

# The Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers with the Implementation of Looseparts Play in Toddler Classes

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## ABSTRACT

The use of loose parts in the classrooms, especially in Early Childhood, has its many advantages in supporting the learning of the children, as it allows them to think of their ideas for their play. However, although there are many studies regarding the benefits it presents to children, studies regarding its implementation from the experiences of the teachers remain limited. Using a qualitative research design, this study explores the perceptions, strategies, and experiences of teachers while implementing loose parts play in their toddler classes. The analysis of data indicates the key factors that influence the implementation of the teachers such as environmental factors including classroom setup, perceived risks, and their intentional strategies that they have used in their classes, which highlights the role of the teachers in effectively implementing meaningful loose parts play.

**Keywords:** *Loose Parts Play, Teacher Strategies, Play-Based, Early Childhood Education.*

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### ➤ *The Problem and its Background*

Implementing loose parts play in toddler classes can be a daunting task, especially for new early childhood teachers and current teachers planning on introducing a more child-centered approach. As it is an open-ended approach, it can be challenging to know how much freedom teachers can give the children as they explore the endless possibilities of the materials. Teachers may wonder when it is acceptable to step in during the children's learning process and when it is acceptable to stop and just observe. It is also challenging to distinguish between risky and hazardous indoor and outdoor play. This study aims to have an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of teachers while implementing loose parts play in toddler classes. The analysis can be used as a recommendation for new teachers or current teachers who wish to implement loose parts play in toddler classes, as well.

### ➤ *Background of the Study*

Using loose parts, which are moveable materials in the classrooms without a set of direct instructions for usage, allows children to incorporate their ideas as they create, carry, and construct something with those materials. Recent studies have shown multiple benefits of incorporating loose parts of play inside and outside the classroom, stating that it allows the children to think of the direction of their play. They are deciding to become independent, build their own social circles, and explore the outcome of their behaviors (Eren Öcal, 2021). However, As much as the benefits of loose part play can be seen, there is an apparent lack of guidelines on implementing its use, especially for new teachers. Although there is some literature regarding the benefits of loose parts play in children, recent literature about its benefits to teachers is limited. Houser et al. (2016) stated that while it is proven that allowing children to play presents lots of benefits, it will be more beneficial if we can come up with standard definitions pertaining to the what and hows. In 2018, it was also stated that there is clear evidence of a lack of agreement among educators and researchers, especially regarding the type of play-based learning being introduced, as well as the optimal role of the educators (Pyle et al., 2018).

Spencer et al. (2021) also discussed the problems involved regarding the risks of outdoor loose parts play. The researchers cited that it is increasingly becoming difficult to allow children to access outdoor spaces because of the potential risks and that adults do not think children are competent enough to engage the world alone. As the children are believed to be in danger during these unstructured plays, the amount of time they are being provided to spend during unstructured, risky plays is shortened.

The effectiveness of implementing loose parts play in toddler classes is very apparent at Komazawa Park International School. From learning how to use different materials in different ways to emerge from solitary to parallel and later to collaborative play to incorporating risks in their indoor and outdoor play, the open-ended materials are proving to be beneficial to the children's learning. Despite this, most of the available literature and studies focus on the outcomes it provides for the children, and mostly on older aged children in the preschool setting. Research regarding the teachers lived experiences, particularly in the toddler setting continues to be limited, especially in topics concerning the teacher preparedness, storage, and how they assess and handle risks associated with the materials.

The open-endedness of loose parts play may be a very vague topic for new teachers as they strive to find their optimal role in the children's learning. It is also notable that the number of risks with implementing loose parts play, as well as the lesson planning and classroom setup, which ensures that they are developmentally appropriate for the children, are some of the challenges that may be faced by new teachers or current teachers who are new to the idea of a child-centered way of teaching. The researcher aims to collate the experiences of current teachers as they implement loose parts play in their classes through their classroom setup, lesson planning, and risk assessment and management.

### ➤ *Review of Related Literature*

Although the idea of loose parts play has been around since 1971, there is quite a limited amount of recent literature about it. Due to the essential information that is being provided by the literature used in this study, and the scarcity of more recent literature regarding the topic, the researcher has kept the references despite being outdated, as it is deemed relevant to this study. The criterion for the literature review of this study focuses on the theories about open-ended materials, observed benefits of implementing loose parts play in early childhood classes, risks in play-based learning, and current challenges being experienced in implementing play-based learning. These sub-topics were chosen because these are some of the most important factors regarding unstructured play in Early Childhood Education, and it highlights the classroom-based experiences of the teachers which this study is aiming to seek to further explore.

### ➤ *Theory of Loose Parts Play and Object Affordance Theory*

There are theoretical perspectives that provide foundation in understanding the intentions or perceptions of teachers, as well as their how they may potentially interpret and implement loose parts play in their classrooms.

Gull (2022) has discussed in her study the Theory of Loose Parts which has been developed by architect Simon Nicholson in 1971. The theory emphasizes the advocacy of Nicholson on the children's involvement in their own education. Using experimentation to learn and involving the environment as part of their learning provides the children an invitation to potentially

apply it in the real world. Gull also quoted Nicholson when the author stated how children learn more in a laboratory setting, as it enables them to experiment and figure out how things go and work by themselves. By allowing children to have more access to loose parts, which are materials they can tinker with, move, build, and recreate, it offers infinite possibilities for them to interact with it and provides an enhanced creative opportunity for learning.

In 2019, Larrea et al. discussed in their research the Affordance Theory which was introduced by Gibson in 1979. A piece of wood may be just that for some, but it can turn into a phone, a computer, or something completely different in the eyes of a child. The researchers discussed how the notion of affordance has been related by Gibson as to how children perceive environmental features, thereby referring to preschool affordances as environmental factors that are viewed by children based on their perception, as well as their interests, knowledge, or even capabilities. In 2022, Sando & Sandseter stated that it is favorable to have a holistic approach to how play is facilitated in Early Childhood Education because of the intrinsic value it provides to the children and its positive impact on their development. The application of these affordances to other research has also been stated, including how different activities stem from the affordance of different places, the affordance of risk and thrill from the environment, and even the importance of having access to not only a built environment but also a natural one.

#### ➤ *Advantages of Loose Parts Play*

Studies about the advantages of loose parts play in the classroom tend to emphasize the outcome that emerges from interpretation and observation of teachers from their classroom experiences. The importance of loose parts play in the modern world where technology is being favored, the low to almost no cost of the materials, the flexibility of its usage depending on the child, the way it fosters creativity and independence of children, and the way it develops fine and gross motor skills of children are some of the benefits which loose parts play offer to both children and adults. (Joe, 2019). The open-endedness of the loose parts materials allows the children to creatively explore the materials in their own way. Nipriansyah et al. (2021) stated the importance of developing one's creativity it later becomes the strong foundation for productive thinking.

Gibson et al. (2017) stated that although there are not many quantitative researches about it, there are a number of qualitative researches through the interview method which documented the advantages of loose parts play in terms of improvement of self-esteem such as confidence and even reduction of boredom, as well as emotional and social aspects like happiness and social inclusion. In another study, it was stated that educators lean more toward a more restricted approach in the implementation of loose parts play. In 2020, Richards stated that many children are being limited in terms of the usage of loose parts, with more and more educators continually saying "no" to the way children use specific materials. However, Richards quoted an educator saying that prior to having the loose parts play area, they felt that they needed to have more control, but now, they are finding themselves saying "no" less to the children. Meanwhile, in another research done in 2017, which was a systematic review of the incorporation of loose parts play, Flannigan and Dietze (2017) determined social behaviors, which included cooperation and leadership, taking turns, and problem-solving. It was also determined that there was an increase in children's risk-taking and independence.

In 2023, Askar and Durmusoglu conducted a case study about the meaning of Loose Parts Materials in Preschool, where the study showed that integrating loose parts in their educational environment resulted in an increased learning motivation, and observable positive behaviors among the children. At the same time, the participation of the parents has also increased when not only the communication, but also the interaction between the parent and school has been strengthened.

These documented advantages influence and become an essential part in shaping the attitude and perceptions of teachers towards the use of loose parts play in their classes, which is further explored in this study.

#### ➤ *Risks in Play-Based Learning*

Despite the perceived benefits of loose parts play, several literatures emphasize the importance of ensuring the safety of children while giving them freedom to explore, which identifies risk assessment as a significant factor in the experience of teachers.

The fact that there are no guidelines in loose parts play is being highlighted in a positive light, as educators are in control of what they want to introduce. (Swadley, 2021) However, certain risks with loose parts are also present. It can be seen when Swadley discussed how their centers are catered for 2 to 6-year-olds but can also be facilitated in younger classes if slight modifications are done. The author mentioned how they do choke-tests on items prior to adding them and suggested the use of an empty toilet paper for those educators who do not have a choke-test tube.

There are a number of other risks involved in a play-based learning environment. These risks may involve the use of dangerous items like scissors or hammers, falling from great heights as children climb and learn how to balance, inability to stop quickly from a high speed, as when children are sliding down, playing near dangerous bodies of water, and even rough playing. (BabySparks, 2019). But even these risks provide learning experiences for children. In 2022, Zuiderveen stated that as children engage in risky play, they are actually taking part in risk analysis, and it allows them to reflect and understand how much risk they are comfortable taking. This process allows children to use that particular experience, relate it to the environment and their known physical capabilities, and then use it for reflection, paving the way for them to experiment the next time they engage in play. (Zuiderveen, 2022).

In addition to this, there seems to have been an obvious increase regarding the understanding of risk. In 2022, Hansen Sandseter et. al has stated that although the word risk has been often associated with a negative connotation, the change in its concept provided a different light towards instances where risks may be necessary to achieve a positive result towards the learning of children. This statement seems to agree with how Branje, et. al has stated that when children take risks in their play, they also master how to overcome those challenges through the development of their perceptual motor skills, as well as their spatial-orientation abilities. (Branje, et. al., 2021).

➤ *Challenges in Implementing Play-Based Learning*

Whilst there are many researches regarding the benefits of play-based education, there are also concerns which have been raised regarding its implementation.

In a study conducted by Pyle and Danniels in 2017, it was stated that the most prominent challenge that arose was the expressed belief of the educators towards the need to create a child-led environment while having to incorporate the mandated curriculum standards, as well. It was stated that fostering a child-led environment hinders lesson-planning issues. There is also a concern with the amount of time children are now allowed to spend playing.

While it is not entirely a challenge for current educators as much as it is for new educators implementing loose parts, it is also expected of them to set up the environment for play by monitoring the play of children, planning, providing the necessary resources, and assessing the equipment. Setting up an environment like this will promote collaborative play among the children, which is beneficial for their social development. (Khayankij & Sutthiboon, 2022) However, certain places have certain standards which are currently being considered in lesson planning. Bjelde (2020) stated that with the changes in kindergarten laws, kindergarten is now being viewed as first grade, where there are a lot of standard-based instructions. This leads to play being lessened as more teacher-led learning is implemented. However, the researcher argued that early childhood educators should not have to choose between play and academics because being able to nurture and value quality play of children will lead to their comprehensive development. At the same time, in a study conducted by Lee, et al. in 2020, results show that the children who had unstructured free time were rated with not only increased, but also more severe disruptive behaviors compared to the children who had their typical recess time. However, it was also mentioned that this may likely be caused by the controlled and structured nature of the typical recess play activities.

These are only some of the determined challenges exhibit the encounters of teachers with the complexities of play based learning, but it highlights the importance of examining what strategies can be employed to counter the challenges.

Overall, the literature available regarding loose parts play often revolves around studies on the perceived benefits it provides to the students, but there are very limited studies from the standpoint of those who facilitate it. While there are undeniable benefits to the children during its facilitation, the lack of studies regarding the preparation of educators to ensure mindful approach to risk assessment, as well as strategies that have been strategically used to overcome the challenges of lesson planning and classroom setup needs to be studied further. As such, this study focuses on exploring deeply the lived experiences of teachers in implementing loose parts play.

