

D. M. W. Munasinghe, 2018

Volume 3 Issue 3, pp.1715-1729

Date of Publication: 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2018

DOI-<https://dx.doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2018.33.17151729>

This paper can be cited as: Munasinghe, D. M. W. (2018). *Preschool Teachers' Concerns on Educational Theories and Views of Educationists to Develop Creativity in the Teaching- Learning Process*. PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences, 3(3), 1715-1729.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

## **PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' CONCERNS ON EDUCATIONAL THEORIES AND VIEWS OF EDUCATIONISTS TO DEVELOP CREATIVITY IN THE TEACHING- LEARNING PROCESS**

**D. M. W. Munasinghe**

*Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka*  
[dmmun@ou.ac.lk](mailto:dmmun@ou.ac.lk)

---

### **Abstract**

*The global attention on research in preschool education has increased and there is an immense motivation in the field of research in Sri Lanka. This research shows that the preschool education is a critical way to introduce and develop all aspects of a child's development with a focus on creativity. The mixed method design approach was used in this research and a stratified random sample was used to collect data during 2015 and 2016. Questionnaires, Interviews and observations were used to collect data from the selected preschools in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis.*

*The findings showed that the majority of preschools are run by Non- Government organizations, and the State does operate some preschools. Most of the preschool teachers of Government and Non- Government preschools were not aware of creativity as a learning concept. It was observed that teachers use several methods that did not promote creativity. Preschool teachers mostly provided instructions while trying to keep children quiet in order to manage the classroom. The*

*majority of preschool teachers stated that they faced problems in preparing lessons to develop children's creativity. In conclusion, it showed that preschool teachers do not have adequate training and knowledge regarding the importance of creativity and its implications for the education of children.*

*Findings of this research are expected to be shared with relevant authorities in order to improve teacher training, curriculum development and further research on preschool education.*

### **Keywords**

Preschool, Creativity, Educational theories, Preschool teachers

---

## **1. Introduction**

Preschool education is of great value to all children because it provides a sound basis for learning and the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, personal competence and confidence, and a sense of social responsibility. Educational research provides evidence that preschool education is an important factor in the promotion of equal opportunity for young children. According to international studies the general principles of preschool education should aim to provide a safe and stimulating environment in which children can feel happy and secure and encourage the emotional, social, physical, creative and intellectual development of children.

Early Childhood Education deals with a very important aspect in the society. It is an important preparation for a child into the formal education system. Preschool is a unique cycle of learning designed to take advantage of the child's critical learning phase between three and five years. As a result the child can readily absorb information from an enriched environment. Childs' development has to be facilitated through appropriate activities related to language and communication. There the child will improve creativity which provides a strong foundation for their future successes.

Creativity has been considered in terms of process, product or person (Barron and Harrington, 1981). It has been defined as the interpersonal and intrapersonal process by means of which original, high quality, and genuinely significant products are developed. In dealing with young children, especially of preschool education age, the focus should be on the process, i.e., developing and generating original ideas, which is seen as the basis of the creative potential.

There are nearly 10,600 preschools in Sri Lanka. It is a large number compared with the formal school setup. The government intervention began with the establishment of the Children's

Secretariat in the Ministry of Policy and Plan Implementation in the International Year of the Child in 1979. The Children's Secretariat gave priority to child growth and development and also the report of the General Education Reforms in 1997 mentioned the need for national policies to meet the needs of young children below five years of age.

Lev Vygotsky (1978) and Jean Piaget (1936) as key cognitive / development theorists introduced noteworthy theories to education. Vygotsky proposed a theory of the development of cognitive functions in young children as emerging through practical activity in a social environment. He believed that language develops throughout social interactions and language is the greatest tool, a means for communication with the outside world. According to Vygotsky language plays critical roles in cognitive development. Vygotsky emphasized more the role of language in cognitive development and internalization of language. Vygotsky, pointed out that thought and language are initially separate systems from the beginning of life, merging at around three years of age, producing verbal thought.

