Columbia, Canada, during the new normal. The case study identified six teachers who were purposefully identified based on the following criteria: being licensed childhood educators, teaching in the facility, and showing a willingness to participate in the study. The twenty young children were likewise chosen considering these conditions: they are enrolled in the facility, aged three to four,

and their parents gave their written consent. In-depth interviews, classroom observations, photographs, and field notes were utilized. Trustworthiness was also observed in the study. Findings reveal three emerging themes: *engaging children in deliberate play-based activities streamlining classroom management, and challenging and rewarding learning*. The study concludes that the teachers' learning process is characterized by high learner engagement in deliberate play-based activities. The facilitators of learning have to streamline their classroom management through creative scaffolding, collaboration, and modifications in their teaching and pacing. Facilitating learning is a confluence of challenges, job fulfillment, and positive impact. Thus, further investigation may be conducted to verify the findings in other childcare centers in British Columbia, Canada.

Keywords— Education, childhood educators, learning process, new normal, and child care center, qualitative, Canada

INTRODUCTION

The educational and developmental benefits of play have come under scrutiny as kindergarten classrooms have shifted toward a more academic focus in recent years (Ashiabi, 2007; Russell, 2011). To maximize children's future academic achievement, the current standards have strongly emphasized teaching academic abilities as early as possible (Miller & Almon, 2009). As a result, there is currently more emphasis on teacher-led academic instruction (Ashiabi, 2007; Van Oers & Duijkers, 2013), and children are being viewed as passive recipients of knowledge (Weisberg et al., 2013). Because of this, many kindergartners are spending less time playing (Bergen, 2002; Miller & Almon, 2009). There is an ongoing discussion among scholars over what constitutes human behavior and how to characterize the idea of children's play.

A practical-knowledge conflict arises when professionals' actual behavior differs from their advocated behavior. Additionally, a Canadian study (Newbould et al., 2022) indicated that young children in daycare were reported to engage in 1.54 minutes per hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical exercise when attending childcare. This is disturbing because Canada has a high childcare facility attendance rate, and children's physical activity levels drop with age. Childhood educators must incorporate physical exercise into everyday programming and encourage active play to reach the early childhood population. Opportunities for physical activity in childcare remain scarce and underappreciated, despite the

advantages of physical movement during early development.

All of the requirements, expectations, and other issues in this new normal have made studying education an essential and popular topic (Grageda et al., 2023). Early childhood educators, however, have not received much attention. Furthermore, little is known about the education they received in these institutions. Early childhood educators are coping with this particular and challenging time caused by the worldwide epidemic. Along with their safety and health, children's educational experiences in daycare centers under the new normal are a developing concern. In this case, I want to explore how childhood educators support learning for children in group childcare (ages 3-5) in the context of the new normal.

FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the British Columbia Learning Framework, the *First Peoples Principles of Learning*, which requires a program of activities to provide children with opportunities to grow according to their developmental milestones. The theories Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, and Urie Bronfenbrenner posited also played a critical role in the study. In collaboration with the government, the First Nations Steering Committee and the *First Peoples Principles of Learning* were developed by the Ministry of Education. This was done to change the education and early learning system in British Columbia to reflect indigenous viewpoints, knowledge, values, and understandings (Framework for Early Learning [ECC], 2019). The principle states the following: “(a) *Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, family, community, land, spirits, and ancestors;* (b) *Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place);* (c) *Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions;* (d) *Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities;* (e) *Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge;* (f) *Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story;* (g) *Learning involves patience and time;* (h) *Learning requires the exploration of one's identity;* and (i) *Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.*” These principles are intended to inspire pedagogies for all children, families, and communities, regardless of diversity.