➤ *Conceptual Framework*

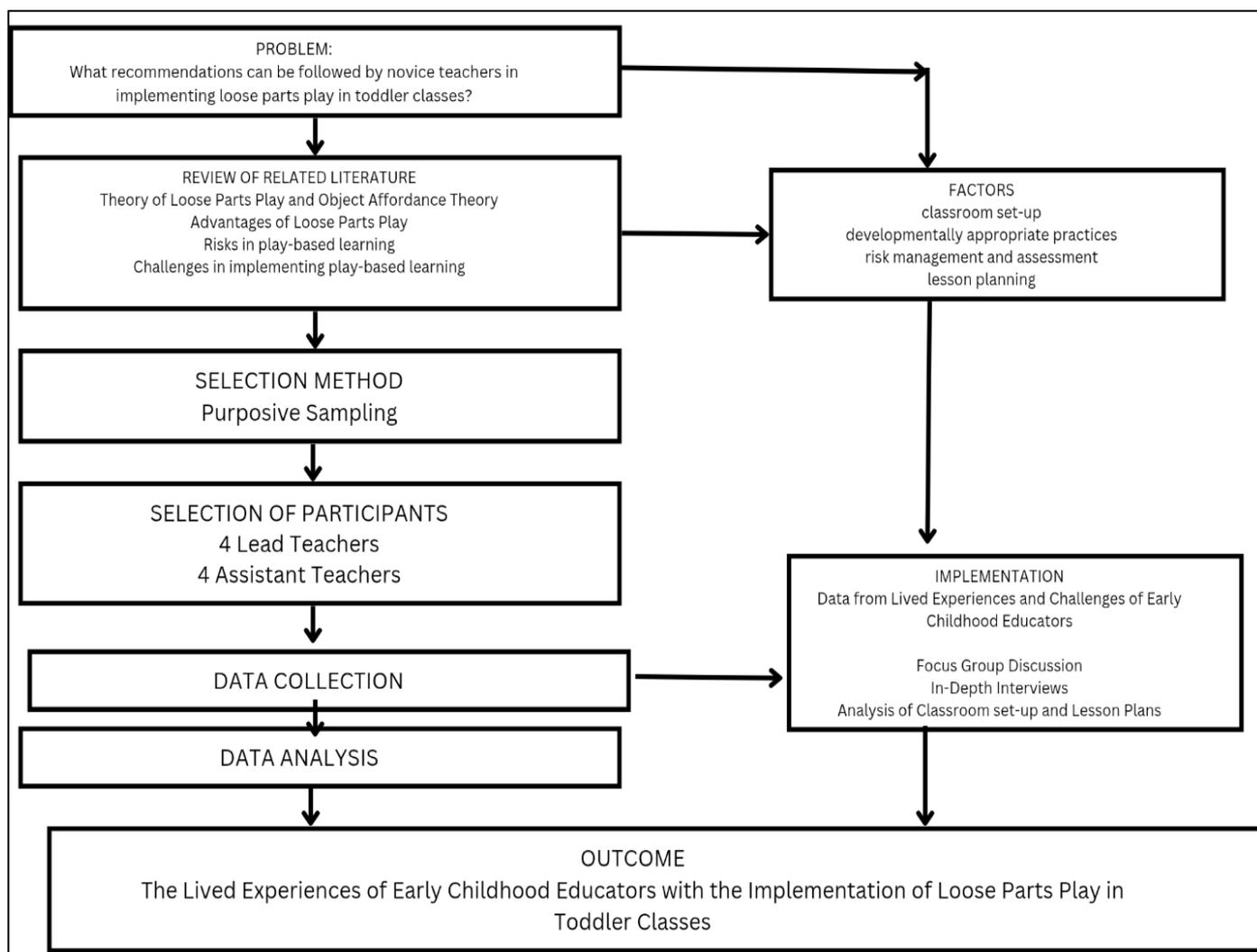


Fig 1 Methodological Framework of the Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers with the Implementation of Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes

Dewi et al. (2022) stated that teachers have various stages of development of loose parts materials, and it involves teachers learning, analyzing, and finding out what materials catch the attention of the children and are not dull. It was mentioned how it initially starts with the availability of the materials, adjusting those materials to the child's learning objectives, and finally, material development. The methodological framework of this study shows the process in which the analysis of the implementation of loose parts play in toddler classes emerges from the challenges and lived experiences of the participants. Data will be gathered from focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and analysis of data gathered from the examination of classroom set-ups and lesson plans.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The goal of this study is to analyze the experiences (including the challenges) of teachers while utilizing loose parts play in toddler classes at Komazawa Park International School to provide an in-depth analysis of the implementation of loose parts play. To specify, this study aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the experiences and perceptions of teachers in the implementation of loose parts play in the toddler classes?
- What are the challenges encountered by teachers in toddler classes with loose parts play in terms of:
  - ✓ Classroom setup
  - ✓ Risk Management and Assessment
  - ✓ Lesson Planning
- How can new and current teachers efficiently implement loose parts play in toddler classes?

➤ *Significance of the Study*

The quest for developing curricula nowadays lies in discovering teaching approaches that will suitably allow the emergence of suitable critical thinking skills meaningfully. (Smith-Gilman, 2018) The researcher also stated that in 2018, Pinar confirmed the lack of flexibility in today's curricula, as it is often delivered with a lack of learning from lived experiences. The author also stated that by uncovering effective implementation of provocations will lead to a step up for the educators as it will help them be more sensitive to the needs of their students.

This study, which has gathered data from the lived experiences of early childhood teachers while implementing loose parts play in toddler classes, is deemed important to the following:

- New Early Childhood Teachers - As first-time Early Childhood Educators, this study will allow them to be able to view the lived experiences of current childhood educators as they implement loose parts play in their classes. It may be used as their basis for implementing loose parts play in their classes.
- Current Early Childhood Teachers - The data gathered will be beneficial for current Early Childhood Teachers who are currently implementing loose parts play as their guide for improvement, and those who are planning on adopting a play-based curriculum may use this as their starting point towards introducing loose parts play in their classrooms.
- Students - As teachers become more familiar with implementing loose parts play in their classes through the data gathered from this study, students will benefit from the better implementation of play-based learning.
- School Administrators - The study will be beneficial to school administrators as they acquire knowledge regarding the experiences of teachers with loose parts. They may use this as a basis when aiming to implement changes in their curriculum or when planning to incorporate loose parts in their school curriculum.
- Future Researchers - The data emerging from this study may serve as a basis for future development and of loose parts play in Early Childhood Education and may extend to other age groups, localities, and regions.

➤ *Scope and Delimitation*

The focus of this study is to examine the lived experiences of early childhood teachers with the implementation of loose parts play in toddler classes from Komazawa Park International School in Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, Japan. Eight (8) participants will be selected through purposive sampling to conduct the study, where the data gathering will be conducted within one (1) term.

This study will not extend beyond the experiences of the participants with loose parts play outside of Komazawa Park International School, as well as outside of the data gathering time frame.

➤ *Definition of Terms*

To ensure clarification, the operational definition of the terms used in the study are defined as follows:

- Hazard - may also be referred to as dangers. These may inflict bodily harm or cause injuries.
- Lived Experiences - refer to the direct experiences of the participants.
- Lead Teacher- refers to the homeroom teacher of the class. It may also be referred to as Teacher 1.
- Loose Parts - refer to movable materials in early childhood classrooms that have no set directions for use.
- Loose Parts Play - refers to the use of open-ended materials in children's play to allow them to learn through various ways including construction, creativity, and even problem-solving.
- Novice Teachers- refers to teachers who are new to the institution or new to the concept of using *loose parts play*.
- Risks - refers to the possibility that a person may get injured, hurt, or experience negative health effects.
- Unstructured Play - refers to a type of play for children where they have the freedom to discover and learn without being guided by an adult.
- Teacher Assistant - refers to the teacher who assists the lead teacher. It may also be referred to as Teacher 2. Toddlers - refer to children whose ages are between 1-3 years of age.

## CHAPTER TWO METHODOLOGY

### ➤ *Research Design*

The phenomenological research design has been used in this research to examine and have a detailed understanding of the experiences of current teachers in the toddler classes of Komazawa Park International School. In 2023, Ayton stated that the use of phenomenological research design deals with what the participants experienced, and how it has been experienced. Ayton also further discussed the advantages and disadvantages of using a phenomenological design, emphasizing the presentation of authentic accounts of a phenomena as one of the advantages, and the tendency for non-generalizable result as a disadvantage. However, it was further discussed how this research design has mainly been chosen by researchers to understand an individual and their experiences, thus generalization to a larger population may not be applicable.

The data was collected within one (1) term. Data collected from the study will be analyzed and used to identify the lived experiences of early childhood teachers while implementing loose parts play in their classes.

### ➤ *Participants of the Study*

This study used purposive sampling to determine the participants. The use of purposive sampling has been regarded as choosing participants based on their possessed qualities. It has also been stated that this choice is deliberate by the researcher (Etikan, 2016).

The participants of this study are teachers from Komazawa Park International School who have toddlers in their classes. These are four (4) lead teachers who have Education degrees majoring in Early Childhood Education, as well as teacher assistants who do not necessarily have a degree in Education but have prior experience assisting.

### ➤ *Research Instruments*

This study utilized one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the participants. The use of interviews has been selected as it was stated that the primary goal of using interviews in research is to gather more information on the topic the researcher is interested in. This includes the participants' perceptions and experiences. It was also discussed how the use of both interviews as an instrument and as a social practice is essential, with the former being about the lived experiences of the participants and the latter about reflecting on what happened while the interview was taking place. (Roulston, 2019). Other tools that have been used by the researcher include observation notes gathered from the examination of lesson plans and classroom setup of the participants.

### ➤ *Data Gathering Procedures*

Before gathering data, the researcher secured a signed letter of permission to conduct research from the institution, detailing the number of target participants, the purpose, and the expected outcome of the study. A signed letter of consent has also been secured from the target participants. The consent form informs the participants of the purpose and background of the study, their voluntary participation, and the process of data collection and handling.

For higher validity, the use of multiple methods to gather data through triangulation will be utilized by the researcher. The research will use interviews to gather in-depth information regarding the teacher experiences towards the utilization of loose parts play in toddler classrooms, while a follow-up focus group discussion may also be used to further understand personal experiences regarding the challenges and strategies the teachers have encountered during their implementation of loose parts play, and finally, analysis of lesson plans and photos of the teachers' classroom setup.

### ➤ *Data Analysis Process*

To have a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the participants, the Colaizzi Method has been utilized by the researcher. First, the data collected from the interviews have been thoroughly read multiple times. Using the tool Atlas.ti, significant statements which were deemed relevant to the phenomenon were labeled, and the data were later used to formulate meanings in relation to the experiences of the participants. The formulated meanings were then analyzed into themes which were observed to be common among the data gathered.

Together with the transcripts, the contents of the observation records of the researcher from the examination of lesson plans and documentation of the teachers were also coded and thematically analyzed, following the same steps as the interviews.

Finally, the condensed data, which includes graphs and narratives of findings resulting from coding and thematic analysis, has been digitally shared with the participants as a method of member checking, to verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of the data.

The collated data was used to create a guidebook for new and current teachers at Komazawa Park International School who aims to implement Loose Parts Play in their toddler classrooms.

➤ Gantt Chart

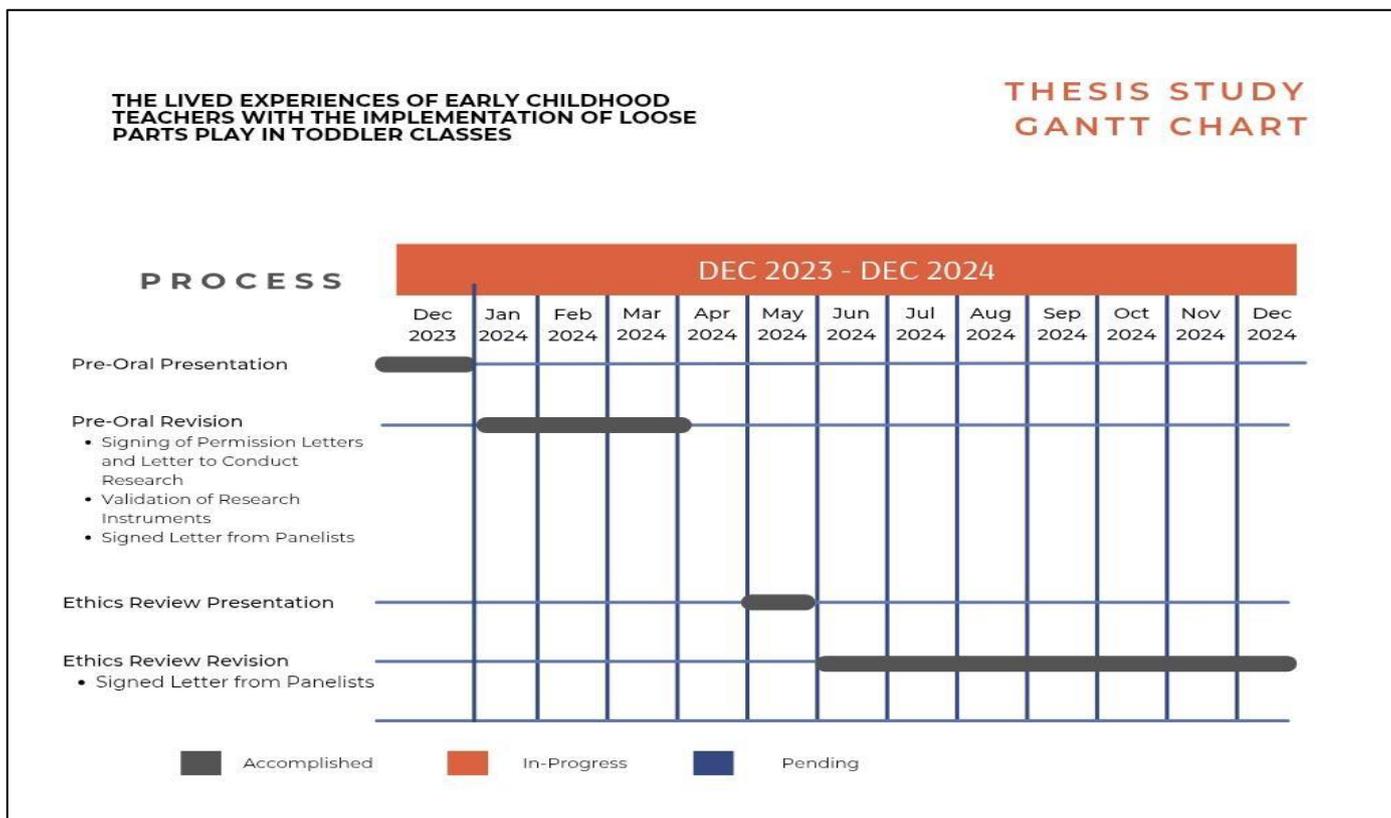


Fig 2 The Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers with the Implementation of Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes Gantt Chart 1