Lev Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development posts information on how the external world is internalized through language and he has highlighted the importance of play in this developmental process. Vygotsky further proposed to make-believe that plays leads to the development of the skills required for abstract thinking; as play focuses on doing - that is the process of play and not the product of the play activity. In play children use more complex language than in conversations with adults.

Vygotsky stated that imaginative play is a crucial component of a child's normal development. Play shapes how child/children make sense of their world, how they improve thinking skills, and how they acquire language. Imaginative play is essential for cognitive development and as such is a crucial component of a child's normal development. How imaginative play helps development of the child's brain revealed by investigations, especially the dialogues they have among themselves when they engage in imaginative play. Role-playing means creating a story and giving voice to the different characters in the story. When children imitate others, they develop an expressive vocabulary that allows them to name and navigate the world and relationships around them. Less verbal children may talk more during imaginative play than in other settings. Children at play are making sense of the world through a process of "inner speech" - that is, they are often talking out loud to themselves. Vygotsky's investigations

on the impact of play in the development of a child's language provide evidence for the importance of creative play in the development of a child's language and social understanding.

Piaget's view of universal stages and content of development has elaborated language development. According to Piaget, language depends on thought for its development. Both educationists are more concerned regarding how language supports cognitive development of a young child.

Also play is enacted by the players (children) not the adults (teachers or parents). This is a significant factor as play is what children choose and manage by themselves. Because children learn through the process of playing, they need plenty of time, open-ended materials and co-players (Broadhead, 2004; Broadhead and Burt, 2012).

Based on major theories on how preschool children develop their creativity teachers need to organize their activities. Therefore, a key objective of this study is to identify the current status of the teaching - learning process in developing creativity through the development of language in preschool children.

Also Rousseau believed that the child should be allowed to grow close to nature and should be given the right to think own way. He also stressed that childhood is a crucial period and should not be forced to do things. He always emphasized a method of discovery; not from the books they can learn from experience. Play way was recommended by him and his views on education are very similar to Mahatma Gandhi and Pestalozzi who sustained the total development of the child.

Above mentioned are some of the strong theories by famous educationalists that confirm how creativity could be brought through various language teaching methods and activities.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Vygotsky has pointed out the major significant factor, that thinking is not explained by stimulated response. He began to develop a system of psychological thinking. He tried to analyse the role of consciousness in the development of thinking. He also emphasized play and imagination as a product of speech.

According to Piaget, the preoperational stage usually occurs during the period between toddlerhood (18-24months) and early childhood (7 years). During this period, Piaget notes the importance of play which allows children to develop vocabulary, concentration, flexibility, creativity and imagination, and empathy.

Theories of educationists provide basis for a strong foundation for education and teachers should be able to apply these theories to develop creativity during the teaching- learning process.

This study has focused on the extent to which language learning in early childhood education contributes the development of creativity in children. Finally it will have a positive impact on the learning culture in preschools that will benefit preschool teachers and researchers. In the context of the average Sri Lankan preschools, preliminary observations have shown that the teachers in a majority of the instances do not help the child to develop creativity in relation to theories of educationists.

## **2. Objectives**

1. To identify the current status of the teaching - learning process in developing creativity through the development of language in preschool children
2. To find out whether preschool teachers take into consideration theories of educationists when they engage in activities with preschool children to enhance creativity.

## **3. Research Design**

The mixed method design (Qualitative and Quantitative) approach was used in this research and random sample was used to collect data from the selected sample during 2015 and 2016.

According to Creswell, (2014)