Additionally, Ambrose et al. (2010) assert that “learning is a process, not a result.” Knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes can all change due to learning. Additionally, Gardner (1993), referenced by Dietze and Kashin (2019a),

postulated that “Children’s learning grows through children doing things, not only from imitating what they observe others do.” Learning is a developmental process that interacts with other developmental processes in a student’s life. As such, students enter the classrooms not only with skills, knowledge, and abilities but also with social and emotional experiences that affect what they value, how they see themselves and others, and how they will engage in the learning process (Ambrose et al., 2010). The foundation of this learning process happens in early learning. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (2008) defines early learning as it applies to programs for children from birth to age eight and includes programs for children before they enter formal environments. It believes “early learning refers to the emerging and expanding of young children’s physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and creative capacities” (Atkinson, 2019).

Learning approaches are, therefore, essential to children’s holistic development. Martin (2021) emphasized Piaget’s theory of constructivism, where he saw children as actively constructing their understanding of the world for themselves and as active seekers of solutions to problems. Early childhood professionals recognize the importance of child-initiated activity for meaningful learning and development. Learning through experience is often called “discovery learning.” Play is a key tenet of Piaget’s cognitive development approach. This reinforces the importance of stimulating play environments that allow children to follow their interests. The author further cited that being allowed to experiment and explore through play provides children with opportunities to construct knowledge. It also creates situations where meaningful interactions between peers and adults can take place. South China Morning Post (2019) further posits that for children to be equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century, a child-centered approach should be provided, adding, “A child-centered approach to learning views children as active participants who are capable and competent learners.”

The critical importance of play is likewise highlighted in Vygotsky’s constructs, pointing out intelligence as the capacity to learn through instruction—the role of culture in this learning process. Vygotsky believed that play and imagination were vehicles for learning and the child’s holistic development. The emphasis given to social and collaborative activities can be demonstrated through play experiences. Practitioners can turn the theory into practice by matching play and learning tasks to children’s interests and current development, planning a child-centered curriculum, using observation to identify the ZPD for a child and responding with interactions that scaffold children’s learning, assisting children

in their emerging view of the world they inhabit, and observing the potential development and current needs of children.

From an ecological theory perspective, Urie Bronfenbrenner helped examine how environmental influences contribute to a child's play experiences. His model outlines the relationship between children's environments and their interactions in play and human development (Dietze & Kashin, 2019b). It provides the outline of Bronfenbrenner's five major systems. Each part of the system shows how play is influenced. Microsystem refers to the setting where children live, including home, early learning experiences, and the neighborhood. The microsystem considers children's direct interactions with parents, peers, early learning teachers, and groups that apply to children's cultural context. The mesosystem refers to the people and places outlined in the microsystem. The mesosystem includes the beliefs, interactions, connections, and relationships among parents, extended family members, early learning teachers, and children. Ecosystem denotes experiences or influences from external people in social settings or forces. The chronosystem focuses on the patterning of environmental events, transitions through the life process, and the timing of events.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This case study aimed to describe the learning processes facilitated by six full-time Licensed Early Childhood Education teachers in a group daycare center. Given the opportunity to observe the twenty children in their classrooms, this empirical investigation ascertained their learning processes as children engaged in their play activities during the new normal.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This investigation used a case study, which examines a case (or instances) within a real-life, modern context or environment (Yin, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2016), case study research is a qualitative approach where the researcher investigates a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (such as observations, interviews, audio-visual material and documents, and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes. A case study is an event of some kind that occurs in a restricted environment, according to Miles and Huberman (2014).

Research Site

This study was conducted in a Canadian daycare facility. According to Bhattacharjee (2012), the research setting is a “physical, social, and cultural site in which the researcher conducts the study. The researcher studied the participants in their natural setting, the classroom where children are in the context of the New Normal. The author further espoused that the setting is appropriate for the study because it allows for the embeddedness and flexibility of the researcher in the cultural setting of the participants.”