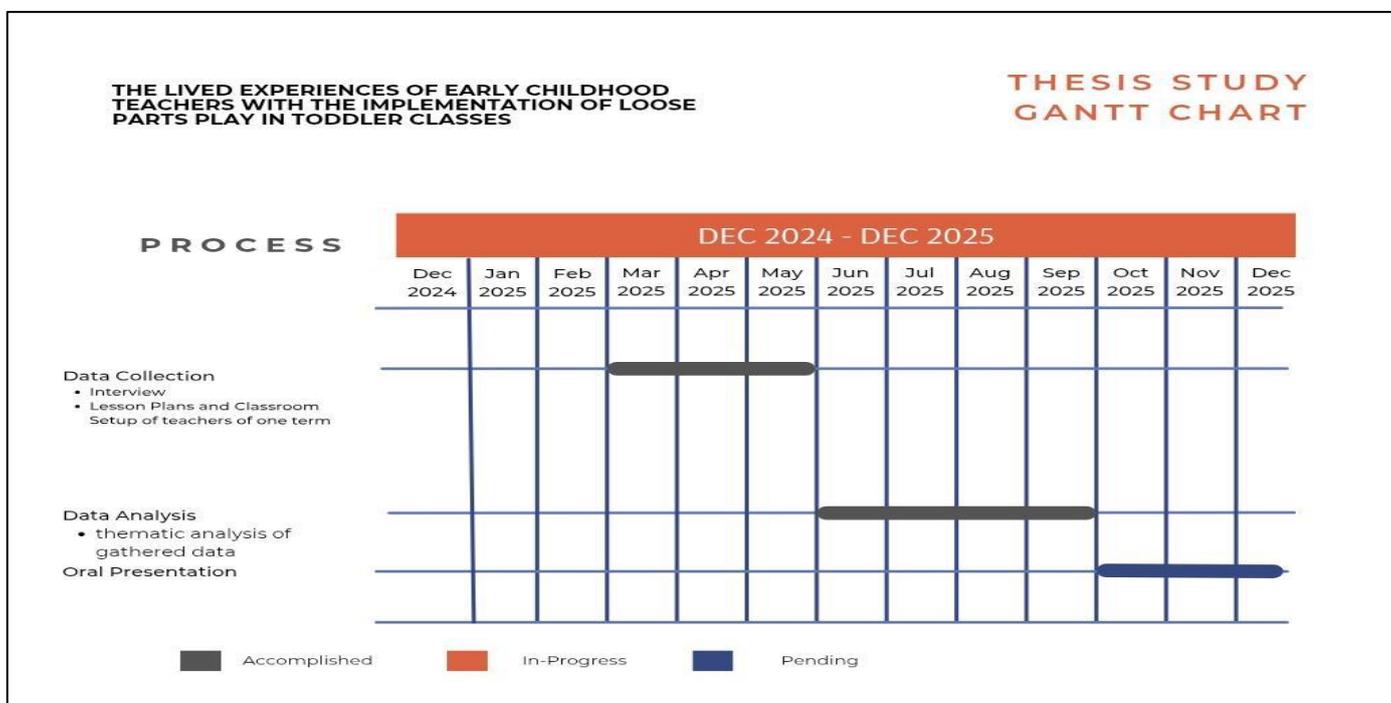


Fig 3 The Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers with the Implementation of Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes Gantt Chart 2

The Gantt Chart of the study provides a visual representation of the timeline of this study. After obtaining the consent forms from the institution and the participants, and having the research tools validated, the data collection will be gathered within one (1) term. Once data gathering has been completed, data analysis will then be conducted by the researcher.

➤ *Ethical Considerations*

To ensure that ethical principles have been followed during this study, the researcher has secured a signed permission letter to conduct research from the institution through the school principal. This signed consent includes the purpose of the study, the number of target participants, the duration of the data gathering collection, as well as the expected outcome of the study.

A signed letter of consent has then been secured from the target participants, which provides significant information about the research, including the purpose and background of the study. The consent form also informs the participants of their voluntary participation and emphasizes their freedom to withdraw anytime from the study without incurring any penalties and provides an opportunity for the participants to contact the researcher if they wish to clarify some information. The form also discusses the data gathering and collection.

A separate document has also been provided and signed by the participants regarding their data privacy. This document provides information about which sensitive information will be collected, who has access to the data, how and where the data is stored for their protection, purpose, and usage, which potentially includes academic publications, as well as the amount of time in retaining the data.

To ensure validity of the research instruments, the researcher has obtained validation from four (4) experts in the field, with the following credentials: validator one (1) has a Master of Arts in Education degree, majoring in Early Childhood Education, validator two (2) has a Master of Arts degree in Child and Family Counseling, and has taught in an Early Childhood setting in Japan, validator three (3) has a Master of Arts in Education degree, majoring in Reading, and has been teaching in the early childhood setting both in the US and Japan, and validator four (4) has a Masters of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education, and is currently pursuing a Doctorate degree, as well.

### CHAPTER THREE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher deemed phenomenology as the most appropriate research design as this study aims to understand the lived experiences of the teachers, emphasizing their attitude, perceptions, and the understanding of the meanings that they attributed to the use of *loose parts* in their classrooms. Since the researcher aims to seek understanding on how the participants experienced a certain phenomenon, this research design provides an in-depth understanding of how the teachers not only navigated the risks, but also how they developed strategies that helped overcome the challenges that they have encountered. Together with the research design, thematic analysis has been utilized in analyzing the data from this study. This enables thorough examination and identification of common patterns and themes shared through the experiences of the participants.

The researcher used multiple data sources which included interviews, lesson plans, and classroom setup photos gathered during the duration of the study. The data gathered through interviews and the analysis of the lesson plans used by the participants were coded and thematically analyzed using the tool Atlas.ti, while the photos were interpreted through observation.

With this data, the researcher was able to analyze six (6) main themes from the codes gathered namely Positive Experiences, Negative Experiences, Experience of Teachers (Strategies), Challenges, and Implementation Strategies.

➤ *The Experiences and Perceptions of Teachers in Implementing Loose Parts Play*

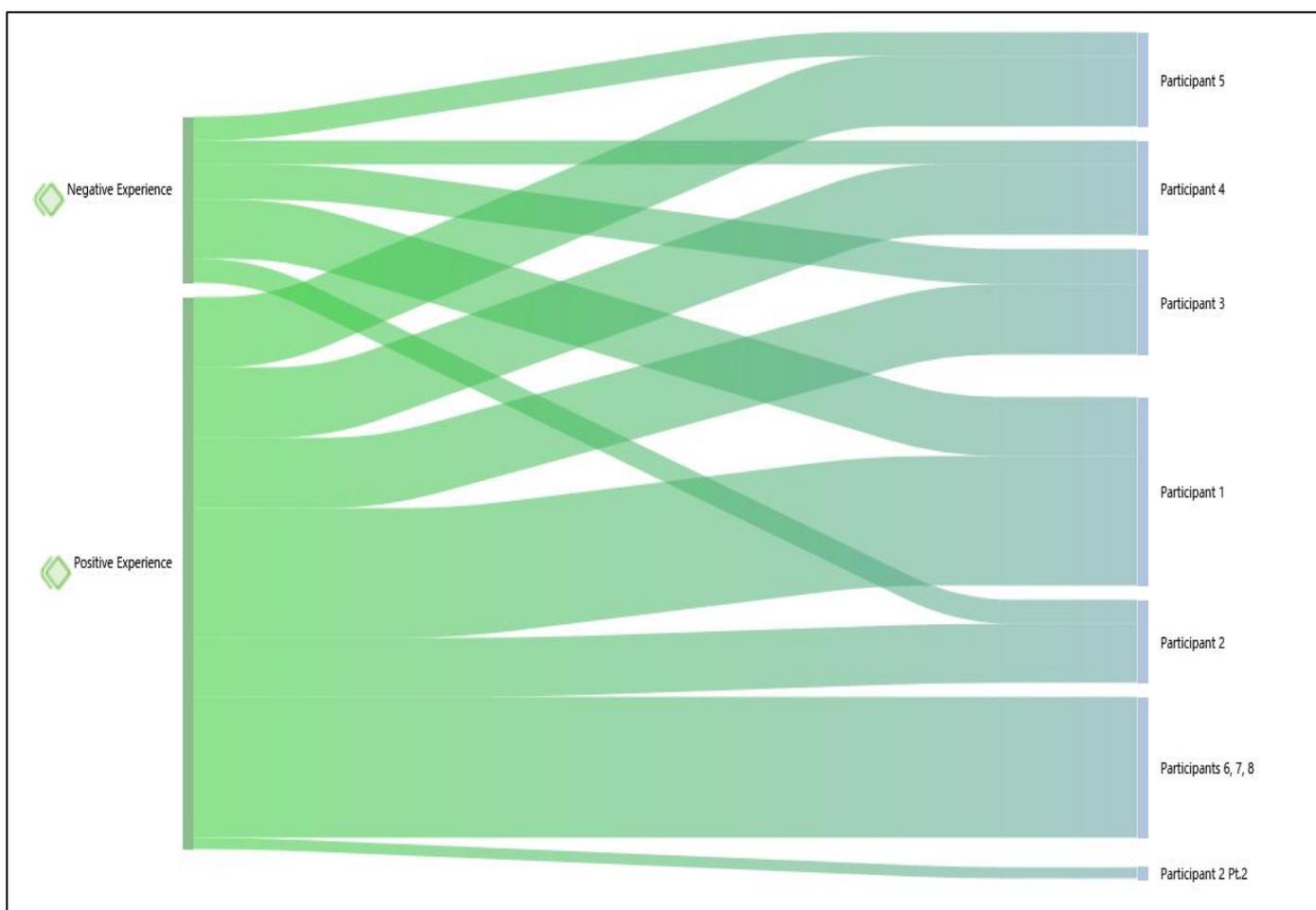


Fig 4 Sankey Diagram of the Positive and Negative Experiences of the Participants in Implementing Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes.

The results of the interviews showed that the participants had a significant number of positive experiences compared to the negative experiences when implementing loose parts play in the toddler classes. Based on the results of the interviews conducted, the top five (5) experiences of the participants are the following: open-endedness, learning impact, imagination, creativity, and a child's individuality. Among others that were also mentioned were availability of the materials, child-led learning, natural materials, cost efficiency, cooperation, independence, social learning, sensory, and problem solving.