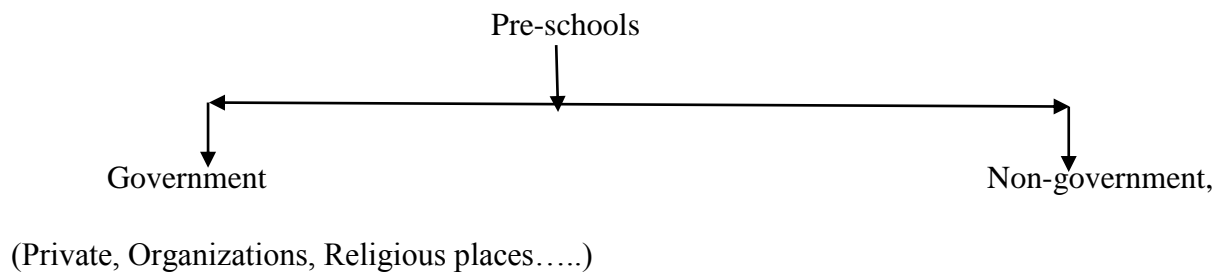
“Mixed methods research is a research design (methodology) in which the researcher collects, analyses and mixes (integrates or connects) both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a multiphase program of inquiry”  
...Moreover, The mixed method helps to analyse data in all possible ways. It provides a broader perspective of the study and helps the researcher to assemble a deeper understanding of the facts of interest. Creswell further explained that mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both Quantitative and qualitative data using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of the qualitative and quantitation approach provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone” (Creswell, 2014 p. 119)

In this study researcher also used quantitative and qualitative methods for data gathering and mixed method approach was used to fulfil the first and second objectives.

**3.1 Sample**

A sample in a research study refers to any group from which information is obtained. The large sample to which one hopes to apply the results is called the population. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, (2007) Therefore, in this research the target population comprised preschool teachers and families (parents/other family members/Guardians/) in Colombo district. Preschools can be divided mainly into two categories.

All the preschools are run by the Government and non-government institutions. The preschools run by the government are few in number.



The target population of the study comprised preschool children and preschool teachers. A representative sample was selected from Colombo District, Western Province in Sri-Lanka. The Sample consisted of twenty preschools selected Stratified randomly from Sri Jayawardenapura, Maharagama, Kaduwela, Moratuwa, and Maradana divisions in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

**Table 1: Sample of Preschools**

	Government preschools	Non-Government preschools	Total
Urban	04	07	11
Rural	03	06	09
Total	07	13	20

**3.2. Data Collection Methods, Instrumentation, Process and Analysis**

Questionnaires, Interviews and classroom observations were used to collect data from the selected samples. The following aspects were inquired through the instruments from the

preschool teachers concerns on educational theories of educationist’s views to develop creativity in the teaching- learning process.

Preschool teacher attention and concern on educationalists theories related to creativity development, teacher involvement in developing creativity, teacher perceptions in developing creativity through play activities, preparation of lesson plans, teacher behavior and Teaching learning methods have been analyzed in the study. The data was analyzed through statistical analysis and presented as percentages in the form of tables.

In-depth analysis was conducted in a small sample selected from those who have responded to the mail questionnaire. For that twenty preschools were selected for teacher interviews. Semi structured interview scheduled was used one hours’ time with each preschool teachers in the preschool classrooms after closing the preschools. Interviews were recorded and notes have been taken where necessary, and also whole classroom observations were conducted accordingly. The researcher observed the classrooms in natural setting twice for each of the twenty preschools. Field notes and video recording were carried out while observing classrooms.

#### **4. Findings**

It was found that the majority of the sample, nine of the preschool teachers is in the age range of 30-39 years with one teacher being in the age range of 50-59.

