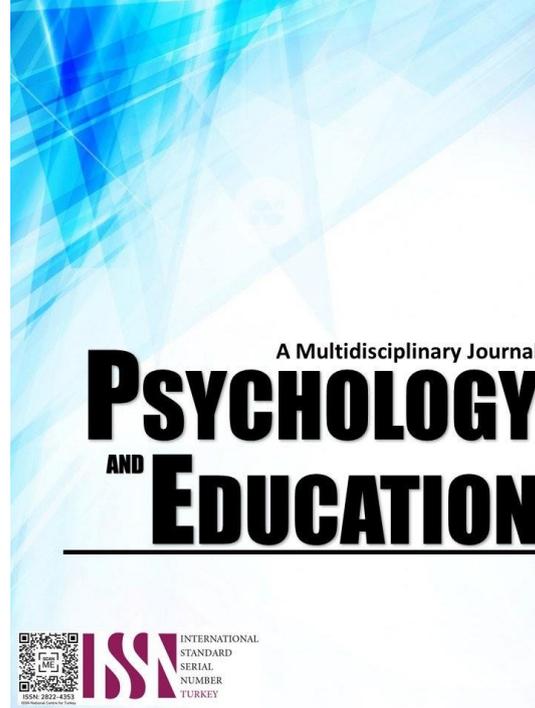


RESTRUCTURING THE KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM CONTENT



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Restructuring the Kindergarten Curriculum Content

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Abstract

The study was conducted to restructure the Kindergarten curriculum content. Specifically, it sought to achieve the following objectives: investigate on master teacher's perception about the curriculum content and organization in Kindergarten in terms of: balance, articulation, sequence, integration, and continuity; explore the perceptions of the master teachers about the content of the Kindergarten curriculum that curriculum maker needs to enhance or develop; investigate the suggestions of the master teachers as a curriculum expert in enhancing the curriculum content of the Kindergarten; and restructure the Kindergarten curriculum content. A qualitative case study was utilized where all ten (10) master teachers from Catanauan District I and II purposively selected and served as the participants of the study. Unstructured interview was used by the researcher as the primary tool for collecting data. The instrument used was the validated interview guide. The data was analyzed through coding of data, then identifying the themes and concept mapping. The time frame of this study was from January, 2019 to April, 2020. Accordingly, master teachers perceived that Kindergarten curriculum is a play-based and spiral curriculum where some of its content needs to enhance or develop such as reading and writing. Based on the results of the study, a restructured curriculum content was developed. It is recommended that Kindergarten teachers should undertake different trainings and seminars for the better implementation of Kindergarten curriculum content.

Keywords: *articulation, balance, continuity, curriculum maker, integration, Kindergarten curriculum content, play-based, sequence, spiral curriculum*

Introduction

Kindergarten is a child-centered, developmentally appropriate, and early childhood program for children in the year prior to grade one. Kindergarten provides children with experiences that would influence them to be responsible people in the future (Ramos, 2021). Similarly, according to Curriculum Framework (2011), the kindergarten curriculum is based on the belief that the process, the content and the product all have a valuable contribution to the kindergarten program. The child is at the center of the curriculum framework. Therefore, it is critical that teachers of kindergarten children have a clear sense of where the child is in terms of overall growth and development and to plan for developmentally appropriate learning activities.

Moreover, Wright (2010) added that developmentally appropriate practice continues the original approach of a child-centered or whole-child curriculum allowing children to learn by doing and have fun while learning. It also helps teachers to focus on social and emotional development as well as cognitive development. When a teacher understands the developmental stages of a child and takes that information into account, that teacher is better able to meet the child's needs and a smoother transition occurs (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009). Furthermore, Slade & Griffith (2013) the whole child approach or curriculum focuses on the emotional, social, mental, physical and cognitive development of

students. This approach believes that every student should feel engaged, supported, challenged, healthy and safe.

Therefore, according to Chervenak (2011), it is important to incorporate play into the curriculum for the development of children. Today, play has taken a backseat in kindergarten to teacher-directed instruction in the belief that the latter is more effective than the former in preparing children to perform well on standards-based assessments.

Students would have the opportunity to explore their learning environment by means of free-play as well as through teacher-initiated play. Free-play is play that is initiated by the child (Graue, 2009). Furthermore, free-play allows children to develop social relationships with other students, the opportunity to choose their own level of challenge, and the overall ability to make their own decisions. Teacher-initiated play is where the teacher is involved in the interactions between students. The teacher is there to provide feedback, extend conversations, and bring in appropriate resources (Graue, 2009). With the focus on play-based learning, students would continue to grow and develop appropriately as well as meet the expectations expected of them (Miller & Almon, 2009).

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study was to restructure



the Kindergarten curriculum content based on the master teacher's perception about the curriculum content and organization in Kindergarten. Specifically, it sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Investigate the master teacher's perceptions about the curriculum content and organization in Kindergarten in terms of:
 - 1.1 Balance;
 - 1.2 Articulation;
 - 1.3 Sequence;
 - 1.4 Integration; and
 - 1.5 Continuity.
2. Explore the perceptions of the master teachers about the content of the Kindergarten curriculum that curriculum maker needs to enhance or develop.
3. Investigate the suggestions of the master teachers as a curriculum expert in enhancing the curriculum content of the Kindergarten.
4. Restructure the Kindergarten curriculum content.

Methodology

Research Locale

The researcher conducted her study in Catanauan District I and II, Catanauan, Quezon. The selected districts comprise of almost twenty master teachers. The researcher chose this locale because most of the master teachers here have knowledge on the curriculum of Kindergarten and some were also handled Kindergarten before, therefore, they can give the information needed in this study.

Participants

The researcher purposively selected ten (10) master teachers from Catanauan District I and II of Catanauan, Quezon. The criteria for choosing the participants are as follows: master teacher in Catanauan District I or II; she/he observed Kindergarten class or handled Kindergarten before; and have knowledge or information regarding the curriculum content and organization of Kindergarten.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study method. In qualitative research, the process is inductive (Creswell, 2013), allowing the researcher an opportunity to explore data and create understanding. This type of research builds thoughts, concepts, or

theories (Merriam, 1998), rather than testing existing theories. Case study research seeks to explore, describe, or explain events or phenomena in a real-world context (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, the use of qualitative case study research facilitates the exploration of the context-based phenomenon through various data sources, ensuring that the issue is explored through multiple lenses to reveal and understand the many facets of the phenomenon. Unstructured interview (open-ended) was utilized by the researcher as the primary tool for collecting data.

Research Instrument

In order to attain the objectives, instrument was used in the conduct of the study.

1. Interview Guide

An interview guide was developed to discuss the perspectives of the participants in the curriculum content and organization in Kindergarten.