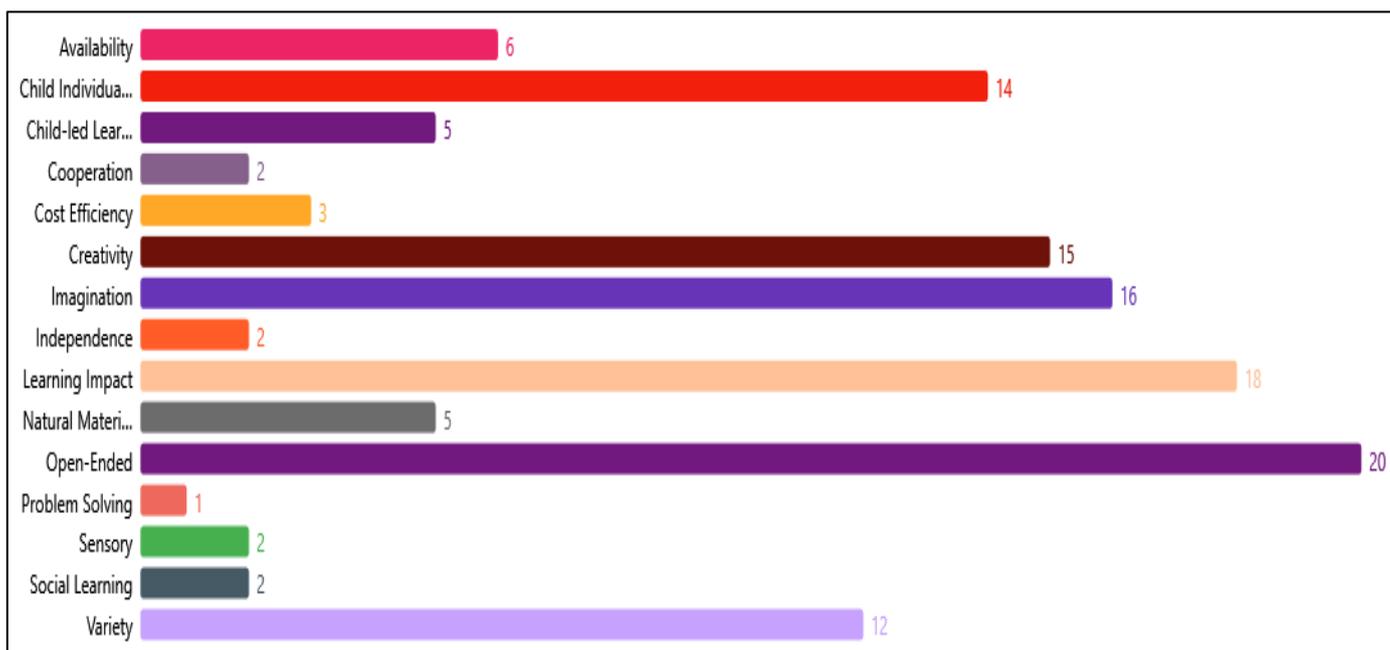


Fig 5 The Positive Experiences of Teachers in Implementing Loose Parts Play

The participants had the most positive experiences with *Loose Parts Play* with its open-endedness. The participants discussed how the children found different ways of using the materials, compared to how they initially set them up as invitations for their play, with some participants stating that the children seemed more drawn to the loose parts materials than traditional toys. The open-endedness of the materials was also closely tied to the learning impact of the materials on the children, with the participants stating that there is an observable growth not only in the children's self-expression as they freely manipulate the materials, but also through their language, creativity, and even the way they build cooperation and collaboration with their peers.

Table 1 The Positive Experiences of Participants with Loose Parts Play

Positive Experiences	Open-Ended	Learning Impact
	"They offer different textures...they can be anything you can imagine.." [Participant 1] "It never goes exactly how I imagine it and that's actually the beauty of it. The open ended nature of it is so unique. Kids always surprise me with how creatively they use the materials in ways I never expected.." [Participant 2] "...if you leave things like old boxes, pallets, rope, or even random household items lying around, kids are drawn to them more than traditional toys. They turn them into castles, kitchens, cars—whatever they imagine." [Participant 3] "It sparks creativity and imagination, encouraging children to play in ways I don't even think about" [Participant 4] "really flexible it can be anything anything and we can stretch the time...the kids... and we can add anything" [Participant 6]	"Loose parts allow toddlers to engage at their own level—some build, some sort, some pretend" [Participant 3] "Gives toddlers so much freedom to make choices, as well as to express themselves" [Participant 5] "I've seen strong growth in their language, creativity, and cooperation." [Participant 8]

Although there were a lot of positive experiences encountered by the participants, there were also a few negative experiences that the participants have experienced- among which includes the lack of previous knowledge and prior misconception about Loose Part Play (more common with the participants who did not study Early Childhood Education as their bachelor's degree)- with some participants stating that using natural materials are being viewed as "old-fashioned", and raising concerns about the children's interests in using materials freely or without a definite set of use.

Interestingly, storage and material organization is the most frequently given answer by the participants, with some also stating concerns about how the materials are kept, including hygiene and cleanliness, especially when using natural materials taken from outdoors, as well as porous materials like cardboard boxes, papers, and pieces of cloth.

Table 2 The Negative Experiences of Participants with Loose Parts Play

Negative Experiences	Lack of Previous Knowledge/ Misconception about Loose Parts Play	"assumed it was too old-fashioned and that today's kids wouldn't enjoy it" [Participant 2] "How misunderstood it can be— that a teacher using loose parts is “lazy” or that loose parts are “clutter” and “messy”" [Participant 4] "It looks messy, but at the same time, you can also see all the experimenting, as well as the thinking that is happening." [Participant 5]
	Storage	"Bringing in some natural items in the classroom may make the room dirty. (bugs, dirt, mold, etc." [Participant 1] "even if these kinds of learning environments are available, many schools or spaces aren't really designed for it" [Participant 2]

➤ *Challenges in Implementation*

In terms of the challenges encountered by the participants, some of the most recurring codes from the interviews included: Child-engagement, Learning Impact, Material Selection, Lack of Previous Knowledge, Setting Boundaries, and Topic Presentation. It is also notable how some codes from the challenges overlap with the negative experiences including storage and organization, showing relevance to how the participants perceived the challenges in implementing loose parts as negative experiences.

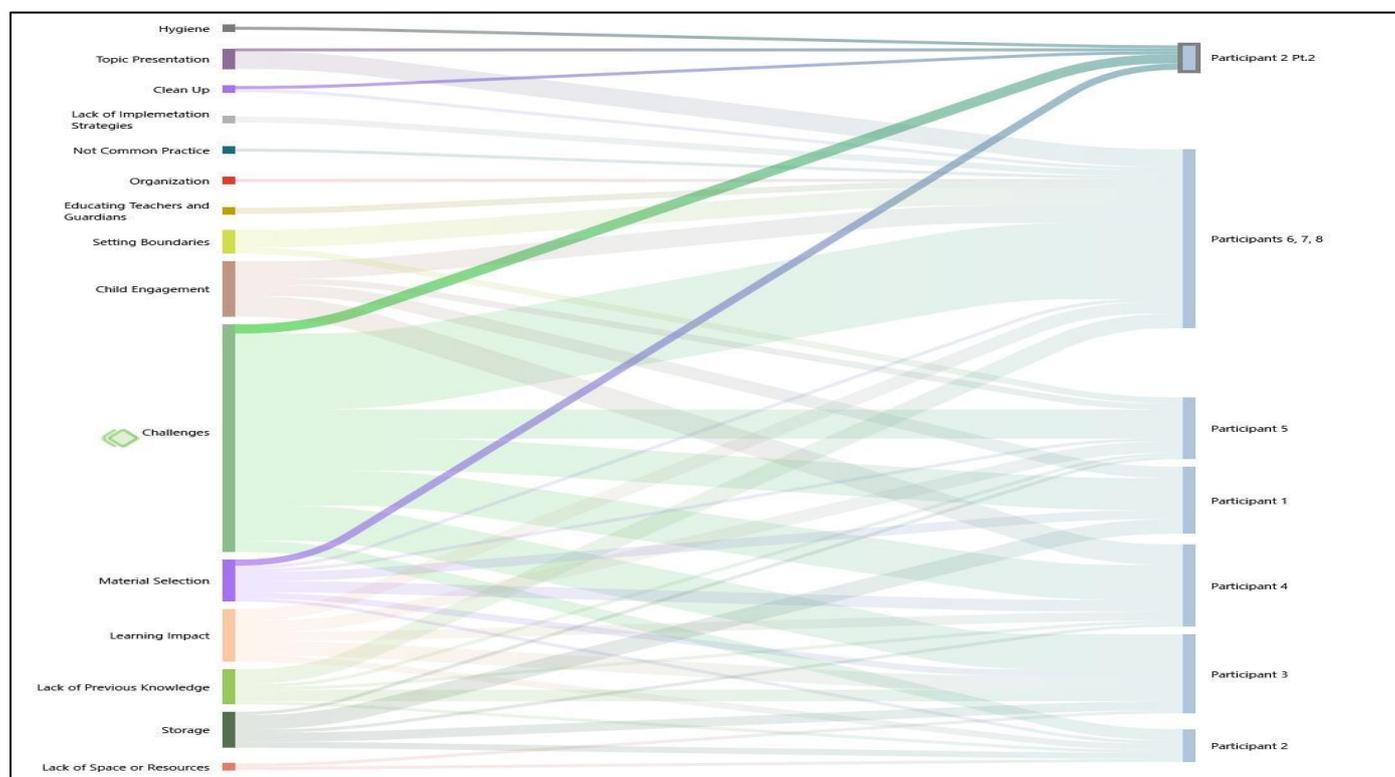


Fig 6 Sankey Diagram of the Challenges of the Participants in Implementing Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes

➤ *Setting Up the Classroom*

In setting up the classroom, the results of the data gathered show that the availability of the loose parts also comes with the challenge of storage and organization, with participants stating that it is mostly challenging, especially for shared spaces at school. Likewise, the constant rotation of the materials, especially the smaller-sized items, is difficult to keep organized, which poses the risk of some items which are not displayed to not being rotated. At the same time, although children are invited to clean up the materials after use, this may take time depending on the amount of materials used.

Table 3 The Challenges in Implementing Loose Parts Play (Classroom Setup)

Challenges	Classroom Setup	Material Selection/ Storage/ Organization/ Lack of Space or Resources	"we encourage the children to tidy up as part of their learning, but it still may take time even when doing it together..." [Participant 1] "The mess can be a bit of a challenge, especially in shared or limited spaces." [Participant 3]
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			<p>"At first, I was a bit unsure, wondering if the children would engage with the materials or if the play would look chaotic" [Participant 3]</p> <p>"include even more natural and culturally relevant materials in our collection, and create a more intentional rotation system" [Participant 3]</p> <p>"Storage can be tricky" [Participant 4]</p> <p>"Managing...like, knowing what you have especially small items. Also, how to rotate them to keep interest of the children. Also, ensuring that everything remains organized." [Participant 5]</p> <p>"lack of better system in storage and display in materials...which would help both teachers and children access and clean up materials independently." [Participant 7]</p>
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➤ *Risk Assessment and Management*

In managing and assessing the risks which come with the implementation of loose parts, one of the biggest challenges was the sizes of the materials in relation to age, and prior knowledge of the child with the use of the materials. With the use of materials such as acorns, pompoms, bottle caps, and the like, the participants expressed their feelings of nervousness about the children choking. Since the use of natural materials is also common, the participants stated that there are also risks of these materials having sharp edges, which may be hazardous to the learners, especially when introducing them for the first time.

Table 4 The Challenges in Implementing Loose Parts Play (Risk Assessment and Management)

Challenges	Risk Assessment	Small Items/Sharp Objects	
			<p>"I can still remember feeling very nervous when the lead teacher I was working with was introducing the small items to the 1-2 year olds... some of them have quite sharp ends." [Participant 1]</p> <p>"The main challenge is safety. I always making sure they are not hazardous" [Participant 2]</p> <p>"Some materials aren't always safe for mouthing toddlers, so I have to be extra careful in choosing age-appropriate items." [Participant 3]</p> <p>"Sometimes it's as simple as something being too sharp— then those are taken away." [Participant 4]</p> <p>"it's very small it's not safe if they get choked or something" [Participant 7]</p>

➤ *Lesson Planning*

In terms of the challenging experiences with the creation and implementation of the lesson plans for the children's age group, the interviews stated that child engagement towards the materials is one of the biggest challenges of the participants. Since it is a concept that is new to the children, incorporating loose parts into their play may take time, as they are not "toys" they commonly use for their play. This, in turn, may be interpreted as having very little progress or productivity, as the children seem disinterested in the beginning while they explore the materials.

At the same time, the participants not only have to think about the activities for the child, but also to educate novice colleagues and guardians of the learners, as well. Since the use of loose parts materials is open-ended and is not geared towards traditional education, it can be quite challenging to make others see the learning that it provides for the children.

However, although open-endedness was one of the most common answers for the participants' positive experiences in implementing loose parts play, it is also proven as a challenge to novice teachers in implementing loose parts play. It has been stated that some participants felt at a loss for what to do in terms of observing and facilitating the play. Due to the nature of this form of play, it may take some time for novice teachers to step back and observe the play of the children, and they may often veer towards asking the children to clean up as the classroom looks "messy" when the children are exploring the materials.