**Table 2:** *Age Distribution of the Preschool Teachers*

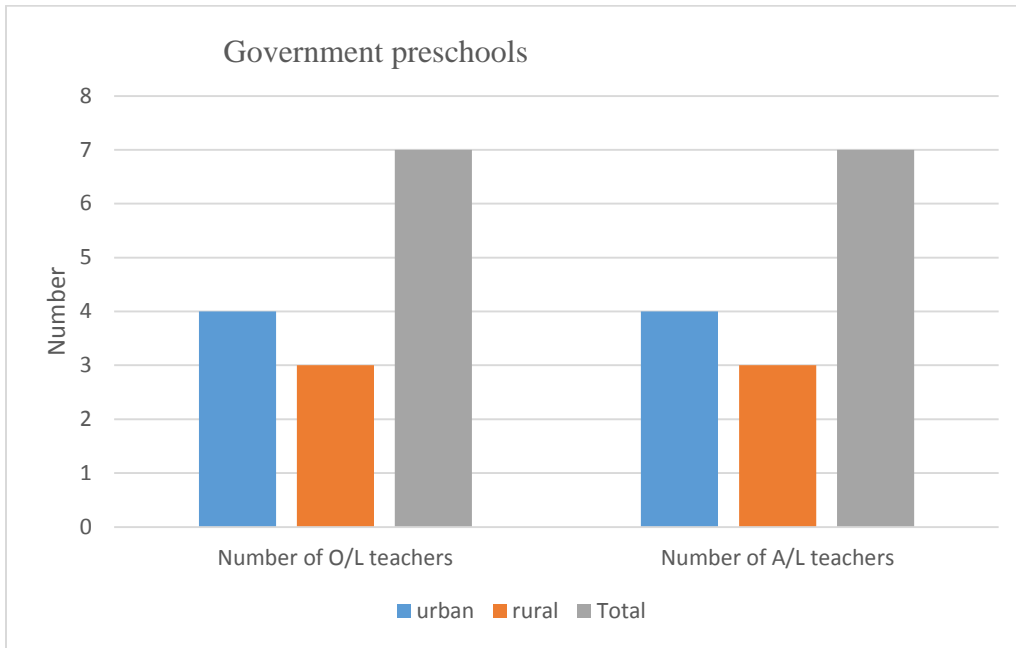
Age	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
Number of Teachers	7	09	3	01

**Table 3:** *Educational Qualification of the Preschool Teachers*

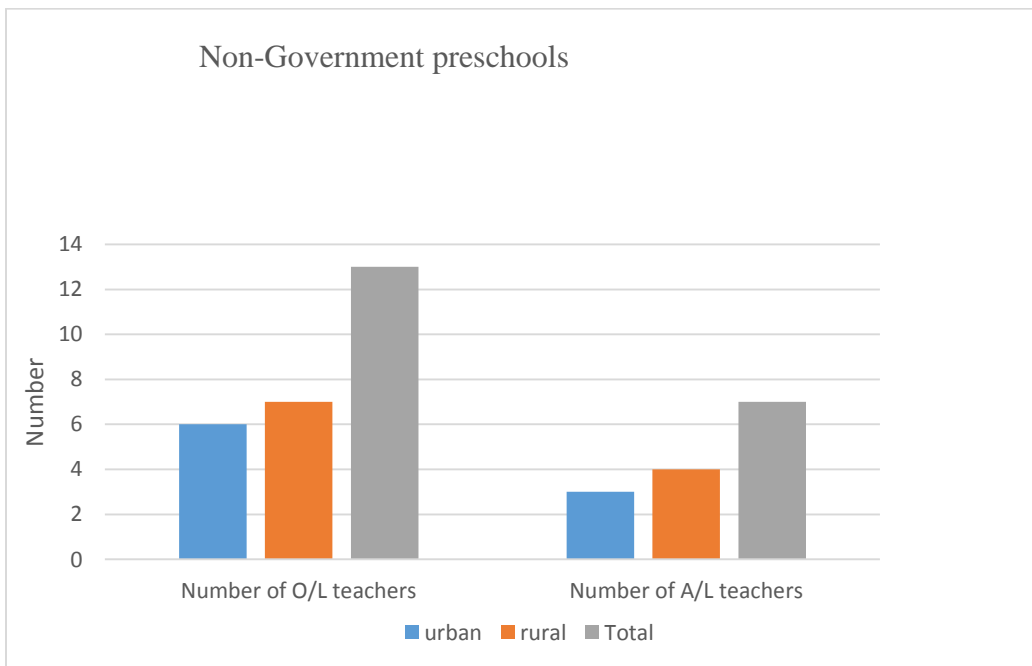
Location	Government Preschools				Non - Government Preschools				
	*O/L Number of teachers	%	*A/L Number of teachers	%	O/L Number of teachers	%	A/L Number of teachers	%	
Urban	04	57	04	57	06	46	03	43	
Rural	03	43	03	43	07	54	04	57	

Total	07	100	07	100	13	100	07	100
-------	----	-----	----	-----	----	-----	----	-----