A.1 Construction of Initial Draft

The researcher designed the initial draft of the interview guide with three (3) questions and five (5) probing questions to investigate the master teacher's perception about the curriculum content and organization in Kindergarten and their suggestions to improve the curriculum.

A.2 Validation

To determine its validity, the interview guide was shown to five (5) master teachers in Catanauan District I who are teaching in Catanauan Central School and two (2) professors of the College of Teacher Education in SLSU Lucban. Their suggestions and comments were taken for the improvement of the interview guide.

Then, the initial draft of the interview guide was checked and validated by the researcher's adviser and validators. They suggested to rephrase some questions leading to the attainment of the objective about discussing the master teacher's perception about the curriculum content and organization in Kindergarten.

A.3 Pilot Testing

To determine the reliability of the interview guide, it was tried out to five master teachers in other districts specifically in the Mulanay and San Narciso.

A.4 Final draft

After the validations of the experts, the interview guide was then finalized and administered to the participants on their prepared time, venue, and date.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher requested a permit for the conduct of the study from the Schools Division Superintendent of the DepEd-Division of Quezon. She also gave the participants an informed consent form and also informed the participants regarding their code name in the study. After the confirmation of the schedule, the researcher personally approached the participants in their respective schools to conduct the interview. The responses of the participants were recorded using audio-recording software on a cellphone. The minimum length of the interview was around 20 minutes and the maximum will around 30 minutes. After this, member checking was done. Transcripts were typed, coded, and decoded to reveal the perceptions of the participants about the curriculum content and organization in Kindergarten and their suggestions to improve the curriculum, then the concept map or visual display was formed after every subtheme. Afterwards, the responses were analyzed to develop the output of the study which is restructuring the Kindergarten curriculum content.

In case study research, “data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to produce empirically based findings” (Yin, 2014, p. 132). For qualitative data analysis, Mulaudzi (2016) mentioned in his study that qualitative data is analyzed primarily in an inductive manner, which involves organizing data into categories and identifying patterns among the categories. The process of data analysis involves preparing data for analysis, conducting different analysis, moving deeper into understanding the data, representing the data and interpreting the larger meaning of the data. Data were presented through themes, subthemes and concept map. The participants were coded MT1 to MT10 since there will be ten (10) participants.

Ethical Considerations

The code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) recommends that researchers value the dignity and worth of all persons equally, with sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over others and with particular regard to people’s rights including those of privacy and self-determination. Accordingly, the researcher will respect the participant’s voluntary decision to participate in this study. All the data

collected were kept anonymous and confidential. The code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) also notes that the researcher has a responsibility to develop and follow procedures for valid consent, confidentiality, anonymity, fair treatment and due process that are consistent with those rights. So, an informed consent form was signed by the participants to start conducting the study or the interview.

Results and Discussion

Perceptions about the Kindergarten Curriculum Content

The different perceptions of the master teachers about the curriculum content of the Kindergarten were based on their experiences and observations. This theme has five subthemes which discuss the different perceptions on curriculum organization of Kindergarten namely: curriculum balance, curriculum articulation, curriculum sequence, curriculum integration, and curriculum continuity.

When the participants were asked about their perceptions about the curriculum content of Kindergarten, the participants shared their views the following ways:

“Kindergarten activities are play-based where pupils really enjoyed while learning and this is the best in the content of the Kindergarten curriculum, pupils are always excited to go to school because of the different activities and different manipulative materials which was given by the DepEd.” (MT3)

MT3 mentioned that with play-based activities, pupils are always excited and enjoyed while learning and with the use of different manipulative materials. While MT4 states that:

“the content of the curriculum of Kindergarten really develops and promotes the different domains namely: socio-emotional development, values development, physical health and motor development, aesthetic/creative development, mathematics, understanding of the physical and natural development, and language, literacy, and communication which prepared the readiness of the pupils to formal literacy which is Grade 1.” (MT4)

Similar responses were given by MT8 and MT10: *“since Kindergarten curriculum content utilized varied play-based activities, it promotes, enhances and develops pupils’ socialization skills, being responsible,*

and being risk-takers. These characteristics for me, are best for the foundation of young learners that they can use in formal schooling or in the future.” (MT8) “Kindergarten curriculum content provided different activities that promote learners’ physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development, including values formation, so they will be ready for school. Teachers serve only as facilitator of learning. Different action songs, games, and dances are also used in this level that is why learners are not bored, stressed and frustrated.” (MT10)

MT4, MT8 and MT10 shared that the content of the curriculum promotes, enhances and develops different domains among Kindergarten pupils that can be used and prepared learners into formal schooling or in elementary specifically in Grade 1. While MT9 claimed that:

“the content of the Kindergarten curriculum especially the activities are suited for the needs, interests and abilities of the learners that is why pupils are enjoyed doing it. And I can say that one of the best in teaching Kindergarten is that, curriculum guide is provided and it is a total package for the teachers because all the activities are written on it - the instructions, materials needed, objectives and so on and so forth but the burden is that, the materials needed for different activities are time-consuming and needs money to prepare and make.” (MT9)

While MT1 added that:

“for me, the curriculum content of the Kindergarten here in our country can cater most of the needs of the pupils intended for 5 years old especially in terms of socialization skills, another is the physical growth and development of the pupils - their fine and gross motor. (MT1)

MT9 and MT1 claimed that curriculum content of Kindergarten is suited and can cater the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils especially the socialization skills and physical growth and development. MT9 mentioned that curriculum guide is a total package for Kindergarten teachers. While MT2 shared her perception the following way:

“curriculum content in Kindergarten for me, is mostly focused on the socialization aspects of the pupils through the use of different activities.” (MT2)

MT2 shared that socialization aspect is the main focused of Kindergarten curriculum content that can be developed through differentiated activities. MT6

mentioned that:

“in my perception, the curriculum content of our Kindergarten is based on the perspectives of John Dewey which is “learning by doing” because it contains different play-based activities that enable pupils to learn while doing. It makes learners learned in an easiest and enjoyable ways.” (MT6)

MT6 mentioned that the content of the curriculum is play-based activities that based on the perspectives of John Dewey “learning by doing” which engage learners in an easiest and enjoyable ways. On the other hand, MT7 said:

“our Kindergarten curriculum is a child-centered curriculum which utilized a developmentally appropriate practices or DAP that promotes learners’ meaningful experiences.” (MT7)

While MT 5 claimed that:

“Kindergarten content for me, plays a vital role in developing young learners holistically. Now, in our current Kindergarten curriculum, as I have been observed and seen is somehow effective since pupils at the end of the school year or before entering Grade 1 learners can be able to count, recognize letters, and many more basic learnings that can serve as prior knowledge in Grade 1. In addition, the curriculum content is also focused more on developing the social aspects of the learners.” (MT5)

Kindergarten as play-based activities provide various activities that develop pupils holistically. Through play, children learn to cooperate with others and they can acquire skills and experience that will prepare them into the next level or stage of their life.