Table 5 The Challenges in Implementing Loose Parts Play (Lesson Planning)

Challenges	Lesson Planning	Learning Impact/ Child Engagement/ Lack of Previous Knowledge/ Implementation	
			<p>"It was a new concept to not just the children but the teachers as well. The children were curious at first but it took time for them to integrate loose parts that weren't familiar to them, those that weren't usual "toys" that had predetermined purposes." [Participant 3]</p> <p>"gaining buy-in from others takes time and explanation" [Participant 3]</p> <p>"But if the children are not yet ready— maybe they do not know how to take turns and end up grabbing breakable items from each other, then I simply pull out these items." [Participant 4]</p>

			<p>"It can be frustrating at the beginning, feeling like toddlers show no interest in loose parts but over time" [Participant 4]</p> <p>"how to help adults see the value in playing with what they see is junk" [Participant 5]</p> <p>"Some kids have no idea what to do with the materials. Im not sure how to watch them." [Participant 8]</p> <p>"also takes time to educate others—parents, colleagues—about why this kind of play is valuable, especially when it doesn't look "academic" on the surface." [Participant 3]</p> <p>"As for the teachers— it was too out of the ordinary that they didn't understand just letting the children explore without telling them what to do. It took time and patience for both the children and my colleagues to understand the value of including loose parts to our play areas." [Participant 4]</p> <p>"It will take time and patience, since their attention span is shorter, they lose interest a lot faster, making for less time for exploration of loose parts which is vital as children try to figure out how to use different/new/unusual objects." [Participant 4]</p> <p>"...their interest shifted quite quickly." [Participant 5]</p> <p>"lack of previous knowledge- I guess in Japan they don't really..." [Participant 6]</p> <p>" some kids just...you know... don't move- and, like, you don't know what to do with it. (they) just stay there and then like (we invite them to) touch and then (they) don't do it." [Participant 7]</p> <p>"I wish my assistant.. to make things smoother.. I wish i showed my assistant how to play, how to observe loose parts play so we have the same view, the same thing so they are not confused, too. Should I do it this [sic], it may break..." [Participant 7]</p>
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➤ *Implementation Strategies*

The implementation strategies from the interviews and the lesson plans used by the participants were also coded and thematically analyzed, while the images of their classroom setup were interpreted through observational interpretation.

The results showed that material presentation is one of the most practiced strategies of the participants, followed by Child Engagement, Observation, Guidance, Children's Interests, Child Individuality, and Lesson Planning.

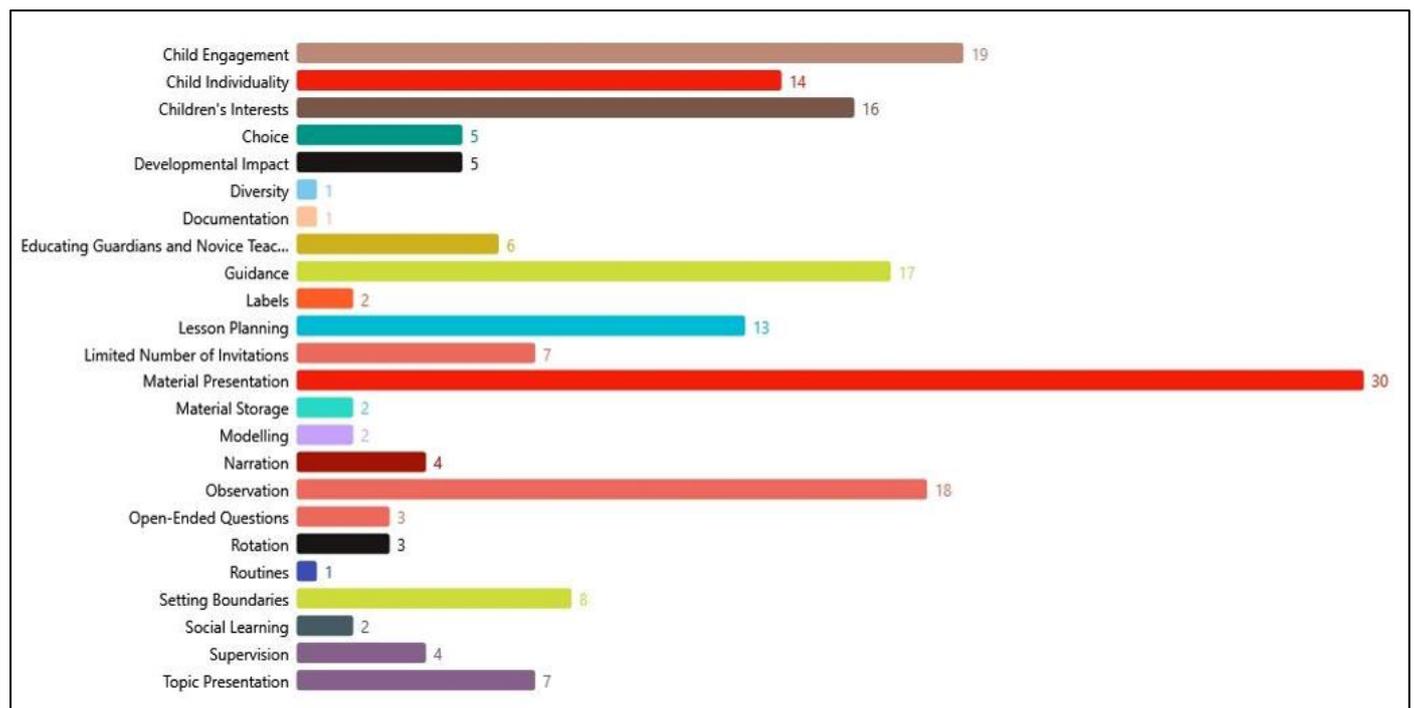


Fig 7 Implementation Strategies of the Participants in Implementing Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes

• *Classroom Setup*

The results of the interviews showed that many of the participants offer less items or introduce fewer materials at once, which allows the children to explore the materials differently while also supporting the different ideas of the children. This is often supported by either intentionally taking out only a few items, rotating the materials, or even intentionally covering certain play areas to encourage the children to explore other items.

Aside from the data gathered from the interviews, other supporting data were also gathered and analyzed through manual interpretation of some classroom setups and invitations that were used by the participants. (Appendices). The materials included a mix of natural materials, as well as containers, and other common household materials like cork potholders, spare cloths, and wooden trays and bowls. Further analysis shows that the materials are openly accessible to the children using easy-to-open jars, low cabinets, easy to pull out containers, and even art materials like paint, scissors, and markers are easily accessible for the children.

Interestingly, although it is unclear whether it is the interest of the children or a concept the teacher wants to introduce, it is noticeable how although seasonal topics may also be included as invitations through winter sensory boxes, pumpkins for Halloween in October, or sweet potatoes for fall, loose parts materials are still strategically placed together with these invitations- allowing the children to still keep the “open-endedness” of their play.

• *Risk Assessment and Management*

When introducing items that may be too small or pose risks, the data shows that the participants use communication, guidance, and supervision to prevent risks. Before introducing a material, there are constant reminders about why and how it may be risky for them or for their peers. Later, supervision and guidance are put into action by the teacher as they observe how the children use the materials. Interestingly, it was also mentioned that in guiding children to prevent or assess risks, emphasizing the risks of the materials for them and their friends is crucial, but may also include assuring the children that the teachers will not get angry, nor will they be reprimanded if the materials break, as they sometimes do. It has also been mentioned that although loose parts encourage open-ended and child-led learning, the setting of clear boundaries regarding the use of these materials is still being practiced by most of the participants. This may include reminding children to walk and point down the sticks while playing, asking the children to clean up materials they were exploring through dumping, and limitations on items they may throw across the classroom.

• *Lesson Planning*

When making lesson plans or implementing loose parts play in their classes, the participants seem to share the same approach, which is to step back and observe the play of the children. However, when the child includes them or invites them to their play, the teachers join by having meaningful conversations about their play.

In particular, the data from the interviews show that they prefer asking open-ended questions or otherwise narrate the action (what the child is doing) rather than asking them close-ended questions and giving suggestions or ideas, which can set a limited function for how the material may be viewed by the child. It has also been mentioned that some participants enjoy introducing concepts through songs, dances, or books, with one participant saying that singing Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes encouraged her students to later view loose parts materials as body parts.

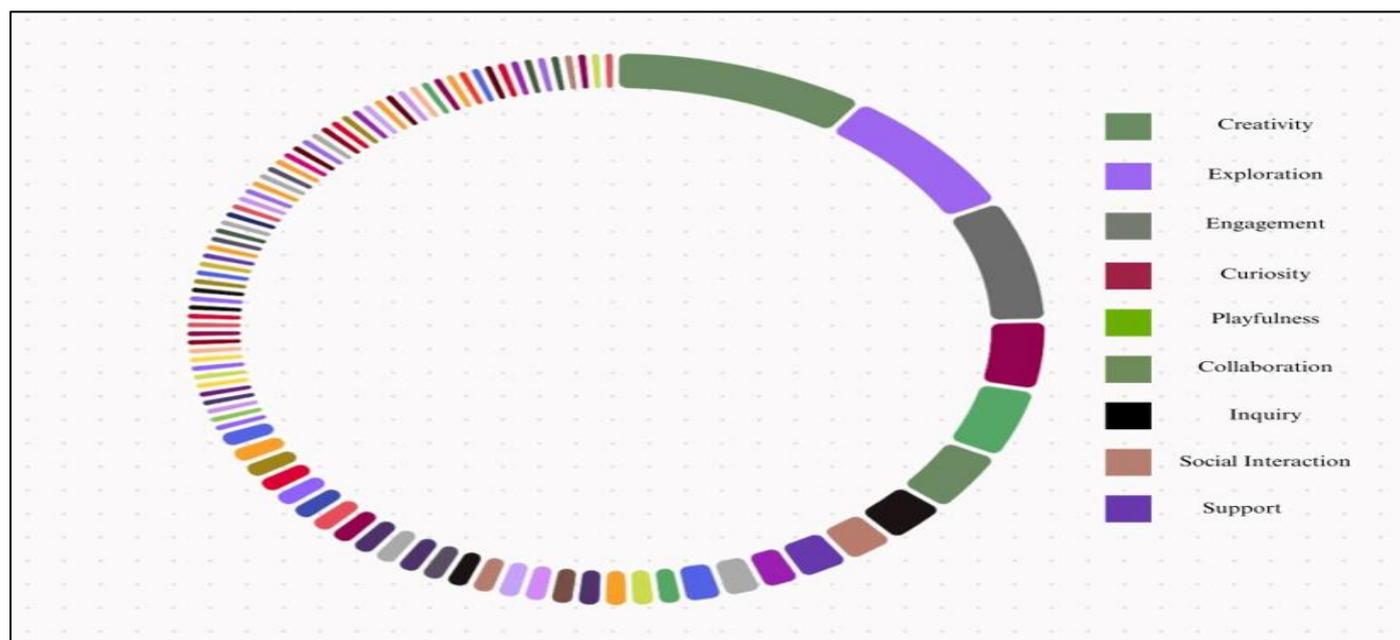


Fig 8 Codes of the Lesson Plans for the Participants

To further analyze the strategies implemented by the participants when planning for their classes, the lesson plans from the first three months of the academic school year have also been manually coded and thematically analyzed. The data gathered has been individually coded into code groups. The results showed that the most common codes that emerged were creativity, exploration, engagement, curiosity, playfulness, collaboration, inquiry, social interaction, and support.

The documents also showed that establishing routines, as well as invitations to explore the classroom for familiarity, is common in the first month, with “What’s in our classroom?” a common learning invitation among the participants, followed by building connections through familiarity with the names of teachers and classmates. Open-ended questions are also used as learning invitations to invite children to creatively use and explore the materials with questions like, “What can we use this as?” frequently used by participants, as well as using statements like, “I wonder what happens if I do this...”. The lesson plans also noticeably become more inviting to collaboration among children, especially by the third month, where pretend play seems to become the interest of the children.

The data from the interviews also shows the strategies implemented by the participants in educating parents and other teachers which includes proper documentation, which includes photos, videos, and some narratives of how the child uses the materials, which "explains" the learning of the child. Likewise, to further their own learning, some participants took online courses and read books about loose parts play.