Ordinary Level (O/L) Advanced Level (A/L)



**Figure 1:** Educational Qualification of Government Preschool Teachers



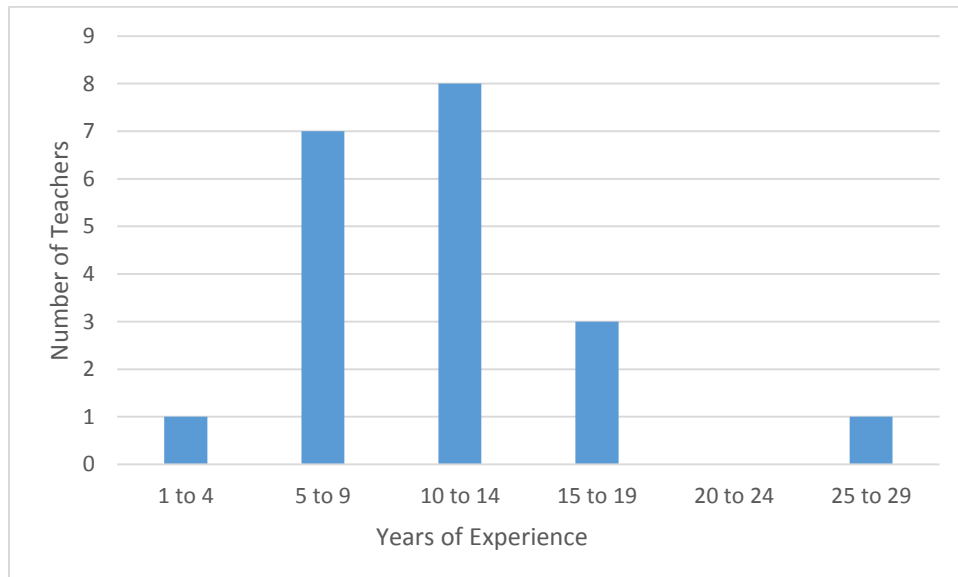
**Figure 2:** Educational Qualification of Non-Government Preschool Teachers



All the preschool teachers in the Government preschools have General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A/L) qualifications in both urban and rural locations. In Non-Government preschools only seven out of thirteen have GCE A/L qualifications where three are from the urban sector and other four are from the rural sector. The remaining six have only General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) qualifications. It shows that 57% GCE A/L qualified preschool teachers are from the urban sector in the Government preschools while 57% rural preschool teachers of the Non-Government preschools have the same qualifications.

**Table 4:** *Work experience of the Preschool teachers*

Years of experience	1-4	5-9	10- 14	15-19	20 -24	25-29
Teacher	1	7	08	3	0	01



**Figure 3:** *Work experience of the teachers*

According to teacher experience or the duration of their service maximum number, that is eight teachers have served for ten to fourteen years. There is one teacher whose experience is from twenty five to twenty nine and also one teacher has experience of less than four years.

Accordingly it was revealed that all the teachers have experience of more than three years and there was one teacher who has worked for more than twenty eight years.

According to the researcher investigation it was found that the preschools run by the Non-Government sector did not conform to the curriculum developed by the Government. Most of the Non-Government preschools used primary school syllabus to teach and conduct activities suggested by parents.

The syllabus in the Government preschools include activities involving socialization, pre-writing, pre-reading, Aesthetic activities and preparatory activities for formal writing (both letters and numbers)

Investigations have shown that there are no significant differences in Government preschools when they are rural or urban, but Non-Government preschools have differences between rural and urban contexts.

- Preschool Teacher Attention and concern to develop creativity

Although every one of them has followed a course on preschool education it was revealed that except two teachers, others were familiar with the names of the philosophers both in Non-Government preschools and Government preschools.