According to Curriculum Framework (2011), the kindergarten curriculum is based on the belief that the process, the content and the product all have a valuable contribution to the kindergarten program. The child is at the center of the curriculum framework. Therefore, it is critical that teachers of kindergarten children have a clear sense of where the child is in terms of overall growth and development and to plan for developmentally appropriate learning activities.

Moreover, Wright (2010) added that developmentally appropriate practice continues the original approach of a child-centered or whole-child curriculum allowing children to learn by doing and have fun while learning. It also helps teachers to focus on social and emotional development as well as cognitive development. When a teacher understands the developmental stages of a child and takes that information into account, that

teacher is better able to meet the child's needs and a smoother transition occurs (Copples & Bredekamp, 2009).

In addition, according to Chervenak (2011), it is important to incorporate play into the curriculum for the development of children. Today, play has taken a backseat in kindergarten to teacher-directed instruction in the belief that the latter is more effective than the former in preparing children to perform well on standards-based assessments.

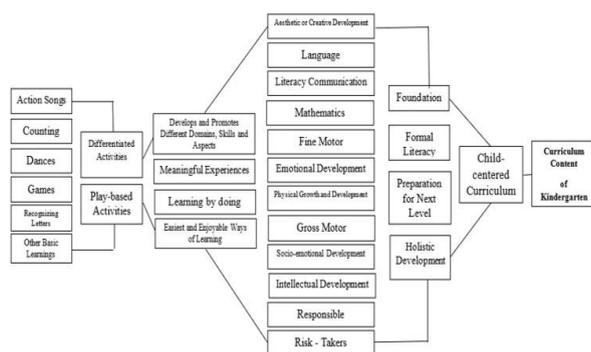


Figure 1. *Perceptions about the Kindergarten Curriculum Content*

Figure 1 shows the perceptions of the participants about the Kindergarten curriculum content. Considering their answers, it is evident that action songs, counting, dances, games, recognizing letters, and other basic learnings are some of the differentiated activities and play-based activities in Kindergarten which are learned through learning-by-doing or experiential learning where it is the easiest and enjoyable ways of learning of the pupils and which can provide them meaningful experiences. It can also develop and promote different domains, skills, and aspects such as aesthetic or creative development, language, literacy communication, mathematics, fine motor, emotional development, physical growth and development, gross motor, socio-emotional development, intellectual development, responsible and risk-takers. These can be a foundation, preparation for next level, formal literacy and promote holistic development of learners which is one of the objectives of a child-centered curriculum.

Perceptions About the Curriculum Balance in Kindergarten

Curriculum balance is the unusual curriculum concept that on the surface seems obvious but with some

probing becomes somewhat cloudy. Based on the responses of the participants, the following perceptions were given: some said there is an imbalance in the curriculum especially in writing and reading because it is not fully given emphasis, but some said that Kindergarten curriculum is balance since dealt on the designed activities which are equated with learner's needs and interests.

When the participants were asked about their perceptions regarding the curriculum balance in Kindergarten, the participants shared their views the following ways:

“curriculum balance is providing learner the knowledge and skills to become a holistic individual, so I think the Kindergarten curriculum content is balance which lead to the holistic development of the learners.” (MT3)

MT3 mentioned that the curriculum balance in Kindergarten promotes learners a holistic development. While MT8 added that:

“from my past experiences, I can say that there is a balance in our Kindergarten curriculum content in the sense that the different activities provide the learners with interactions, fruitful experiences, and values for future learning.” (MT8)

Similarly, MT10 and MT4 shared that:

“in my perception, there is a balance between the learning objectives and the learnings and abilities of the pupils since our Kindergarten curriculum is a child-centered which focused on developing the different domains among young learners. It also assists the Kindergarten pupils in attaining knowledge, skills and attitudes to be served as foundation for incoming level or grades.” (MT10)

“curriculum balance in the content of the Kindergarten curriculum for me, is designed and suited to the ability of young learners based on their needs and interests. I can say that all the contents of the Kindergarten curriculum are balance since the objectives at the end will be achieved.” (MT4)

MT10 and MT4 claimed that the Kindergarten curriculum content is balance. On the other hand, meanwhile, MT8 mentioned that:

“from my past experiences, I can say that there is a balance in our Kindergarten curriculum content in the sense that the different activities provide the learners with interactions, fruitful experiences, and values for future learning.” (MT8)

While MT9 said that:

“as what I’ve been observed in the Kindergarten classes, most of the activities were suited to the level and abilities of the learners because all of them were play-based and we all know that young children love to play so, they became interested and participative during their classes. From that, the balance between the objectives and learnings of the pupils was observed and achieved. But, in terms of the materials needed for the different activities, I observed that there is an imbalance for the teachers since it requires efforts, time and money. Imagine, if a Kindergarten teacher has 50 pupils (25 for morning session and 25 for afternoon session) and the materials needed are worksheets or BINGO cards so, she or he needs to provide 50 worksheets and BINGO cards for a day. And that is one of the burdens in teaching Kindergarten.” (MT9)

MT9 claimed that there is a balance in terms of activities but when it comes to the materials needed in the teaching-learning process, it is somehow imbalance.

On the other hand, MT1 shared that:

“since our Kindergarten curriculum is focused more on developing the socialization skills of the learners, I think there is an imbalance since other basic skills such as writing and simple reading must also be given emphasis because it is very essential in Grade 1.” (MT1)

Similar response was given by MT6:

“in my perception, balance is an important element in the organization of a curriculum. In our present Kindergarten curriculum content, I have been observed that writing and reading is not the priority and not fully given emphasis which I think is needed for the elementary level.” (MT6)

MT1 and MT6 added that there is an imbalance in the curriculum content because writing and reading were not fully given emphasis.

Kindergarten prepares children to formal school. It is a stepping stone for young children to be ready in elementary level. This is where they can learn socialization and other basic knowledge such as

The aforementioned findings seem to link with Curriculum Framework (2011), the kindergarten curriculum is based on the belief that the process, the content and the product all have a valuable

contribution to the kindergarten program. The child is at the center of the curriculum framework. Therefore, it is critical that teachers of kindergarten children have a clear sense of where the child is in terms of overall growth and development and to plan for developmentally appropriate learning activities.

While, according to Chervenak (2011), it is important to incorporate play into the curriculum for the development of children. Today, play has taken a backseat in kindergarten to teacher-directed instruction in the belief that the latter is more effective than the former in preparing children to perform well on standards-based assessments.

