

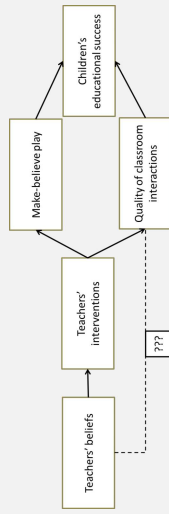
Association between teachers' beliefs about make-believe play and quality of interactions observed in kindergarten

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ABSTRACT

Kindergartners' educational success have been associated with a focus on make-believe play in the classroom and also with the quality of classroom interactions;

- Make-believe play**
 - Important role in formation of the child's mind;
 - Affect the development of children's abstract and symbolic thinking, and their ability to engage in intentional and voluntary behaviors (Bodrova, 2008);
- Quality of classroom interactions**
 - Contribute to promote children's educational success (Sabot et al., 2013);
 - Teachers' interventions support the development of the make-believe play in classroom (Bodrova, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978), which is influenced by their beliefs;
- Teachers' beliefs**
 - Teachers understanding the educational value of make-believe play are more likely to consider students' perspectives, to give children's opportunity to express their ideas and their feelings, to symbolize and test their knowledge of the world, and help them acquire effective support for academic learning (Saracho, 2012);
 - When teachers encourage the situations of play in kindergarten, they are more likely to engage and interact with children playing (Ashabi, 2007);
 - But we don't know if teachers' beliefs contribute to influence teachers' intervention in make-believe play, and also the quality of classroom interactions.



OBJECTIVES

It seems relevant to identify if a link exist between the teachers' beliefs about make-believe play and the quality of interactions in kindergarten. Therefore, this research has three objectives :

- Examine the teachers' beliefs about make-believe play;
- Evaluate the quality of the interactions in 5-Year-Old kindergarten in Québec (Canada);
- Examine the association between the teachers' beliefs about make-believe play and the quality of interactions in kindergarten.

METHOD

Data collection – Fall 2016, in 17 classrooms of the Commission scolaire de la Capitale (Québec, Canada).

- Participants**
 - 17 teachers (16 women) of 5-Years-Old kindergarten;
 - They have an average of seven years of experience in kindergarten (M = 7,59, SD = 4,98)

- Tools**
 - Teachers' beliefs about make-believe play**
 Measure with the translated version of the questionnaire Teachers' Play Beliefs Survey (TPBS) (with the permission of the author) (Dako-Gyke, 2008, 2011)
 - 5 points Likert-type scales : from disagree to strongly agree.
 - 30 items divided into two scales to examine their beliefs on :
 - Play support (α=0.90): 18 items (e.g. I can teach children social skills during make-belief play).
 - Academic Focus (α=0.73) : 12 items (e.g. I would rather read with children then play together).

- Quality of interactions**
 - Observe with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta et al., 2008) (Likert scales on 7 points).

- Three domains** are related to CLASS tool (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION

- Beliefs about **Academic Focus** are a predictor of the quality of **Emotional Support** in the classroom;
- Even if their beliefs are more academically focus, kindergarten teachers remain sensitive to the children's needs (**Emotional Support**);
- Perhaps teachers showed sensitivity to children's needs or misunderstandings during teacher-directed or whole group activities, therefore in the interest of schooling;
- Teachers may know that children learn through play, but not the specifics of why and how (Cemore, 2005);
- Teachers don't typically focus on child-oriented play when teaching. They have a tendency to tell children what they want them to know (Cemore, 2005);
- Make-believe play in kindergarten requires a range of teacher participation, and teachers have to understand the right degree of involvement (Ashabi, 2007);
- When teachers understand, encourage and participate in children's make-believe play, they create a child-center curriculum, because play is determined by them;
- When children play, they decide what they want to learn or how they will learn it (Pearson, 2010);
- Focusing on student's perspective means building on their interest, engagement, intrinsic motivation, autonomy and attention which are central to learning (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2008). This could contribute to promote the quality of interactions in classroom (e.g. instructional support).
- In this study, however, "teachers' beliefs" don't correlate with "students perspective";
- Perhaps the type of activities (whole-group, free choice) should be taken into account in further studies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Cemore (2005) suggest to look at teacher more closely and to look not only at their understandings of play and make-believe play, but also at how was play addressed in their undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Thus, this study reinforces the idea of focusing on initial and ongoing training that addresses beliefs about play in order to promote children's educational success;
- Quality of instructional support specifically should be deepen in initial and ongoing training since it remains lower than the other domains;
- It may help to do further action-research project about pedagogical practices in kindergarten, to help transfer knowledge into practice, in order to promote the quality of interactions in classroom.

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