Table 6 Implementation Strategies of the Participants

Strategies	Classroom Setup	Material Presentation /Limited Number of Invitations	<p>"Since the school has smaller groups of children, it is somehow easier to follow the different interests of the children by using the same materials yet presenting them differently." [Participant 1]</p> <p>"I cover the other materials in the classroom when I want the children to try exploring certain materials." [Participant 1]</p> <p>"I offer them limited variety of materials in small amounts, then observe their play closely." [Participant 1]</p> <p>Offer fewer items. [Participant 1]</p> <p>"Since every child is different, it is okay for them to explore the daily provocation in different ways" [Participant 1]</p> <p>I'd love to include even more natural and culturally relevant materials in our collection, and create a more intentional rotation system. [Participant 3]</p> <p>Using loose parts in toddler play is only effective with time, constant invitations, little nudges to explore... [Participant 4]</p> <p>"Starting with simple and materials which they are familiar with, I observe how they interact with it, then introduce more as I learn about their own abilities" [Participant 5]</p> <p>"engaging deeply... i think...when offered limited selections, it makes it easier for them to focus, too" [Participant 5]</p> <p>"don't give too many ideas because we're limiting what the children already know" [Participant 7]</p> <p>"let them explore let's keep it little" [Participant 8]</p>
	Risk Assessment/ Management	Guidance/ Supervision/ Communication	<p>"If they have different plans than mine, I try to think of how I can support them in extending their learning experiences, while ensuring that we are still using the materials safely." [Participant 1]</p> <p>"I talk to the children about how they can play safely when I am offering them small items like acorns, or how they can safely use sticks and rocks. Sometimes, we also talk about the reasons" [Participant 1]</p> <p>"supervising actively." [Participant 3]</p> <p>"We talk about how these things are tricky toys and can sometimes break and might hurt our friends. We emphasize that we will not be angry if these things happen but we all need to be careful when using tricky toys." [Participant 4]</p> <p>"clear boundaries and supervision are essential as they are still learning about how materials are safely used" [Participant 5]</p> <p>"just try to tell the children...yeah... how to use it- if this is not (for) your mouth it's not safe." [Participant 6]</p> <p>"give clear boundary to them" [Participant 7]</p> <p>"constant reminders" [Participant 8]</p>

	<p>Lesson Planning</p>	<p>Observation/ Documentation/Modelling/ Open-Ended Questions/Educating Guardians and Teachers</p>	<p>"I usually watch them first and wait a bit but try to support them. If they need help, I give small ideas or ask questions, but I don't tell them what to do. I let them lead the play." [Participant 2]</p> <p>"I try to observe first. I listen, document, and only step in when I see an opportunity to extend or scaffold their learning without taking over. Sometimes I narrate what I see or ask an open-ended question to keep their thinking going." [Participant 3]</p> <p>"Showing photos, documentation, and explaining the learning that happens during loose parts play can really help adults see the value" [Participant 3]</p> <p>"By observing them— sometimes adding new parts based on conversations and ideas I hear, rearranging parts for others to have more access. Sometimes I sit next to them and do my own thing with my own set of loose parts." [Participant 4]</p> <p>"Using loose parts in toddler play is only effective with time, constant invitations, little nudges to explore..." [Participant 4]</p> <p>"I like asking open-ended questions that support their thinking rather than taking over. I avoid changing the direction of their play, but rather observe then follow their lead." [Participant 5]"you just need to step back and observe" [Participant 6]</p> <p>"through songs... okay, then we start playing. with playing and listening, the loose part can be the eyes..." [Participant 7]</p> <p>"just observe after they know then we step back and watch them" [Participant 8]</p>
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The findings from this study became the foundation in developing a guidebook for teachers of Komazawa Park International School. The common themes identified directly from the lived experiences of the participants were synthesized into school-based strategies which focus on classroom setup, risk management, and lesson planning which is tailored to the context of the specific institution.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ➤ Summary

The purpose of this study is to understand and have an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of early childhood educators at Komazawa Park International School with the implementation of loose parts play in toddler Classes. Using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of the participants' lesson plans and classroom setup, the data shows the following summary of the themes, in relation to the statement of the problems in this study:

- *What are the Experiences and Perceptions of Teachers in the Implementation of Loose Parts Play in the Toddler Classes?*

The experiences and perceptions of teachers in implementing loose parts play revealed that the participants experienced more positive experiences in its implementation compared to the negative experiences, with the children's engagement emerging as one of the biggest factors. The participants stated that they have seen positive results in the creativity and self-expression of children, which has been observed in the way they use the materials. Some of the participants also mentioned that the children use the materials in ways that they haven't even thought of- demonstrating the way the children view the materials in their own ways. On the other hand, the negative experiences mentioned focus on the lack of knowledge towards loose parts, which may be viewed as "old-fashioned", which also makes it challenging for current teachers or guardians who are unfamiliar with loose parts to easily understand the learning of the children.

- *What are the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Toddler Classes with Loose Parts Play in Terms of Classroom Setup, Risk Management and Assessment, and Lesson Planning?*

The data regarding the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing loose parts play shows that organizing and storing the materials is one of the biggest challenges in terms of classroom setup. The availability of the materials makes it easy to gather and collect, and thus poses a challenge in terms of storage. The importance of material rotation and labelling has also been mentioned, with some expressing their hope for a more efficient storage and material storage solution.

Although open-endedness is being viewed as a positive experience, it is also posing as a challenge to the participants who find it quite challenging to decide when to just observe or step back while the children are still exploring the materials, when the materials are initially introduced to the children, their exploration may seem like they are disinterested. This, in turn, may be viewed by the participants as lacking in engagement and learning outcomes.

- *How Can New and Current Teachers Efficiently Implement Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes?*

The results of the implementation strategies, on the other hand, highlight the importance of guidance through words and modelling, as well as keeping consistent and clear boundaries during the children's play, especially when it involves risks with the materials. It has also been suggested that taking out fewer items when introducing the loose parts, as well as incorporating books and songs, are also some of the strategies being used by the participants.

#### ➤ Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest consistent perspectives with the literature that was reviewed in the previous chapters, particularly about the advantages the materials present to the learners, which include their open-endedness, as well as observable increased engagement from the children. The use of the interview questions resulted in meaningful data which provided an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the teachers when implementing loose parts play in their classes.

By ensuring that the interview questions all cover specific areas of challenges such as classroom management, risk assessment, and lesson planning, rather than treating it as a singular experience, the participants were able to discuss and reflect on their experiences better and in greater detail. One notable example is how the reviewed literature often emphasized the concerns associated with the risks and their prevention, the participants focused more on the importance of modelling, guidance, and supervision alongside the children while they are engaged in their play.

The reviewed literature also included information about how there are several studies about how loose parts are beneficial to children, yet studies from the experiences of the teachers who are implementing them remain limited. While this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the teachers in implementing loose parts play in their classes, several limitations including the sample size, setting, and time, must be acknowledged. Thus, caution must be applied when generalizing the findings of this research.

#### ➤ Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this study, the following recommendations can be made regarding the implementation of *loose parts play* in toddlers:

- New and current teachers – these recommended strategies were developed from the data gathered, which may prove helpful to not only new, but also current teachers who may wish to implement loose parts play in their classes:
- ✓ In introducing the materials to the children, taking out smaller amounts and offering them fewer items at the beginning may encourage the children
- ✓ Begin with some items which the children may already be familiar with
- ✓ Regular rotation of the items is also important and helpful when introducing new concepts, and provides children with the opportunity to view the materials differently from how they initially viewed them
- ✓ Step back and observe the play of the children, and use open-ended questions to prevent interrupting their play or to avoid giving them ideas on how to use the materials
- ✓ Allow the children to have sufficient time to explore the materials
- ✓ Guide the children on how to use the materials not only verbally, but also by modelling
- ✓ Set consistent and clear boundaries for safely using materials
- ✓ Sufficiently document using not only narratives, but through videos and photos as well, to educate guardians and other teachers about the learning objectives of activities or the children's exploration
  
- The institution or other institutions aiming to use loose parts - establish a more efficient way of storing the materials where items are labeled and recorded, so materials will remain organized, and items can also be easily rotated.
- Other institutions may also consider providing better support to teachers through training and other professional development opportunities.
- Future research- further research regarding the experiences of the other teachers in the institution who teach older-aged children, and whether the age of the children affects their interest in loose parts or not, as well as the experiences of teachers from other play-based schools in implementing loose parts play in toddlers.

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## APPENDICES

### LETTER OF REQUEST TO THE INSTITUTION



The National Teachers College  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

16 December 2023

Ms Merete Kropp  
School Principal

Komazawa Park International School  
1 Chome-12-16 Fukosawa,  
Setagaya City, Tokyo  
158-0081

Dear Ms Kropp,

Greetings!

I am Jessica Diane Wakai, a Master of Arts in Education (Major in Early Childhood Education) student from The National Teachers College in Manila, Philippines. I am willing to ask for your permission to allow me to conduct my thesis entitled "THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOOSE PARTS PLAY IN TODDLER CLASSES" at your school, Komazawa Park International School.

I wish to conduct the following among four (4) lead teachers, as well as (4) assistant teachers who have students between the ages of 18 months to 3 years of age:

- focus group discussion
- Individual in-depth interviews

I would also like to ask permission to access lesson plans, as well as photographs of the participants' classroom setup.

The focus group discussion and the individual interviews will be conducted at a convenient time for both the participants and the school. The teachers' participation will be voluntary, and they may withdraw anytime they wish to.

All collected information will strictly be used for academic purposes and will be kept with utmost confidentiality. No names and other personal identifiers of the participants will appear in any publications resulting from this specific study unless it has previously been agreed to.

If you are interested in more detailed information, an electronic copy of the working thesis paper can be provided to you.

If you agree, kindly sign below to acknowledge your consent. Your assistance and support is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jessica Diane Wakai  
MAEd Early Childhood Education  
8211262

Noted by:

Dr. Lybeth Matira, LPT, PhD  
Thesis Adviser

Approved by:

Name and Signature

Merete L. Kropp

12/18/2023  
Date

LETTER OF REQUEST TO THE PARTICIPANTS



The National Teachers College
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

16 December 2023

Dear Ma'am/ Sir,

Greetings!

I am Jessica Diane Wakai, a Master of Arts in Education (Major in Early Childhood Education) student from The National Teachers College in Manila, Philippines. I am inviting you to participate in my data collection for my thesis entitled, "The Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers in Implementing Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes".

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All collected information will be stored securely by the researcher, and data will not be stored longer than necessary. The data will be used strictly for academic purposes and will be kept with utmost confidentiality. Any personal identifiers of the participants will also be removed to ensure anonymity. No personal information of the participants will appear in any publications resulting from this specific study unless previously agreed to.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me through email at jessicawakai5@gmail.com, or through phone at +81 808735 1103.

If you agree, please check the boxes below and sign to acknowledge your consent. Your participation is highly appreciated.

[X] I confirm that I have read and understand the contents of this Participant Consent Form

[X] I understand that my personal information and any personal identifiers will be kept confidential

[X] I agree that I am allowed to contact the researcher to clarify any questions

[X] I understand that my participation is voluntary and I will not be liable for any penalties should I wish to withdraw anytime

[X] I agree to participate in this study

Sincerely,

Jessica Diane Wakai
MAEd Early Childhood Education
8211262

Noted by:

Dr Lilybeth Malira, LPT, PhD.
Thesis Adviser

Approved by:

Participant 1

Name and Signature

12/19/2023

Date



**The National Teachers College**  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

16 December 2023

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Sincerely,

*Jessica Diane Wakai*  
**Jessica Diane Wakai**  
MAEd Early Childhood Education  
821 1262

Approved by:

Noted by:

*Dr. Lilybeth Matira*  
**Dr Lilybeth Matira, LPT, PhD.**  
Thesis Adviser

Participant 2

Name and Signature

Dec 18, 2023

Date



**The National Teachers College**  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

16 December 2023

Dear Ma'am/ Sir,

Greetings!

I am Jessica Diane Wakai, a Master of Arts in Education (Major in Early Childhood Education) student from The National Teachers College in Manila, Philippines. I am inviting you to participate in my data collection for my thesis entitled, "The Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers in Implementing Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes".

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Sincerely,

Jessica Diane Wakai  
MAEd Early Childhood Education  
8211262

Noted by:

Dr. Lilybeth Magro, LPT, PhD,  
Thesis Adviser

Approved by:

Participant 3

Name and Signature

12/19/2023

Date



**The National Teachers College**  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

16 December 2023

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Sincerely,

**Jessica Diane Wakai**  
MAEd Early Childhood Education  
8211262

Noted by:

**Dr Lilybeth Malira, LPT, PhD,**  
Thesis Adviser

Approved by:

Name and Signature

12/20/2023

Date



**The National Teachers College**  
 Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

16 December 2023

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Sincerely,

  
**Jessica Diane Wakai**  
 MAEd Early Childhood Education  
 8211262

Noted by:  
  
**Dr Lilybeth Matira, LPT, PhD**  
 Thesis Adviser

Approved by:

Participant 5

Name and Signature

Dec 18, 2023

Date



**The National Teachers College**  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

16 December 2023

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Sincerely,

**Jessica Diane Wakai**  
MAEd Early Childhood Education  
821 1262

Noted by:

**Dr. Lilybeth M. Garcia, LPT, PhD,**  
Thesis Adviser

Approved by:

Name and Signature

01/02/2024

Date



**The National Teachers College**  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

23 April 2024

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Sincerely,

**Jessica Diane Wakai**  
MAEd Early Childhood Education  
8211262

Noted by:

**Dr. Lilybeth Matira, LPT, PhD.**  
Thesis Adviser

Approved by:

**Participant 7**

Name and Signature

04/24/2024

Date



**The National Teachers College**  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

16 December 2023

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MAEd Early Childhood Education  
8211262

Noted by:

**Dr. Lilybeth Mafira, LPT, PhD,**  
Thesis Adviser

Approved by:

**Participant 8**

Name and Signature

12/18/2023

Date

## DATA PRIVACY COLLECTION

### Data Privacy Collection and Storage

Greetings!