Moreover, there are learning domains that must be nurtured and equally imparted to holistically develop children. The KCF figure also forms a flower that portrays the gradual unfolding but steady development, as is expected of every child. The child is seen as being in the process of blossoming – like a flower bud whose development should not be forced lest it lose its chance to fully mature. The domains are connected by the Learning Areas that children will meet in Grade One onward, for which they are being prepared. The guide also provided the Curricular Themes upon which the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (KCG) or the Teacher’s Guide is designed. It has been crafted using the thematic or integrative approach to curriculum development in a spiraling learning process. This approach employs integrative and interactive teaching-learning strategies as well as child-centered learning experiences. The mother tongue of the learner shall be the primary medium of instruction for teaching and learning in kindergarten. (Section 5, R.A. 10157) Moreover, Ronald C. Doll (2010) looked at balance from the learner’s standpoint and described it as follows: A balanced curriculum for a given learner at a given time would completely fit the learner in terms of his or her particular educational needs at that time. It would contain just enough of each kind of subject matter to serve the individual’s purposes and to speed his or her development. . . . Perhaps the best that can be done in working toward balance is to be clearer about what is valued for the growth of individual learners and then to apply these values in selecting curriculum content, grouping pupils for instruction, providing for articulation, and furthering guidance programs.

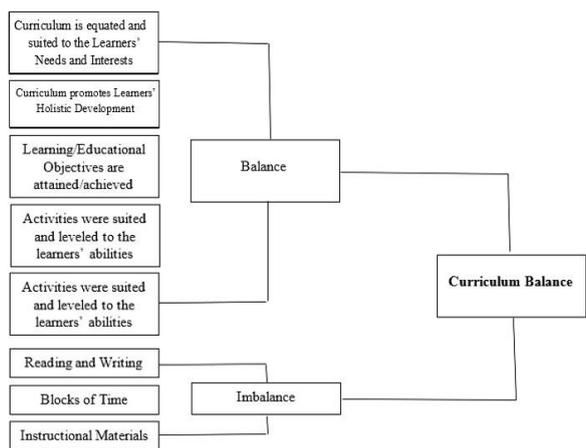


Figure 2. Curriculum Balance in Kindergarten

Figure 2 on the previous page presents the curriculum balance in Kindergarten. Considering the answers of the participants, some said that curriculum is balance since it is equated and suited to the learners’ needs and interests, curriculum content promotes learners’ holistic development, learning or educational objectives are attained or achieved, and activities were suited and leveled to the learners’ abilities, but some said there is an imbalance in the curriculum especially in reading and writing. According to the participants, these two are not fully given emphasis. Another is blocks of time where the allotted time for different activities are imbalance and the last one is the instructional materials used in the teaching-learning process. Based from one of the participants, the materials are time, money, and efforts consuming.

Perceptions About the Curriculum Articulation in Kindergarten

Curriculum articulation refers to the meshing of subject matter and skills between successive levels of schooling to provide a smooth transition for boys and girls from a lower to higher level. When the participants were asked about what is your perceptions about the curriculum articulation in Kindergarten, MT4 attested to this with the response:

“I think the curriculum articulation in Kindergarten builds and connects the learners’ experiences and the learning goals or objectives of every lesson. Most of the lessons naman in Kindergarten are really leveled on the abilities of the pupils eh, example the topic is about family, we all know naman that even young learners know who the father, mother, brother and sister are, and that is based from their background knowledge and experiences.” (MT4)

On the other hand, MT8 mentioned during the interview that:

“I observed that when Kindergarten pupils went or enrolled in Day care or nursery level, they are more participative and more confident than the others that does not enrolled in any school before. From that, I can say that background experiences and prior knowledge and information can make the learnings more meaningful. But in our present curriculum in Kindergarten, even the pupils are first time in school, because of the different activities and enjoyable games, they become participative since the topics and themes in Kindergarten are associated with their everyday experiences even in the house or outside the school.” (MT8)

Similar response was given by MT1 and MT10: *“since most of the Kindergarten pupils went to day care center before entering Kindergarten especially the 4p’s beneficiaries, they had already some experiences that are connected to their present lessons or topics.”(MT1)*

“our Kindergarten curriculum articulation can make the Kindergarten pupils more interested on the lessons or topic since it is connected to their learnings when they are in nursery, day care or even their learnings with their family or friends.” (MT10)

In addition, MT9 added that:

“based on my perception, Kindergarten curriculum in our present education perceived that learning should be meaningful if there is a strong connection between the learning contents and the learning experiences of the learner.” (MT9)

Moreover, MT6 states that:

“for me, the curriculum articulation in Kindergarten focused on what Kindergarten pupils know and can do as a result of their educational experiences and past experiences”. (MT6)

While, MT5 claimed that:

“our Kindergarten curriculum articulation is the assessment which through the pupil’s experiences connection and guided by learning contents, goals and objectives.” (MT5)

According to Watermeyer (2011), articulation refers to the incremental development of learning objectives across the tiers and subject domains of formal education. It is a process of making visible the connectivity of learner experiences that constitute a

logically progressive and seamless learning career. Ostensibly articulation is step one or route one in improving student achievement in reference to national or state curriculum guidelines/benchmarks. It is a roadmap that makes explicit the expectations of educational providers/regulators for instruction and assessment. Articulation demands that teachers at various tiers, levels or “grades” of the school system work collaboratively to implement curriculum in ways that make its articulation crystalline. Achieving articulation however is not always easy, particularly given the heavy and competing demands of the school teacher’s timetable and a paucity of time for collective brainstorming. The articulation process may be furthermore compromised by disagreement between teachers as to a desired level of focus or connectivity.

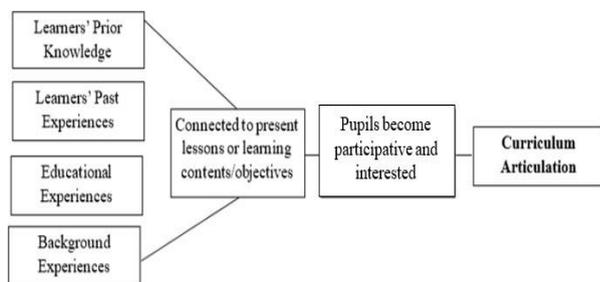


Figure 3. Curriculum Articulation in Kindergarten

Figure 3 shows the curriculum articulation in Kindergarten. Considering the participants’ answers, since most of the Kindergarten pupils enrolled in Day Care or in Nursery in private schools before entering Kindergarten, their prior knowledge, past experiences, educational experiences and background experiences can be connected to the present lessons or learning contents/objectives that makes pupils become participative and interested in the topics taught by the teacher.