This non-profit daycare facility is run by the Board of Directors and managed by an Early Childhood Education teacher. It is a licensed facility or center for infants and toddlers, a 3-5 Program, kindergarten, and before and after school care. It has a total of 30 children on the premises. This daycare facility is composed of 3 rooms; one for the Infants and Toddler Program, another for the 3-5 Program, and one for kindergarten. The area is fenced, with a playground in the backyard. This study focused on the 3 to 5 group care program handled by six teachers in different shifts from 7:00 AM- 6:00 PM. The facility is a play-based daycare, and it has an hour of circle time engaging in language and literature for three sets in a day for 20 minutes per circle time. The rest of the day integrates math, science, social studies, art, music and movement, dramatic play, and indoor and outdoor activities through play.

Based on the data generated from the in-depth interviews, class observations, artifacts, and field notes, three themes emerged from the study: *Engaging Children in Deliberate Play-based Activities*, *Streamlining Classroom Management*, and *Challenging and Rewarding Learning*.

Participants

A childcare center or facility comprised of the participating school. A purposeful sampling method was utilized to get an appropriate sample of the participants. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling is a sampling technique used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. In this case study, the participants were identified according to the following criteria: the teacher-participants have to be licensed early childhood educators; they are currently connected to the said facility; and they also expressed willingness to participate in the study. On the other hand, the twenty children were identified as participants considering the following conditions: they have to be between the ages of 3 and 5; they are currently enrolled in the group daycare program; and their parents expressed their written consent to be observed during the learning process.

Six female childhood educators voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Most of them were between the ages of 23 and 48 and were all licensed in Early Childhood Education from different nationalities such as Indian, Filipino, Malaysian, and Canadian. All the participants had experienced teaching in early childhood. On the other hand, nine boys and 11 girls likewise participated in the study. Out of the nine boys, six were three years old, and the four girls were of the same age. Three boys and seven girls were four years old when the study was conducted. In this study, the children are mostly Canadians, one Sri Lankan, one Indian, and one Brazilian.

Research Ethics Protocol

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the researcher masked the participants' names to avoid concluding that they contained identifiable information. In this case study, the names of the participants were withheld by using pseudonyms. I likewise secured the certificate of approval from the LC Research Ethics Committee and took into consideration the ethical frameworks of Lourdes College to respect the privacy of the person, beneficence, and justice and follow the informed consent that composed the voluntary participation, participation selection, procedures on conducting the data collection, duration of the research, the risks and benefits, confidentiality, and the sharing of results. I adequately protected the confidentiality of research participants, clients, organizations, third parties, or others who are the sources of information presented in this manuscript. After obtaining the participants' permission, letters of assent/consent duly signed by the parents were kept confidential. In addition, I took full accountability for the ethical considerations of retaining the fundamental values of academic integrity: honesty, respect, trust, fairness, responsibility, and courage.

Data Collection

Yin (2014) used documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts to gather the data. Class observations, lesson plans or guides from teachers, field notes, and in-depth interviews were employed in this study. The six teachers who have worked at the group daycare for three to five years were interviewed in-depth to elicit data on how they facilitate the children's learning process and the children's response to the tasks or activities prepared for them. The in-depth individual interview with the teachers lasted for ninety minutes, and a spacing of 2 to 3 days after each interview was done following the protocol of Seidman (2006). The spacing allowed the researcher to debrief with her mentor and transcribe the narrative

subject for confirmation by the participants. According to Merriam and Tisdell's (2009) theory, interviews are utilized when seeing people's behavior, feelings, or interpretations of their environment is impossible. After complying with the necessary protocols, I observed classes using guided observation sheets. Field notes were likewise utilized in the study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a way by which researchers can convince readers and themselves that their research findings are important (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By adding the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to the standard qualitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) improved the idea of trustworthiness. In this case study, member checking, drafting the triangulation matrix, auditing, and audit trails were made to meet the evaluative criteria of trustworthiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme One: Engaging Children in Deliberate Play-based Activities

From the preceding theme, three categories were captured, such as *children's participation and cautious implementation of play-based activities*.

Category 1: Children's Participation

The teacher-participants define children's participation as appreciating values which means that the children not only understand shapes and colors but also learn to be polite and appreciative, as shown in the following exemplars:

...and not only learning the subjects like shapes and colors but manners wise... whenever they eat, they know they remember how to sit down properly and being polite saying thank, saying am their very appreciative." (Participant 4, Lines 80-81).