As part of the data collection of my, Jessica Diane Crisostomo Wakai, a Master of Arts Student Major in Early Childhood Education, thesis entitled, "*The Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers in Implementing Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes*", this form is to specifically inform the participants of how the data will be collected and stored. This is to assure participants that the researcher will properly handle any sensitive information in this study.

The following personal details will be collected:

1. Full Name
2. Employment Details (Work location and work title)

Access:

While access to any personal identifiers of the participants including their full names and work titles will only be accessible to the researcher, the research paper may be available for academic use including but not limited to publications, with the participant's approval.

Storage:

The data containing the participants' personal details will be stored on the researcher's personal computer, which is password-protected. A copy of the working research paper will be accessible to both the researcher and the school (National Teachers College) for academic purposes only.

Purpose and Usage:

To ensure confidentiality, the above personal information of the participants will solely be used for data collection and analysis. Any personal identifiers of the participants that will make them recognizable will be removed from the paper and thus will be replaced by pseudonyms chosen and only known to the researcher.

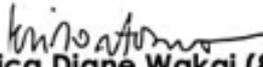
Retention of Information:

The data collected will be stored no longer than five (5) years from the data collection. Any personal information collected will then be properly disposed of.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me through email at [jessicawakai5@gmail.com](mailto:jessicawakai5@gmail.com) or through mobile phone at +81 8087351103.

After thoroughly reading through this data privacy form, please sign with your full name in the space provided below. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

  
**Jessica Diane Wakai (8211262)**  
MAEd Major in Early Childhood Education

I have read and agree  
to participate in this research study:

Participant 1

**Name and Signature**

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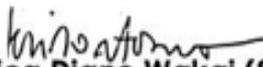
Retention of Information:

The data collected will be stored no longer than five (5) years from the data collection. Any personal information collected will then be properly disposed of.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me through email at [jessicawakai5@gmail.com](mailto:jessicawakai5@gmail.com) or through mobile phone at +81 8087351103.

After thoroughly reading through this data privacy form, please sign with your full name in the space provided below. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

  
**Jessica Diane Wakai (8211262)**  
 MAEd Major in Early Childhood Education

I have read and agree  
to participate in this research study:

**Participant 2**

**Name and Signature**

### **Data Privacy Collection and Storage**

Greetings!

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2. Employment Details (Work location and work title)

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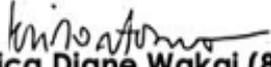
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Sincerely,

  
**Jessica Diane Wakai (8211262)**  
MAEd Major in Early Childhood Education

I have read and agree  
to participate in this research study:

**Participant 3**

**Name and Signature**

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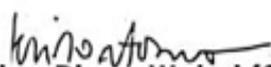
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Sincerely,

  
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MAEd Major in Early Childhood Education

I have read and agree to participate in this research study:

**Participant 5**

**Name and Signature**

### Data Privacy Collection and Storage

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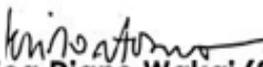
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Sincerely,

  
**Jessica Diane Wakai (8211262)**  
 MAEd Major in Early Childhood Education

I have read and agree  
to participate in this research study:

**Participant 6**

**Name and Signature**

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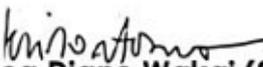
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Sincerely,

  
**Jessica Diane Wakai (8211262)**  
 MAEd Major in Early Childhood Education

I have read and agree  
to participate in this research study:

**Participant 7**

**Name and Signature**

### **Data Privacy Collection and Storage**

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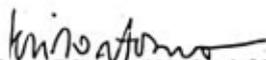
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Sincerely,



**Jessica Diane Wakai (8211262)**  
MAEd Major in Early Childhood Education

I have read and agree to participate in this research study:

Participant 8

**Name and Signature**

## RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

### ➤ Interview Questions A

- *How Did you First Learn About Loose Parts Play?*
- ✓ How was your experience with implementing loose parts play for the first time?
- ✓ What is something you wish you had known before implementing loose parts play for the first time?
- What is your opinion about implementing loose parts play in toddler classes?
- What has been your experience in implementing loose parts play in toddler classes?
- ✓ What did you like about it?
- ✓ What did you not like about it?
- ✓ What is something you wish you could change or develop further?
- In your experience, how do you think have loose parts play been beneficial to the student's learning?
- How do you take part in children's learning without interrupting their play?
- In your experience, what challenges have you experienced while implementing loose parts play in toddler classes?
- Now that we have talked about the challenges, in your opinion, what steps can we make to lessen or resolve these?

### ➤ Interview Questions B

- How did you decide on the lesson plans?
- How do you manage and assess risks when deciding on the materials to be used?
- ✓ How do you assess if an activity is developmentally appropriate especially if it is the start of the school year?
- What is your approach when students are not responsive to the materials of the day?
- ✓ How would you redirect their learning when they seem disinterested in the lesson plan?
- ✓ How do you handle differences between the interests of each child?

### ➤ Images of Classroom Setup







## CERTIFICATE OF VALIDATION OF RESEARCH TOOLS AND VALIDATORS' CV



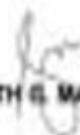
National Teachers College  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

### CERTIFICATE OF INSTRUMENT VALIDATION

This certifies that the research instruments to be used in the study entitled **THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOOSE PARTS PLAY IN TODDLER CLASSES** has been validated upon the request of the researcher, *Jessica Diane Wakai*, a Master of Arts in Education major in Early Childhood Education at The National Teachers College in Manila, Philippines.

The instruments that have been validated include interview questions for both the focus group discussion, as well as the individual interviews.

Validated by:



LILIBETH S. MAGTANDOC

(Full Name and Signature of Validator)



**LILIBETH G. MAGTANGOB**

*Instructor I*

**PERSONAL PROFILE:**

**Birth Date:** September 7, 1996

**Age:** 26

**Address:** Palnab del Norte, Virac, Catanduanes

**Citizenship:** Filipino

**Religion:** Roman Catholic

**Civil Status:** Single

**CP No./ Tel No.:** 09481821972

**Email address:**

magtangobilibeth@gmail.com

Catanduanes State University  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**  
Virac, Catanduanes  
*Center of Development in Teacher Education, CHED*  
*Level III Re-Accredited, AACUP*

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:**

Master of Arts in Education  
Major: Early Childhood Education  
2018-2022

Bachelor of Elementary Education  
Major: General Education  
2013-2017

**PROFESSIONAL ELIGIBILITIES:**

Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET)  
PRC Registration No.: 1575009  
Registration Date : 12/12/2017  
Valid until : 09/07/2026

**PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCES:**

Instructor I  
College of Education  
Catanduanes State University  
January 3, 2023-present

Teacher I  
Alphastar Educational Centre, Incorporated  
June 1, 2021-September 3, 2022

Language Assessor  
Transnational Education Solutions Team Inc.  
June 17, 2019-March 5, 2020

Teacher I  
Great Beginnings Integrated School  
April 10, 2018-April 6, 2019

**LILIBETH G. MAGTANGOB**

*"Leading to mold tomorrow's noblest"*



National Teachers College  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

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Validated by:

*Rina Brown-Ono*

(Full Name and Signature of Validator)

# Rina Brown-Ono

33346 South Shore Drive, Mount Vernon, WA 98274 | 808-387-7176 |

[rinoob0623@gmail.com](mailto:rinoob0623@gmail.com)

## Experiences

### **Psychometric Technician / Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Associate**

#### **At Beautiful Autism, Arlington WA**

January 2022 to Current

In this current position, I help with psychological evaluations under our lead psychologist and her team. I help with scoring, administering, and writing psychological evaluations with adults and children. I'm also a licensed LMFTA, and I work directly with clients while maintaining supervision hours. Based on the client's diagnosis, I create a treatment plan for each client. I work with clients from diverse populations. I also conduct an assessment under supervision if it is appropriate.

### **Behavior Technician**

#### **At Learn Behavioral, Portland OR**

September 2020 to December 2021

I worked as a behavior technician. As a behavior technician, I worked with autistic children and their families based on the plans my supervisor provided for each child.

Depending on the plans, I ensured I had all the materials needed. Also, I communicated with parents daily to ensure that everyone was on the same page.

### **English Teacher**

#### **At NYC SCHOOL KAMIOOKA, Yokohama, Japan**

September 2019 to April 2020

I worked as an English Teacher. I worked from infants to adults who wanted to learn English in Yokosuka, Japan. I oversaw not only teaching English classes, but also making science curriculums.

### **School-Age and Child Youth Center Teacher / Lead Teacher**

#### **Navy CYP**

September 2016 to July 2019

I have worked as a teacher, then later promoted as a lead teacher. While working at the center, I worked closely with not only children but also families in the military community. My responsibilities at the center were not merely taking care of children of all ages, but also planning and managing events based on community needs.

**U.S. Navy CFAC Sexual Assault Response Coordinator / Prevention and Response Victim Advocate (SAPR)**

September 2017 to March 2018

As a response coordinator, I made sure the SAPR program was running correctly. Also, I was working closely with the commander so that the community was well informed.

Awarded Citation of Appreciation from Rear Admiral.

**Education**

Master of Arts in Family and Couple Therapy

**Northcentral University** (Graduated January 2023)

Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies

**American Military University** (Graduated July 2022)

Bachelor of Science in Family Resource Management

**University of Hawaii at Manoa** (Graduated December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014)

Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts

**Hawaii Tokai International College** (Graduated December 14, 2011)



**National Teachers College**  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

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Validated by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leia Mitchell', is written over a horizontal line.

(Full Name and Signature of Validator)

**Leia Mitchell**

# Leia E. Mitchell

(901) 201-7033  
leiamitchell9@icloud.com

## EDUCATION

### University of Memphis, Memphis, TN — Bachelor of Arts

Conferred: August 2015

Major: English Literature

### Relay Graduate School of Education, Memphis, TN — Teacher Licensure Program

Conferred: August 2016

Tennessee License (000633167): Elementary K-6

Texas License: Core Subjects with Science in Teaching Reading (STR) Grades EC-6

### Harding University, Searcy, AR — Master of Education

Conferred: July 2019

Major: Reading Literacy

## EXPERIENCE

### Dallas Independent School District, Dallas, TX —

#### ELAR Instructional Lead Teacher

July 2022- PRESENT

Model academic boosting instructional techniques in the classroom in Professional Development meetings.

Manage Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meetings to facilitate diverse learning opportunities in the classroom.

Advise instructional guidance to all teachers on assigned campus, especially to new teachers.

Develop, select, and modify instructional plans and materials to meet the needs of all students

Seek ways to collaborate with the administration and the teachers in designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating the instructional goals of the school's improvement plan.

Plan, research, and implement professional development in

## SKILLS

Adobe Acrobat Pro/Kami

Attention-to-Detail

Audio-Visual Teaching Aids

Google Workspace

Interpersonal Communication

Leadership / Team Management

Microsoft Office Applications

Student-Centered Learning

Tailoring Curriculum Plans

Technological Instruction: (NWEA

MAP, NearPod, IXL, HMH Reading

Archives, CommonLit, and Lexia)

Professional Development Presenter

Meeting Facilitator

## AWARDS / DISTINCTIONS

Secondary Teacher of the Month

Highest Reading Scores in the District

Selected Member of Attendance for Credit Team

Featured on CBS News showcasing school's reading

research-based strategies and interventions with Title I teachers and classroom teachers serving Title I students.

Delegate and coordinate Title I teachers in analyzing both formative and summative assessments, and facilitate the implementation of differentiated instruction based upon the data to increase student achievement for Title I students.

### ***Reading Interventionist***

July 2020- July 2022

Consulted frequently with classroom teachers on matters relating to reading instruction using our progress-monitoring instrument as a base.

Designed interventions and customized lesson plans detailing methods and materials

Assisted in the evaluation of ongoing programs and engineered recommendations for change.

Collaborated with support staff and school administrators to facilitate the coordination of the reading program with the total curriculum.

Consulted with curriculum committees studying such topics as textbook selection, vocabulary development, concept development, supplementary materials and the development of study skills.

Helped teachers diagnose reading strengths and weaknesses and match these skills with appropriate techniques and materials.

