



# Does theory translate into practice?

An observational study of current mathematics pedagogies in play-based kindergarten

## Article Summary

There is rising concern in research and practice to improve early years mathematics education as initial mathematical mastery sets the foundation for future academic success. In response to these concerns, this study used observational data from 20 kindergarten classrooms to understand current pedagogies teachers use for mathematics. In particular, our study is situated in kindergarten classrooms that promote play as a dominant pedagogical approach as research and policies endorse play as an effective teaching strategy for early learners. However, research also suggests that teachers express challenges implementing novel pedagogies, such as play, and use various forms of instruction when teaching math. Results showed teachers used four mathematics pedagogies (free play, guided play, teacher-directed play, and direct instruction). The enactment of these pedagogies gave rise to three classroom pedagogical orientations: child-controlled, shared-control, or teacher-controlled math contexts, indicating that combinations of play and direct instruction pedagogies are used to teach math in kindergarten.

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