Furthermore, the teacher-participants described children's participation as asking questions, doing creative and hands-on activities in arts and crafts through play, and executing fine motor skills and activities through play. Children's participation also includes demonstrating their overt behavior or responses, such as laughing, giggling, smiling, modeling, and sharing with their parents the joys caught in the various activities in the classroom. The study's disclosures find consonance with the postulation of Ambrose et al. (2010), asserting that "learning is a process, not a result." Knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes can all change due to learning. Additionally, Gardner (1993), referenced by Dietze and

Kashin (2019a), posited that “children’s learning grows through children doing things, not only from imitating what they observe others do.”

In this play, children learn math and art through play. This is done by rolling the dice, matching the number of “dots,” and gluing the tissue paper on the fish template. The importance of play aligns with Bertrand and McCain’s (2019) postulation that “play-based learning can be described along a continuum from free play to inquiry, collaborative play, playful learning, and learning games.”

Category 2: Cautious Implementation of Play-based Activities

The teacher-participants likewise characterized engaging children through the cautious implementation of play-based activities. The use of play-based activities during the new normal necessitated teachers to be highly conscious and extra careful of the manipulatives used in the classroom, ensuring the non-spread of viruses in these materials and the outdoor play activities. Moreover, children gain the eagerness to explore their surroundings when they are exposed to outdoor play and the environment. Children know the prudent execution of what to do before going for an outdoor play or walk. Young children’s high cognizance of careful implementation of play-based activities was captured in the teacher-participants’ disclosures:

“... we have to separate them...” *Participant # 1, line 147*

“I have my books at home that are about germs and how it spreads... how you can protect your friends like, you know, sneezing at your elbows. Conscious about yourself.” *Participant # 2, lines 136-138*

Category 3: Integrating Arts in Play

Engaging children in play-based activities is likewise described by the teacher-participants as integrating arts in math and science and exploring novelty or anything new, as illustrated in the following exemplars:

“When it comes to teaching children, when you try to teach math and science, we used other art to teach through art. Touching sensories.”
(Participant # 3 line 70-71)

They further cited using activities tailored to fit children’s interests and assisting them in learning sign language. These activities include children’s routines, circle time, group interaction, integrating arts into math and science

through play, integrating Social, Physical, Intellectual, Communication, and Emotional (SPICE) in language, and interesting strategies.

Theme Two: Streamlining Classroom Management

The teacher-participants delineated streamlining classroom engagement into two categories, namely: *creative scaffolding* and *Collaborating, ensuring learning, health, and safety*. The transition of learning in the group care program necessitated swift adjustments on their end to address the varying needs of the young children.

Category 1: Creative Scaffolding

Streamlining classroom management includes creative scaffolding in the learning process characterized by assisting children during activities such as listening and providing ample time when they are in the facility. They collaborated with other teachers to thresh out some novel things that need to be done in dealing with the children during the New Normal. They were highly cognizant of the need to facilitate individual differences in their approach to learning. Excerpts of these conversations and photos are shown below:

“...the activity we are going to prepare for them is challenging to meet their specific level of needs since every child is different and you get different results, and from that, I can assess what level each of the children in the daycare is at.” (*Participant # 4, lines 108-113*).

The crucial role of play in children’s learning is emphasized by Maria Montessori, citing that children’s demonstration of learning outcomes is a product of their work and play. The use of creative scaffolding is further demonstrated through the manipulatives such as wooden blocks where children would create interesting shapes as a product of their imagination. Furthermore, creative scaffolding is defined by them as an exercise of creativity, sparking curiosity among the children, as well as providing opportunities for communication, as expounded in the following disclosures:

“Learning process will be for them to be creative and have their imagination and interpretation of what they build. Communicating with each other develop skills of understanding, listening, sharing, and so on...” (*Participant # 5, lines 55-57*).