Perceptions About the Curriculum Sequence in Kindergarten

Curriculum sequence refers to the “when”—the ordering of the units of content. Attention must be paid to prerequisite learning requirements. Master Teachers – participants viewed curriculum sequence in Kindergarten as planned from simple topics to more complex. This could be attributed to the fact that young learners are like an empty sheet, they don’t have enough background knowledge to understand a complex or complicated topics. In the interview done by the researcher, MT1 disclosed that:

“the curriculum sequence of our Kindergarten

curriculum planned from simple topics to more complex for example: the content focus for week 1 is I belong to a Kindergarten class, then week 2 is focus on I do many things in school, then week 3 is I can learn in others and so on and so forth. This makes the learners focused on one topic a week, confusion can be avoided.” (MT1) Another participant said that: *“for curriculum sequence in Kindergarten, learning experiences progress from simple to more complex with the goal of enhancing knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA).” (MT4)* Same response was given by MT7: *“curriculum sequence in the Kindergarten content as I have observed is, the lessons are arranged from simplest to most complex.” (MT7)*

MT1, MT4 and MT7 shared the same response which is according to them, the sequence in Kindergarten curriculum is planned from simple to more complex. Similar responses were given by MT2, MT5, and MT6:

“as what I’ve been observed in Kindergarten curriculum and upon seeing and reading their curriculum guide, the lessons and the activities are arranged and presented in an inductive manner, from simple components to complex components. For example, the learning objective is writing the letter a, since learners in this level are beginners they will not write it directly using pencil and paper instead they will first use clay or playdough to mold this letter or sometimes it is written on the back of their seatmate. From that, they will have prior knowledge upon writing this letter.” (MT2)

“the process in the curriculum sequence begins to easy and ends to more challenges processes which develops pupils’ talents, skills and attitudes.” (MT5)

“lessons, materials, and activities are well-arranged and presented in the curriculum guide of Kindergarten. All of them are organized from simple to more complicated manner where the interests and maturity or readiness of the learners have considered by the curriculum makers.” (MT6)

Moreover, MT10 states her views in the following way:

“the content of the Kindergarten curriculum for me and based from what I have been observed is arranged from specific to general that is why the curricular themes starts with myself, followed by my family, then my school, my community and the last is more things around me. In terms of the materials, it is also beginning from the simplest such as holding or

molding playdough, playing blocks, beads stringing, etc. before holding pencil or paper same with the activities.” (MT10)

While MT8 claimed that:

“the Kindergarten curriculum organized or planned by considering the prerequisite skills of the learners that is why materials, activities, and content focus or topics are started in the simplest then the difficulties are increased little by little.” (MT8)

On the other hand, MT9 mentioned that:

“as I’ve been observed, the sequence of the activities in Kindergarten prepared first the readiness of the pupils before proceeding to the main activities, for example before writing letters, they will play first a playdough or clay to develop and enhance their fine motor skills that are needed in writing.” (MT9)

MT8 and MT9 shared that prerequisite skills and readiness of the pupils are considered in the curriculum sequence.

The abovementioned findings seem to link with curriculum scope and sequence, (2017), the sequence includes plans and materials for learning experiences to support and extend children’s learning at various levels of development. A sequence of learning experiences progress from less to more complex, with the goal of supporting children as they move through the developmental progressions.

Moreover, an organized developmental sequence helps education staff support children’s development of skills, behavior, and knowledge described in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework and a state’s early learning and development standards; includes examples of materials, teaching practices, and learning experiences that support children at different levels of development; allows flexibility to respond to the needs of individual children, including dual or tribal language learners and children with disabilities (or those suspected of having delays) and other special needs; and provides information to education staff that helps them plan and communicate with families and other education partners (curriculum scope and sequence, 2017).

Furthermore, the materials and plans for learning experiences are organized around a sequence designed to support children at various levels of development. The curriculum offers multiple learning opportunities that support children as they learn to understand simple patterns (ELOF Goal P-MATH 7).

Figure 4 in the succeeding page presents the curriculum sequence in Kindergarten. Considering the participants’ answers, most of them perceived that the sequence is from simple to more complex, in inductive manner, easy to more challenging, and specific to general. These can be attributed to the fact that young pupils have only limited learning span where prior knowledge is important in order to learn new one.

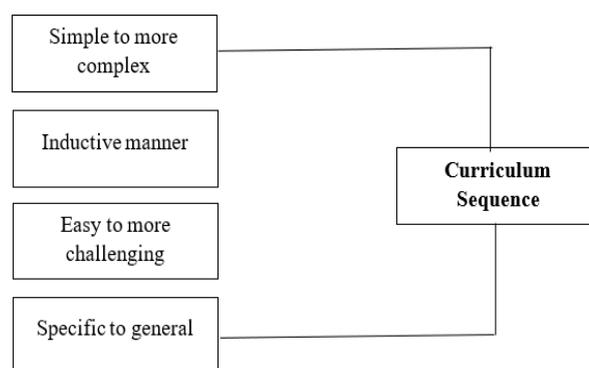


Figure 4. Curriculum Sequence in Kindergarten

Perceptions About the Curriculum Integration in Kindergarten

Curriculum integration refers to the unification of disciplines—the weakening or abandoning of boundaries between discrete subjects. Many educators feel that integrated content helps students in the task of problem solving. Among the common responses were Kindergarten curriculum is an integration of games or plays and an integration of learners’ experiences. When the participants were asked about their perceptions regarding the curriculum integration in Kindergarten they shared their views the following ways:

“Kindergarten is a perfect way for young children to discover what school is like and to have fun while learning new things. In this exciting new community and with the integration of play in the curriculum content of Kindergarten the children’s natural curiosity and eagerness to learn are developed and enhanced. Children will interact, imagine, experiment and explore to add to their knowledge, learn new skills and practice what they’ve learned.” (MT1)

MT1 shared that play integrates the Kindergarten curriculum where young children have fun while learning new things and in an exciting community.

While MT9 and MT10 said that”

“game-based or play-based integrates our Kindergarten curriculum which is best for retaining informations and learnings. Pupils also become increasingly more competent in physical skills such as balance and eye-hand coordination. Another is, play or games help young learners to develop being collaborative, cooperative, good-listeners, communicators, and being responsible. (MT9)

“in my perception, one of the reasons why Kindergarten is an effective way of preparing 5-year-old learners to formal schooling is because of the integration of games or plays. Because children at this age is in the period where they always want to play so if games are integrated with the lessons they will not bored instead they will enjoy while learning”. (MT10)

MT9 and MT10 claimed that Kindergarten is a play/game-based curriculum where it is best for retaining information and learnings as well as pupils are enjoyed while learning.