When testing the level of application of the concept of creativity, it was revealed that even their knowledge of creativity is very poor. Five out of thirteen Non- Government preschools gave approximately correct responses on what is creativity but two teachers mentioned that they do not know anything, six out of thirteen teachers guessed the answers and gave incomplete responses. Their statements were

Preschool No 1. "I do not know the exact answer, but I think this is to draw something"

Preschool No.2. "I think it is constructing new things"

Preschool No. 3. "I think it is drawing a picture"

Preschool No. 8. "I think it is a drawing a picture or collage

Preschool No. 13." I think it is doing something"

Four out of seven Government preschool teachers gave meaningful and successful statements.

e. g. Preschool No. 14. "I think constructing new knowledge"

Preschool No.15. "My idea is "new thinking" "New ideas"

It shows concepts have been built in those preschool teachers, but most of the preschool teachers do not clearly understand the concept of creativity.

- Teacher involvement in developing creativity

Another point inquired from the teachers was their perception over how easy to develop creativity within children based on their experience. According to the responses they were not sure about activities that will help to develop creativity, and they did not have adequate experience.

E.g. Preschool No1. "I can't say anything about it, if I had a clear idea I could have developed the concept through activities with children.

Preschool No 7. "I have not thought about this before, I believe creativity helps to improve intelligence in young children".

Preschool No 15. "I think if we use more resources we can develop creativity".

- Teacher perceptions in developing creativity through Play activities

100 % of the preschool teachers agreed that play activities support development of concepts related to the integrated approach with preschool children. According to the teachers' views they assume that this type of play will motivate the child learn new words, and at the same time to have fun.

Also, about twenty percent of preschool teachers promoted imaginative play with their pre-schoolers. Fifteen percent of preschool teachers used (social play) play that had a domestic orientation.

Every preschool teacher mentioned that they use different methods of language learning. They explained that every teacher telling stories, drawing, songs, poems, picture description, role-play as language teaching methods, but it was observed that it was not happened in the real classroom situation.

The preschool teachers who interpreted play time for children as a waste of school time and tried during that time to get the children to do what the teachers felt was of educational significance like assigning extra time to copy letters and numerals.

Forty per cent of the sample used simple text books to introduce letters and words. Some

teachers failed to provide the children the opportunity for self-expression when they involved themselves in play activities

- Preparation of lesson Plans

Here the attention was drawn to see the level of preparation by the teacher for the teaching learning process. The following information was revealed when inquiring how they draw attention on creativity during lesson planning. The responses of all the teachers in the preschools were as follows.

“I have no idea”

“I do not think about”

“I do not know”

I do not know how to include this concept”

Except one teacher, all the others of Government preschools have mentioned that they draw attention on creativity and they use different methods in lesson planning e.g. No 15 preschool

“I provide opportunities for children using various methods according to my knowledge. If I know the correct meaning of the creativity I can incorporate”

- Teacher behavior

It was observed that questions raised by the teachers always examine child’s memory. All answers that children gave are short. A few children tried to give answers and always answers were given by the same children.

The Government preschool teachers spent more time to make statements. Some statements are instructions. Some others are requests or refusals. Government and Non-Government preschools are equal and used similar words in making statements.

- Teaching learning methods

Among the teaching learning methods observed drawing, play, storytelling and singing were common. However, drawing was the key teaching learning method used by the Non-Government preschools. And also using play as method has been observed occasionally.

Some preschools had given opportunities to engage in new creative activities. Non-Government and Government urban preschools had provided material (wooden blocks, building blocks ....) to do creative activities while few Government preschools also had given that opportunity. However, the allocated time in both types for the above was not adequate. Both types of preschools had allocated minimal time for the opportunities to come up with new ideas about pictures, stories or during friendly conversations.

The main feature identified in observations was using the maximum time either for pre-writing or writing. Non-government preschools had allocated a significant time for letter writing, numbers writing, matching, shapes and patterns, drawing and also pasting certain material and coloring inside shapes the teachers had given. This is being observed in both types of preschools and the majority time is spent for these task, but compared with both categories, non-government preschools spent more time engaging these activities.

Similarly, it was observed that reading materials were provided for reading. Generally this reading materials were requested that particular preschools such as children's papers, story books.