Category 2. Collaborating, Ensuring Learning, Health, and Safety

Streamlining in classroom management during the new normal comprised

Interaction with parents where they, as facilitators of learning, can share their feedback about their children. One of the principles of Atkinson (2019) is that learning is relational *or focused on connectedness*. This phenomenon is best captured in the field notes captured by the researcher while waiting for the pick-up time by the parents.

Table 1

Field Notes 1 and Observation: Capturing conversations with parents.

<i>Child's Name/Pseudonym: Participant 4/ Child B3-3.</i>	<i>Age: 23/3</i>
<i>Observer: Researcher</i>	<i>Date: March 7, 2023, at 4:30-5:00 PM</i>
<i>Content of the Observation: Parent-Teacher Interaction</i>	
<i>Observation: The child is the last one picked up at the daycare. The teacher gives him puzzles to choose from. After doing the second puzzle, the child asks the teacher if he can do more puzzles. The teacher allows him to have one more. In the middle of doing it, the parent arrives to pick him up. But the child is so intense about finishing it. The teacher tells him to finish the puzzle if he wants to finish it and, at the same time, invites the parent to get in. The teacher tells the dad that his third set of puzzles is composed of 24 pieces. The parent is amazed by the child's performance and asks the teacher if he can take videos of the outcomes of his task to be shared with the mother. He tells the teacher, "I guess we need to go to the dollar store and buy puzzles." The child finishes the puzzle and feels so proud of what he does.</i>	
<i>Comments/Interpretations:</i> Interacting with parents is one way of intervening in the learning process. It also gives the idea of inclusion, welcoming, and celebrating with each child and family. In this case, diversity and differences are observed. The support of the family also broadens the interests and inquiries of the child that are meaningful to them.	

From these field notes and observations, it is evident that teacher-participants exercised patience and respect for the child's space by allowing the learner to do more and allowing the parents to acknowledge the child's learning outcome, thereby giving the child a sense of accomplishment. With this phenomenon, I realize the crucial role of family support in the child's development, which agrees with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory perspective showing a variety of children's experiences with learning. These influences come not only from the families but also from the communities, languages, and cultures they are in. As the New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care [ECC] (2008) stated, "Children's best interests must be understood in the context of their dynamic relationships with families, communities, languages, and cultures."

Category 3: Pacing and Modified Teaching

Part of the streamlining utilized by the teacher-participants characterizes participants during the New Normal as giving children time to process their learning, comprehend, and transition from sleeping to waking. As the teachers transitioned to the new normal, they were highly cognizant of the children's pace and their waiting time. They adjusted their groupings, ensuring that the number of children who engaged in the activity would be reduced depending on the activity they were doing per table. Modifications in their teaching also include limiting the learning tasks according to the responses and behavior of the children in the class. In a nutshell, the learning process in the New Normal calls for an exercise of patience in dealing with the varying needs and interests of the children and highly engaging them through problem-solving activities. These statements support these claims:

“Patience is a virtue.”

“The best thing is we just need to be patient. You might not be patient but these kids *taught* you to be patient.” *Participant # 1 lines 120-122*

It is evident from the learning process that teacher-participants tailored-fit their activities according to the needs and interests of the young children, which aligns with the postulation of Maniccia et al. (2011), positing that the program of activities must be suitable for the ages and learning needs and abilities of all children. They added that the program of activities, whether planned or unplanned, needs to give children opportunities to grow in areas of development.

Theme Three: Challenging and Rewarding Learning

Challenging and rewarding learning during the New Normal means difficulty facilitating learning, job fulfillment, and positive impacts.