Similar responses were given by MT6, MT2, and MT5:

“Kindergarten has no specific subjects. The topics here are the integrations of the different learning areas in elementary but most of the activities here are play-based where pupils acquire higher order thinking skills including imagining situations from another’s perspectives and thinking of alternative solutions especially when having role playing or group activities.” (MT6)

“for curriculum integration in Kindergarten, game is seen to be a vital interest of the learners because it helps them develop socially, physically, mentally, and morally.” (MT2)

“in my perception, Kindergarten curriculum is the integration of games that catch the interests of every learner to develop them socially, physically, and mentally in enjoyable experiences.” (MT5)

The three participants attested that Kindergarten curriculum is play-based which promotes higher order thinking skills, develops learners’ socially, physically, mentally, and morally in an enjoyable experience. On the other hand, MT4 shared that:

“Kindergarten curriculum integrates the pupils’ experiences in the lessons which makes teaching-learning process enjoyable and interesting. They became more participative when their experiences are tackled because as we all know young learners always love to share their stories and experiences with others.

Through this, speaking and confident have been developed among them.” (MT4) A similar response was given by MT3: *“curriculum integration in the Kindergarten content so far, can build connections of the lesson and the experiences of Kindergarten learners that makes them enjoyed and interested. Through this, the skills of transferring their learning to other related setting can be developed.” (MT3)*

MT4 and MT3 claimed that learners’ experiences are integrated in Kindergarten curriculum that is why learners become participative and interested as well as develop their speaking and confident.

Moreover, MT7 added that:

“Kindergarten is a learner-centered curriculum which applies and integrates the principles of Learning-by-doing or hands on experiences which promotes child growth and development.” (MT7)

While MT8 said that:

“our Kindergarten curriculum is an integration of developmentally appropriate practices which develops the young learners holistically.” (MT8)

The aforementioned findings seem to link with curriculum development council (2017), for a quality Kindergarten Education curriculum, emphasis should be placed on nurturing children’s interest in learning and sustaining their learning motivation. Providing real-life, sensory and interesting learning experiences helps children gain first-hand life experiences and knowledge, thus achieving the prescribed curriculum aims.

According to Yin (2015) curriculum integration is an important educational development trend derived from the contemporary integrated science and technology trend. Essentially, “the goal of education is to shape people in a wide sense or accurately help children become perfect people”. This means the learning and development of infants is integral and based on the all-around physical, emotional, perceptive and social development. The kindergarten curriculum, as a practical carrier that carries the education goal and education value, should built an open, integral and changing curriculum integration system for the purpose of adapting to the needs of times and infant development. According to the spirit of Guidance for Kindergarten Education, “game is an important form of all-around development education of infants”; “with the game as the basic activity, the education should be integrated into the various activities.” Based on this, it is necessary to complete interpret the existence of

game and its value for kindergarten curriculum and strive to realize the effective integration of kindergarten curriculum and game.

Furthermore, “the history of the application of game in the children education field shows that the game is not a pure natural activity any more once it enters the children education field, which will become an education activity due to the education values and education influences. To a certain degree, the systematic and normalized game activity is the curriculum content of kindergarten, rather than a “form” of curriculum implementation.” Therefore, kindergarten curriculum occurs as a whole, but is penetrated by game. The natural integrity of game can generate and integrate the curriculum and the curriculum integration can be realized by game. There is necessary relationship between game and kindergarten curriculum (Yin, 2015).

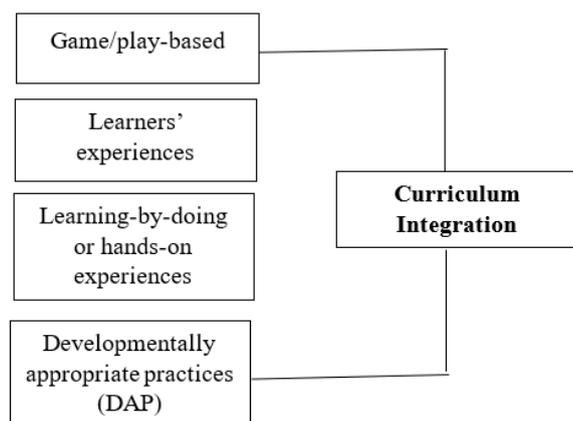


Figure 5. Curriculum Integration in Kindergarten

Figure 5 presents the curriculum integration in Kindergarten. Considering the participants' answers, most of them shared that play or game integrates the Kindergarten curriculum which makes learners participative and interested in each lesson. According to them, it develops learners' social, physical, mental and moral aspects. It also promotes higher order thinking skills. On the other hand, some of the participants said that learners' experiences integrate the curriculum which build the connections with the lessons, learning-by-doing or hands-on experiences which promotes child growth and development, and developmentally appropriate practices which develops young learners holistically.

Perceptions About the Curriculum Continuity in Kindergarten

Curriculum continuity refers to the planned introduction and reintroduction of content at subsequent grade levels and at ever-increasing levels of complexity. This concept is at the heart of the “spiral curriculum”. When the participants were asked about their perceptions about the curriculum continuity in Kindergarten, some of them mentioned that:

“as what I've been read in the curriculum guide and observed during the demonstration teaching in Kindergarten, every lesson is the continuation of the past lesson or topic for example the content focus for week 6 is I have a body and I can do many things with my body then week 7 the content focus is I can see and hear. From that, I can say that every lesson is connected to each other and the activities are aligned on the content focus.” (MT5) Similar response was given by MT1: *“since there is only one lesson or content focus in a week, the mastery of the lessons is observed among Kindergarten pupils. The continuation of every lessons has connections towards each other.” (MT1)*

MT5 and MT1 shared the similar responses which is the continuity of the lesson in Kindergarten curriculum has connection towards each other. While MT3 shared that:

“for me, curriculum continuity is the continuation of what have learned earlier and how it will be related on the present learning and as far as I know and based on what I have been observed on the Kindergarten content, the continuity of the lessons is there. For example, the topic last day is about “I am a member of the family” then the following day, the topic will be “there are different kinds of family.” (MT3)

In addition, MT9 said that:

“prerequisite skills and prior knowledge are considered as the curriculum continuity of the Kindergarten curriculum.”(MT9) Another response was given by MT4: *“the skills to be developed in the Kindergarten are the continuation of what have been developed during their day care or nursery.” (MT4)*

MT9 and MT4 claimed that prerequisite skills and prior knowledge as well as their learnings in Day care or nursery are considered in the curriculum continuity of the Kindergarten.