### **NYC INC., Yokohama, Japan —**

#### ***ESL Reading Teacher/Coordinator***

July 2019 - July 2020

Collaborated with teachers about curriculum enhancement which resulted in student academic success

Conducted Eiken test prep, business conversation, and creative English language learning classes

Developed phonics curriculum and conducted reading assessments for all students

Directed and organized presentations to show student growth/progress

Lesson planned and developed individualized curriculum based on English conversation levels

Managed in-person and online classes simultaneously

Mentored existing teachers and new coming teachers on curriculum and instruction

Facilitated meetings with teachers on vision for the school

growth

TEI Recognized Proficient Educator

Selected Member of Student Service Team (SST)

## **Freedom Preparatory Academy, Memphis, TN —**

### ***K-5 Reading Intervention Teacher/Coordinator***

July 2016 - July 2019

Spearheaded incentives for students who exhibited substantial academic growth

Orchestrated meetings with teachers on implementing various reading strategies

Collaborated with Literacy Coach to develop an effective reading curriculum for each grade level

Executed Response to Intervention Plans for students in multiple grade levels

Researched and analyzed school / student data to produce solutions to academic hurdles in the classroom

Coordinated professional development sessions for school-wide literacy progression

Developed and assessed Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504s for school-wide students

Trained and supervised new and existing teachers on my team

Participated in ARDs and tracked students' performance throughout school year

### ***Kindergarten Reading Mastery Teacher***

August 2015 - July 2016

Provided consistent, immediate feedback to student learning and facilitated analytical questions that elicit students' responses that incorporate prior knowledge, life experience and interests that are directly related to the content objective.

Monitored and maintained a positive classroom environment that supported the school wide behavior expectation in which most students are engaged, incorporates mutual respect and provides cooperative learning opportunities.

Used available technology/instructional media to enhance the students' learning experiences.

Appropriately communicated and interacted with other professional staff in academic planning and school committee work.

Formalized reading mastery lesson plans, aligned with current state and district standards, which refocused instruction through formative assessment and differentiation.



**The National Teachers College**  
Graduate Program, School of Teacher Education

**Comments and Suggestions:**

I commend the researcher for designing well-structured questions that are responsive to the stated SOP of the proposal.

Congratulations in advance on the successful conduct of your research proposal.

**NORMAN P. ROMASANTA, LPT, MAEd, EdD(units)**

*Early Childhood Specialist*

*School Principal II/ NEAP Certified Learning Facilitator*

*Name and Signature of Validator*

(Enclosure No. 5 to DepEd Memorandum No. \_\_\_\_\_ s. 2023)



**Republic of the Philippines**  
**Department of Education**

National Educators Academy of the Philippines

**CURRICULUM VITAE OF RESOURCE SPEAKER/SUBJECT-MATTER EXPERT**

<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:</b>	
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PROVIDER:</b>	

**Part I. Personal Information**

<b>Name:</b> NORMAN PUENTE ROMASANTA	
<b>Residence Address:</b> BUYABOD, STA. CRUZ, MARINDUQUE	<b>Contact Details</b>
<b>Business Address:</b> MALIBAGO, TORRIJOS, MARINDUQUE	Landline No.: NONE
	Mobile No. 1: 0926-029-1296
	Mobile No. 2:
	Email Address: norman.romasanta@deped.gov.ph
<b>Citizenship:</b> FILIPINO	

*Note: NEAP shall be informed of any change/s on resource person/s at least 10 days before the Professional Development program/course offering. Substitute resource person, if any, may submit this duly accomplished form three (3) days before the start of the Professional Development program/course.*

**Part II. Track Record**

<b>Areas of Specialization/ Expertise</b>	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
	SPECIAL EDUCATION
	EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

**Relevant Seminars/Training Programs Conducted in the last five (5) years**

Date	Title
	School Heads Activities for Professional Enhancement (SHAPE) – MIMAROPA Region

	School Heads Development Program – MIMAROPA Region
	National Training of Trainers of the MATATAG Curriculum
	Regional Training of Trainers of the MATATAG Curriculum
	Division Training of Trainers of the MATATAG Curriculum

**Relevant Seminars/Training Programs Attended in the last five (5) years**

Date	Title
February 5-9, 2024	National Training of Trainers for the MATATAG Curriculum
	Workshop on the Finalization of Learning Delivery Guide with Focus on Teaching Approaches - English
	National Training of Trainers for the National Reading Program
	Workshop on the Development of Learning Delivery Guide with Focus on Teaching Approaches - English
	Consultative Conference on the Development of Learning Delivery Guide with Focus on Teaching Approaches - English

**Relevant Publications, Research, and Conference Papers**

Date	Title
January 24, 2024	Investigating The Relationship Between Leadership, Self-Efficacy, And Research Productivity In Educational Settings – Vol. 21, No. S3 (2024), pp. 856-873, ISSN: 1741-8984 (Print), ISSN: 1741-8992 (Online), <a href="http://www.migrationletters.com">www.migrationletters.com</a>
December 2023	Analysis of the Kindergarten Pedagogies in Lowland Schools in Marinduque: Basis for Kindergarten Teachers’ Development Program – Vol. 4, Issue 4, ISSN:2799-1091, pp. 109-141, International Journal of Arts, Sciences and Education

**Major Achievements, Citations, Recognitions, and Awards**

Date	Title	Awarding Body
October 14, 2023	Outstanding School Leader of the Year	Instabright International Awards for Educators
December 2018	Outstanding Head Teacher I	DepEd Schools Division of Marinduque
May 17, 2018	Certified Learning Facilitator	National Educators Academy of the Philippines

**Part III. Education and Employment**

**Educational Background**

## GUIDEBOOK

### Teacher's Guidebook to Implementing Loose Parts Play in Toddler Classes at Komazawa Park International School

#### ➤ *Introduction*

This guidebook was developed from the study about the lived experiences of teachers in implementing loose parts in toddler classes at Komazawa Park International School. The aim of this guidebook is to support teachers in implementing loose parts play in their classrooms by sharing the lived experiences of the participants, sharing practical strategies, as well as addressing common challenges.

#### ➤ *Loose Parts*

Loose parts are open-ended materials which the students can use in various ways and with no set purpose or directions. These are items that the children can freely move, combine, take apart, or even stack and mix together. Some of the common loose parts used are:

- Cardboard boxes
- Old bento boxes
- Pompoms
- Ribbons
- Old wooden trays or cups
- Old pouches or bags
- Spare cloth/ Fabrics

Some Materials are Also Readily Available at the Nearby Park Like:

- Acorns
- Pinecones
- Sticks
- Pine needles
- Pebbles/ Small rocks
- Leaves
- Loose Petals found on the ground

While there are many natural items available at the nearby park areas, it is not advisable to pick out plants, flowers, and leaves other than when they are already on the ground.

#### ➤ *Loose Parts Play in Early Childhood Education*

Some of the research-based benefits of using loose parts materials especially in the early childhood setting include:

- Develops fine and gross motor skills
- Encourages creativity, imagination, problem solving, and independence
- Foster early math and science skills, and support language and literacy skills
- Encourages cooperation and collaboration among peers

#### ➤ *The Role of the Teacher*

The role of the teacher in implementing *loose parts play* extends beyond the setting up of the classroom and gathering the materials. The following are the expected roles of the educators:

- Guide the learning of the children in exploring the materials, avoiding controlling their learning and the outcome of their discoveries.
- Observe the play of the children and documenting how they used the materials, as well as listening to their conversations.
- Create lesson plans from the documents gathered through observations.
- Step back and support the children in their play whether solitary, parallel or cooperative.
- Communicate with Parents and Guardians clearly how the learning happened through proper explanation of the documented pictures and records of their conversations.

➤ *Common Challenges and Solutions*

• *Risk Management and Assessment*

When introducing loose parts for the first time, it is understandably concerning when the materials are quite small or have uneven or sharp edges. In assessing and managing the potential risks, the following strategies are recommended:

- ✓ Introduce the materials through constant reminders. This includes allowing the children to understand why and how it may be risky for them and for their peers when used.
- ✓ Closely supervise and guide how the children use the materials, while giving gentle reminders when needed.
- ✓ Set clear and consistent boundaries regarding the use of the materials including, but not limited to, walking and not running when holding sticks, clean up the materials that they dumped after play, and limitations on the items that they may throw across the room or next to friends.

• *Setting Up the Classroom and Materials for Play*

Having an accessible and well-organized classroom not only creates a warm and inviting learning environment for the children but also encourages them to gain more independence in themselves to explore the materials in different ways, collaborate, and support problem solving. To ensure that the classroom and materials are supportive of their learning needs, the following strategies are recommended:

- ✓ Offer less items or introduce few materials at once. This gives the children the time to explore the materials in different ways.
- ✓ When introducing a certain theme, or focusing on a certain area, the use of fabrics may be used to *close* a certain play area.
- ✓ Use materials which the children can have access to independently. These includes, but not limited to, easy-to-open jars, low cabinets, easy to pull out plastic containers, low easels with easy to access art materials like paint, beginner scissors, and markers.
- ✓ When introducing seasonal topics, the use of sensory materials connected with the theme may be utilized like winter sensory boxes in the colder months, oddly shaped and textured pumpkins for Halloween, or sweet potatoes for fall.

• *Storage and Organization of Materials*

Since loose parts materials may easily crowd the spaces due to their availability and sustainability, intentional storage is essential to keep track of the materials at hand. To prevent overcrowding of the immediate play areas of the classroom and keeping storage organized for the materials, the following strategies are recommended:

- ✓ Store the materials, preferably in clear bins, where you can easily see what is inside.
- ✓ Sort and label items accordingly. Some teachers sort it according to their type (wooden items, fabrics, etc), while some sort it according to their themes (Winter, Construction, Insects, etc.)
- ✓ Keep similar items together.
- ✓ Create a list of items that you have, and rotate items regularly, keeping the most recently stored items at the back.

• *Lesson Planning*

This section guides teachers in creating lesson plans that are flexible, promote exploration, creativity and collaboration, while also following the emerging interests of the children.

- ✓ Use songs, dances, or related literature when introducing new concepts.
- ✓ Establish predictable routines for familiarity so the children will feel safe to explore the environment.
- ✓ Modelling appropriate use of the materials by using it in different ways, while respecting the choice of the children.
- ✓ Use open-ended questions to encourage curiosity and exploration of the environment, including but not limited to knowing the names of fellow students and teachers.
- ✓ Encourage the children to creatively explore the materials by narrating what or how other children are using the materials, and by utilizing questions like, “I wonder what we can use this as?” or “I wonder what happens if I do this?”

➤ *Examples of Play Invitations*

• *Thematic Sensory Bins*

- ✓ Sensory bins may use different colored leaves, acorns, corn kernels, pumpkins, acorns, pompoms, pinecones, and kitchen tools like scoops and tongs.
- ✓ Learning may include early math concepts (volume), supporting fine and gross motor skills through pouring and transferring, and sensory exploration.

- *Rolling, Dropping, and Bouncing Area*

- ✓ Materials may include empty toilet paper rolls and boxes which children can use as tunnels and slides, soft balls, curled up paper, bottle caps, and seasonal items like pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and water balloons.
- ✓ Learning may include supporting language and literacy, problem solving, early math concepts (patterns and speed), supporting fine and gross motor skills as children toss, throw, catch, and crumple papers.

- *Construction and Building Area*

- ✓ Materials may include empty tissue boxes, old cups, sticks, bottle caps, and seasonal items like ice cubes, fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Learning may include problem solving, supporting collaboration, cause-and-effect, and support of fine and gross motor skills.

- *Art Exploration and Sensory Area*

- ✓ Materials may include paintbrushes, sticks, petals, sand, glue, and pompoms.
- ✓ Learning may include early sensory exploration, early math concepts (quantity and sorting), supports creativity, language acquisition, and problem solving.

- *Documentation*

Documentation is a crucial part of the role of teachers implementing loose parts play, as it allows teachers to clearly see the learning progress of the children, as well as providing them with the necessary data to create the lesson plans. Most importantly, thoughtful and proper documentation allows teachers to see the emerging skills of the children without interrupting their play. This, in turn, is also information which can also be shared when communicating with parents and guardians.

- *Some Documentation Materials May Include:*

- ✓ Photos
- ✓ Videos
- ✓ Observational Notes
- ✓ Quotations from the conversations of the children
- ✓ Written narratives through the School Application which is being utilized to communicate with parents. These may include how much or how little the child interacted with the materials, how they played (solitary, parallel or cooperatively), how they attempted to solve problems or if they sought help, as well as emerging skills observed (language, early math concepts, etc).

- *Conclusion*

The role of this guidebook is to transform the combined experiences of the teachers of Komazawa Park International School to support new and current teachers in creating meaningful and intentional learning spaces for toddlers while utilizing loose parts materials.