Category 1: Difficulties

Difficulties in facilitating learning are described by the teacher-participants as extra burdens characterized by heavy workloads, a lack of staff, multitasking, meeting specific children's needs, and managing children's absences. They also had to go through the hurdles of adjusting the classroom structure and finishing routines, which aggravated the gap between the old and new teachers. These are revealed in the following statements:

...heavy workloads and extra burden. ...It's not just physically and mentally tiring; you have to do so much cleaning and sanitizing everything. You have to

make sure that ah.. all their water bottles are clean; all the washrooms are clean. Making sure that their cubbies are also clean... and making sure that they also are being watched at the same time. So, it's like you are doing two jobs at the same time.” (*Participant 4, lines 85 to 91*)

“....it was more work, more burden.” (Line 185) “...and more burden to other teachers and other staff”. (*Participant 1: Line 185*)

Category 2: Job fulfillment

An excerpt of Desiderata which quote. “Best captures the fulfillment of the teacher-participants in facilitating learning in the new normal.” Seeing children progressing and succeeding in the activities and gaining support for teachers’ well-being, the teacher-participants find the experience of facilitating learning during the new normal a fulfilling job leading to job satisfaction. Their sacrifices were paid off, as shown in these disclosures:

“By providing support to our teachers and children’s well-being by making sure that we have everything needed to work and learn.” (*Participant 3, Lines 132-133*).

“Working with kids has always been a fulfilling job for me.” (*Participant 4, Line 54*)

Category 3: Positive Impact

The confluence of challenges and job fulfillment resulted in a positive impact on the stakeholders of the group childcare program. This impact is defined as the benefits of a new normal education characterized by deliberate and extra-careful handling of the activities and the development of self-protection skills. The global pandemic made it easy for teachers to collaborate with parents and be extra careful in ensuring the health and safety of the children, thereby resulting in high self-awareness of health and safety and teaching children the consequences of not protecting themselves.

The resources that Public Health offered to teachers and parents made it easy for teachers to collaborate with parents. The development of self-protection skills includes the daily health checklist before they drop their children off at daycare, the temperature check for children and teachers when they arrive at the daycare, the health and sanitation protocol, and properly posting pictures if they are coughing and sneezing. The teacher-participants further characterize positive

impact as children's social skill development for the new normal, as illustrated in the response below. They thought at first that the social dimension of learning would be grossly affected, but it was the other way around, as indicated in the following exemplars:

"In the beginning, I was thinking, you know, that socially it's not very good they were not able to talk with their parents, but I have seen them talking outside. They talk with the parents, so there is an interaction with the parents, which is good." (*Participant # 1, Lines 61 to 64*)

Furthermore, one of the positive impacts characterized by the teacher participants as rewarding is the support for the teacher's and children's well-being as shown in this narrative:

"By providing support to our teachers and children's wellbeing by making sure that we have everything needed to work and learn. "*Participant #3, Lines 32-33*

This support for the well-being of children is pronounced in the 2007 report of the World Health Organization, which identified success in the area of early child development as requiring partnership, not only among international, national, and local agencies but also with the world's families. The fact is that among all the social determinants of health, early childhood development is the easiest for societies' economic leaders to understand. According to MacDonald (2015), being sustainable in an early learning setting is a practice that is visible daily with children and colleagues, who identified the importance of children, their families, and early learning teachers in creating societies that value sustainability in both sustainable thinking and practices. Based on the themes derived in this study, a model for ECE educators' facilitation of the learning process is thus generated. Figure 1 captures the learning process of teacher-participants as they transition to the New Normal.