## **5. Conclusion**

The sample frame of this study is limited to the Colombo District in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Western Province was selected as it has the largest population and the highest number of preschools and considering the resources available. Children were selected only from the ages of four to five year old for the entire research study.

It is ideal if the teacher is knowledgeable on theories of educationists , so that teacher can create the scenario to facilitate children's play, but it is not happening, because the knowledge and the understanding of the importance of play in developing creativity is not adequate among teachers in both sectors. As Wood, (2013) has stated "Early childhood education is underpinned by an ideological and theoretical tradition which regards play as essential to learning and development.

In conclusion the Government preschools are more concern in providing opportunities for children to develop social skills than subject content. However, the situation in the Non-Government preschools is different. Most of the Non-Government preschools teach subject content of grade one of the Government primary schools in their preschools.

Therefore, an intensive training should be provided. The teacher does not make the best use of the opportunity available to use the child's enthusiasm to develop creativity through his/her actions. Teachers should be able to understand theory and then to relate theory with the practical applications in the real classroom situations.

### References

- Aggarwal, J.C., & Gupta, S. (2006). *Great Philosophers and Thinkers on Education*, Shipra publications, New Delhi
- Barron, F., & Harrington, D. M. (1981). *Creativity, Intelligence and Personality* Department of Psychology California Santa Cruz, California Vol.32, 439-476
- Berger, E. H. (2004). *Parents as partners in education. Families and schools working together* (6th ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ. Merrill.
- Broadhead, P. (2004). & Burt, A. (2012). *Understanding Young Children's Learning Through Play: Building Playful Pedagogies*. London: Routledge.
- Creativity from Childhood through Adulthood: The Developmental Issues* (New Directions for Child Development No. 72). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 10.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. Sixth edition London: Routledge/ Falmer, Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*, Department of Family Medicine, University of Michigan. Saga publication
- David, T. (2003). *What do we know about teaching young children? A Professional User Review of UK Research Based on the BERA*
- Development matters in the early years foundation stage, (EYFS)* (2012). *Early Education*. Retrieved from the website: [www.early-education.org.uk](http://www.early-education.org.uk), accessed 10.04.2016.
- Edwards, C.P. & Springste, K.W. (1995). *Encouraging creativity in early childhood classrooms* (ERIC Digest). Urbana, IL: ERIC
- Epstein, J. L., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2001). *More than minutes: teachers' roles in designing homework*. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3), 181–193.  
[https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3603\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3603_4)
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: multiple intelligences for the 21st Century*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Luis, C. M. (1990). Vygotsky and education instructional implications and applications of socio historical psychology syndicate of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge: University of Cambridge.
- Mellou, E. (1994). 'The case of intervention in young children's dramatic play in order to develop creativity', *Early Child Development and Care*, 99, 53–61.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0300443940990105>
- National Education Commission Sri Lanka (1997). Reforms in General Education, National policy Framework on General Education in Sri Lanka, Colombo: National Education Commission.
- National Education Commission Sri Lanka (2003). Envisioning education for human development, Proposals for a National policy Framework on General Education in Sri Lanka, Colombo: National Education Commission.
- National Survey on Early Childhood Development in Sri Lanka, (2010). Children's Secretariat, Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs
- Ondiekia, L.G. (2012). A study of parental involvement in Pre-scholars' academic work in Dandora educational zone of Nairobi country, Kenya Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Award of Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education in the Department of Educational Communication and Technology, College of Education and External Studies University of Nairobi
- Out-of-School Children in Sri Lanka, (2013). Country Study, United Nations Children's Fund 35, Colombo: UNICEF.
- Piaget, J. (1959). *The language and thought of the child* (Vol. 5). Psychology Press.
- Runco, M.A. (1990). 'The divergent thinking of young children: implications of the research', *Gifted Child Today*, 13 (4), 37–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107621759001300411>
- Vygotsky's theory of creativity (2003). Gunilla Lindqvist University of Karlstad, *Creativity Research Journal* 15 (2 & 3), 245–251
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wood, E. A. (2013). Free play and free choice in early childhood education: troubling the discourse. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, Published 2014 Vol. 22, No. 1, 4–18, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2013.830562>