On the other hand, MT2 and MT10 claimed the similar responses:

“just like any other stage of basic education, Kindergarten follows the spiral curriculum learning

contents or objectives are arranged from simple to more complex.” (MT2)

“the continuity of the lessons and activities are beginning with the simplest then little by little the difficulties are increasingly.” (MT10)

MT2 and MT10 mentioned that learning contents especially the lessons and activities of Kindergarten curriculum is spiral which is arranged from simple to more complex.

Moreover, MT8 added that:

“there is a transition such as songs before continuing the next activities. It would develop an increased sense of competence and self-confidence which enables them to be independent in doing tasks, display appropriate behavior, practice self-discipline, value a sense of order, and have a positive self-concept.” (MT8)

MT8 claimed that songs are used in the transition of the activities. While MT6 shared that:

“in my perception, the continuity of the curriculum in Kindergarten is to ensure the mastery of the lesson.” (MT8)

On the other hand, MT7 attested that:

“the continuity of the lesson in Kindergarten depends on the results of the assessment conducted or observed by the teachers.” (MT7)

The abovementioned findings seem to link with Oliva (2013) continuity is the planned repetition of content at successive levels, each time at an increased level of complexity. Tyler (2010) described continuity as follows: Continuity refers to the vertical reiteration of major curriculum elements. Continuity is thus seen to be a major factor in effective vertical organization.

The principle of continuity is represented in what has been called the spiral curriculum. Concepts, skills, and knowledge are introduced and reintroduced—for example, the repetition of addition, study of democracy, writing, personal health, and conservation, each reintroduction enhancing the earlier exposures (Oliva, 2013).

In addition, smooth transitions are ensured from week to week and from one quarter to the next. Week 10 is dedicated as a wrap-up/summary/review week to solidify the concepts learned throughout the quarter. The foci for these weeks are “I am me” (Q1), “I have a family” (Q2), and “We are members of a community” (Q3). In the last three weeks of the fourth quarter, the Kindergarteners are explicitly prepared for Grade 1

with the foci “We had fun in Kinder”, “Thank you” and “Goodbye Kinder”, and “I am ready for Grade 1”. This is to smoothly transition the learners to Grade 1 by knowing the routine in Grade 1, visiting the Grade 1 classroom, and even playing with the current Grade 1 pupils.

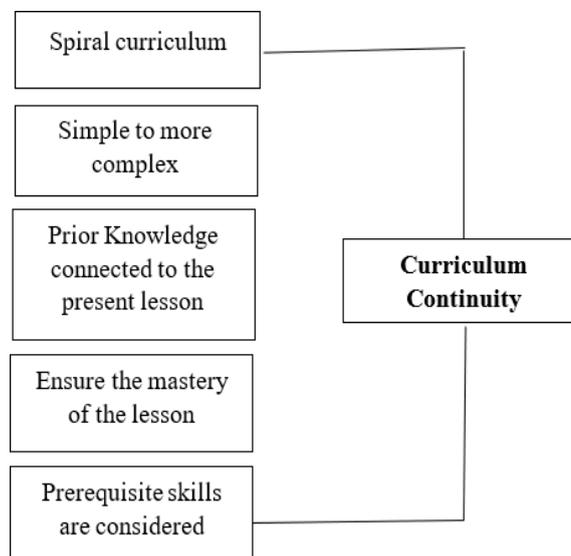


Figure 6. Curriculum Continuity in Kindergarten

Figure 6 shows the curriculum continuity in Kindergarten. Considering the answers of the participants, they perceived that it is a spiral curriculum where it begins from simple to more complex. Another is, prior knowledge is connected to the present lesson, prerequisite skills are considered, and curriculum continuity ensures the mastery of the lesson.

Content of the Kindergarten Curriculum that Curriculum Maker Needs to Enhance or Develop

The interview responses of the participants regarding the content of the Kindergarten curriculum that curriculum maker needs to enhance or develop. Among the common responses were reading, writing, blocks of time, and phonological awareness. MT1 attested to this by saying:

“I think the content of the Kindergarten curriculum needs to enhance the curriculum balance because for me, reading simple words and sentences and writing not only the letters and name of pupils should be included in balancing the curriculum because I believe that Kindergarten must build the strong foundation among learners so that they become a successful readers and learners in elementary grades or for the incoming years.” (MT1)

An excerpt from the responses of MT8 and MT9 further supports this by stating:

“reading should be enhanced by the curriculum makers” (MT8) Similar response was given by MT4: : *“curriculum makers need to give more reading activities to improve the reading skills of the pupils and to develop the reading habit among them and also to help the problems on non-readers when they are in the elementary level.” (MT4)*

“curriculum makers need to enhance the writing activities of the learners.” (MT9)

MT1, MT8, MT4 and MT9 mentioned that reading and writing should be enhanced by curriculum makers since it is a foundation for incoming years and these will lead to become a successful reader. While MT10 claimed that:

“for me, the Kindergarten curriculum is almost perfect except on the writing lessons. They should give more activities that will teach pupils to write their names and simple words or sentences.” (MT10)

In addition, MT3 shared that:

“the content of the Kindergarten curriculum that curriculum makers need to enhance is the writing and reading activities of the learners because these are essentials for the next grades.” (MT3)

On the other hand, MT2 said that:

“I think the curriculum maker needs to enhance the differentiated activities, it must be planned/ or designed to address diversity of Kindergarten pupils.” (MT2)

While MT6 mentioned that:

“counting and recognition of numbers is also important as reading so, I think curriculum makers also need to enhance these two important skills and knowledge.” (MT6)

MT2 shared that differentiated activities should be enhanced and design to address diversity of learners while MT5 said that counting and recognition are also important skills that is why it is also need to enhance. Another response was given by MT5 and MT7:

“for me, the phonological awareness of the learners should be enhanced by the curriculum makers, since this skill can be a good foundation of reading.” (MT5)
“blocks of time should be enhanced by the curriculum makers so that every lessons or activities will be

learned and mastered by the pupils.” (MT7)

The aforementioned findings seem to link with the Kindergarten Curriculum Framework of the Philippines demonstrates an unstructured characteristic of the Kindergarten Curriculum Standards and Competencies to provide the necessary readiness skills for smooth transition for the Filipino child to traverse successfully in Kindergarten and complete Grades 1 to 12 Basic Education. In this kind of principle, it is a positive step that all children in the near future would have the opportunity to experience the most satisfying learning environment which is necessary in their developmental needs. In the end, every Filipino child will become productive, confident and self-sufficient in facing the challenges and tasks of the next level of education (Corpuz, et al., 2016).

In addition, Kindergarten follows a class program known as the Blocks of Time. Following the daily routine helps children feel safe while supporting and encouraging them to do some challenges and work cooperatively with others. The Kindergarten teacher observes and documents children’s learning as they are involved in the learning activities. Many outcomes of the Kindergarten curriculum are reinforced once daily routines are practiced. This system of organizing the children’s learning experiences can be appropriately contextualized in relation to the social and cultural realities in their community.