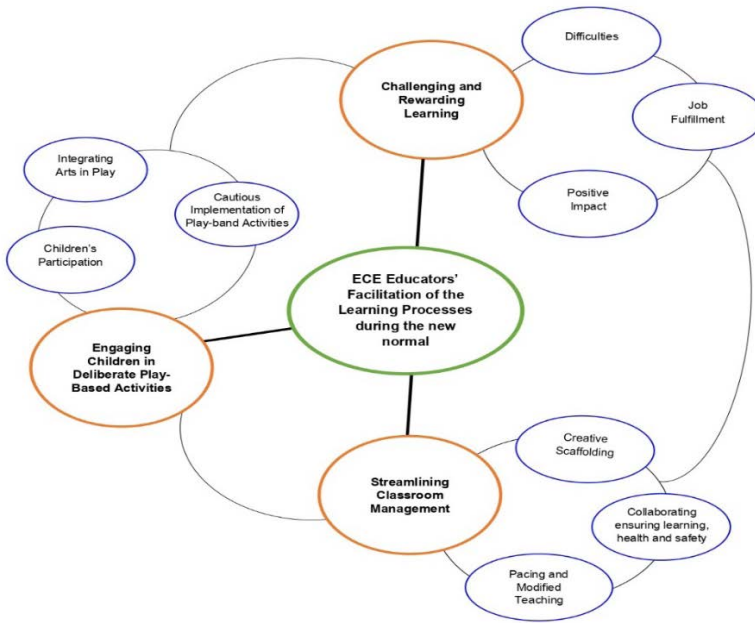


Figure 1. Learning Process Model of CE Educators during the New Normal

Figure 1 shows that children's learning in a group daycare (ages 3-5) is characterized by highly engaging and deliberate play-based activities, challenging and rewarding learning, and streamlining classroom management. This learning engagement likewise requires teachers to carefully implement these play-based activities to ensure children's learning and safety. Facilitating learning in the new normal necessitates that childhood educators streamline their classroom management through creative scaffolding, collaboration, and adjusting their teaching, especially their pacing in conducting play-based activities indoors and outdoors. Childhood educators have become more cognizant and deeply aware of the child's needs and interests, including their diversified needs. Moreover, facilitating learning for group daycare is a confluence of challenges and rewarding experiences for them. Transitioning to the new normal confronted them with seemingly unsurmountable tasks and heavy loads, but they saw the light at the end of the tunnel. Seeing children's progress in their learning outcomes and attitudes made them realize the beauty of the teaching profession.

Implications of the Study

The first theoretical implication is the confirmation of the theory of constructivism advanced by Jean Piaget, which states that through play, children have opportunities to construct knowledge. In this study, children participate in creative and sensory activities tailored to their interests. In this study, however, there is a high level of cognizance and deliberate choice of manipulatives and learning materials by the teacher-participants to ensure children's health and safety. Furthermore, as cited by Martin (2021), Piaget's theory of constructivism saw children as actively constructing their understanding of the world for themselves and as active seekers of solutions to problems. Early childhood professionals recognize the importance of child-initiated activity for meaningful learning and development. "Play is a key tenet of Piaget's cognitive development approach.

The second theoretical implication is the theory of the zone of proximal development and scaffolding by Lev Vygotsky. In this study, early childhood education teachers streamlined classroom management by assisting children during activities and meeting specific children's needs.

The third theoretical implication is the ecological theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner, which states that children's learning is influenced by the environment. In this study, easy collaboration and interactions with parents and teachers supported the learning process. From an ecological theory perspective, Bronfenbrenner's theory helps examine how environmental influences contribute to a child's play experiences. His model outlines the relationship between children's environments and their interactions in play and human development (Dietze & Kashin, 2019b).

CONCLUSION

The early childhood educators in group child care in British Columbia, Canada, have generally efficiently facilitated the learning process as they transition to the new normal. The learning process model generated from the study features three basic elements: highly engaging children in deliberate play-based activities, challenging and rewarding learning, and streamlining classroom management. This finding supports the theoretical implications of Piaget and Vygotsky regarding constructivism and Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective. Facilitating learning in the new normal necessitates that childhood educators streamline their classroom management through creative scaffolding and collaboration, as well as adjust their teaching, especially their pacing in indoor and outdoor play-based

activities. Childhood educators have become more cognizant and deeply aware of the child's needs and interests, including their diversified needs.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of the study may be best translated for childhood educators to design more deliberate play-based activities tailored to the needs, interests, and diversified needs of the children while ensuring their wellness and safety. The result of the study will certainly come to fruition because the findings will be further translated into a manual that will be shared with the manager and owner of the facility/center as a teacher's guide in the conduct of learning processes during the new normal.

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