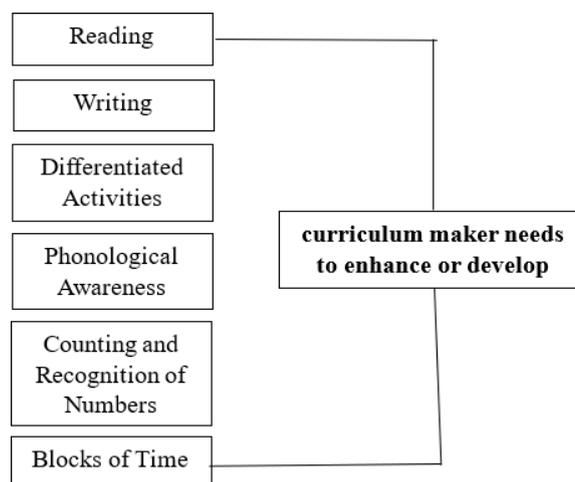


Figure 7. Content of the Kindergarten Curriculum that Curriculum Maker Needs to Enhance or Develop

Figure 7 presents the content of the curriculum that curriculum maker needs to enhance or develop. Considering the participants’ answers, reading and

writing are very essential and important for the good foundation of learners that is why it is needed to be enhanced as well as the differentiated activities, phonological awareness, counting and recognition of numbers and blocks of time.

Suggestions to Enhance the Curriculum Content in Kindergarten

The interview responses of the participants regarding their suggestions to enhance the curriculum content of the Kindergarten. Among the common responses are make a survey, hired eligible teachers, add more activities for reading and writing, and lessen the activities.

When the participants were asked about their suggestions to enhance the curriculum content in Kindergarten, the participants shared their views the following ways:

“to ensure enhanced curriculum content of the Kindergarten, only eligible teachers major in pre-elementary/Kindergarten education should be hired and assigned to teach in Kindergarten.” (MT2)

While MT1 added that:

“review the curriculum content and make a survey from the Kindergarten Teachers to know the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum content.” (MT1)

Another response said that:

“in language, literacy and communication the curriculum maker may add reading and writing so at the early age of the Kindergarten, they at least learned the basics. That way, they can be best adjusted to formal education.” (MT3)

In addition, MT4 and MT6 suggest that:

“for me, my suggestions are to add reading activities and more numeracy drill in the content of the curriculum, since these two can be the gateway for other learnings.” (MT4)

“give more time and activities for reading and writing.” (MT6)

Moreover, MT2 and MT5 claimed that:

“to ensure the successful implementation of the Kindergarten curriculum content, only eligible teachers major in pre-elementary/Kindergarten education should be hired and assigned to teach in Kindergarten.”(MT2)

“lessen the everyday activities because some pupils did not accomplish all of these since not all learners

are same in abilities and capabilities.” (MT2)

The abovementioned suggestions seem to link with Simerly (2014), throughout the educational system there has been a definite shift in curriculum. The kindergarten classroom was one that supported interests of the students. The elements of the classroom were noisy, messy, and playful. The kindergarten curriculum is no longer based on play and exploration as it once was, instead the course of study resembles expectations found in a first grade classroom in past years (Graue, 2010). Initially kindergarten was intended to be a developmental year for children. When the first kindergartens were developed, they were done with the premise that children develop at varying rates (O'Donnell & Mulligan, 2008).

In addition, the shift in the kindergarten curriculum can be attributed to varying reasons, one reason being the changing world itself. In the 1950s when kindergarten was established children stayed at home with their mothers, only 21% age eligible children attended kindergarten. This has risen to nearly 100% in present time (Graue, 2010). Kindergarten is no longer the first formal school students receive. Graue (2010) reported the shift in family structure resulted in more students attending preschool before they enter into kindergarten. Therefore, preschool is now becoming the transition between home and school instead of kindergarten. Many parents of students who attended preschool do not want a play-based kindergarten because they view this as a repeat of preschool. They want their children to move forward and become engaged in a curriculum based more on academics.

Figure 8 on the next page shows the suggestions to enhance the curriculum of Kindergarten. Considering the participants' answers, they suggested that make a survey to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, hired eligible teachers who have ECE specialization, added reading and writing in literacy, language, and communication, lessen everyday activities, and give more time for reading and writing activities to ensure the learners will learn these basic skills needed for the incoming grade level.

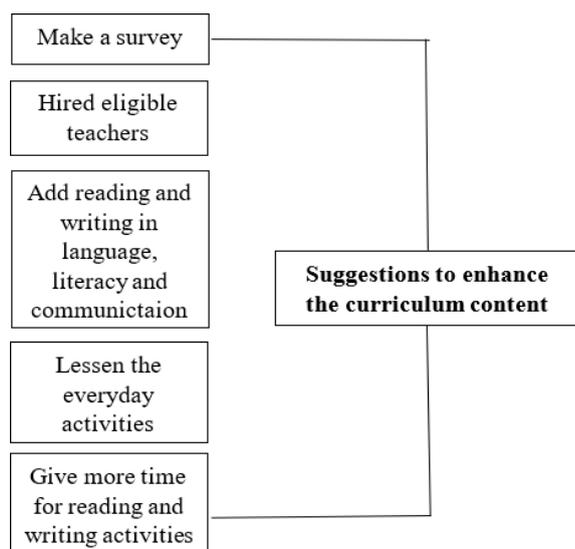


Figure 8. *Suggestions to Enhance the Curriculum Content of Kindergarten*

Conclusion

In the light of the findings, the conclusions that followed were derived: (1) The participants perceived that Kindergarten curriculum is a play-based curriculum that promotes holistic development of young learners. It is also a spiral curriculum which planned from simplest to more complex where learning experiences of the pupils connect to the present learnings and lessons. (2) The participants perceived that some of the contents of Kindergarten curriculum need to enhance and develop by the curriculum makers to make it more effective for the young learners. (3) The participants suggested that some of the contents of the curriculum should be enhanced and developed for the better implementation of the curriculum and for the better results. (4) Restructured Kindergarten curriculum content is ready for validation.

In the light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby given: (1) Training and seminars of newly hired Kindergarten teachers may be conducted to have clear ideas and information about the Kindergarten curriculum for its better implementation. (2) Curriculum makers may conduct a review and survey regarding the Kindergarten curriculum. (3) Instructional materials may provide by the DepEd so it would not burden to the Kindergarten teachers. (4) Restructured Kindergarten curriculum content may be validated. (5) A study related to the Kindergarten curriculum may be

conducted to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum.

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