



# Learning Through Play in Early Children's Education in Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel's Perspective

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze learning through play in early childhood education in the perspective of Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel. Efforts to explore the developmental potential and abilities of children through a combination of learning activities while playing which is the main characteristic has been taking place during the early childhood learning process. This research is qualitative research conducted through a literature study approach. This research was conducted through the stages of data inventory, data classification, data analysis, and then writing the results. The method of analysis in this study uses description, interpretation, and critical reflection. The results of the study show that learning through play in early childhood education in Froebel's view is a fun activity in the democratic learning process, by building harmonious relationships with nature, humans, and God. Play activities are planned and systematic activities through gift and occupation in auto activities, freedom, attention, and action. Based on this, learning through play in early childhood education in Indonesia requires all thoughts, cooperation and awareness of education actors and the community as supporters of innovation in developing children's potential from an early age to continue to develop according to the times without leaving culture, civilization, and divinity.

**Keywords:** Learning · Play · Early Childhood Education · Froebel

## 1 Introduction

Humans as a whole can develop their potential well through a process and stages during education (Mishra, 2012). The process of taking education makes a person receive valuable and useful experiences for life. Various forms of challenges, problem solving abilities, and adapting to the environment shape a person's personality to be better prepared to face the future. The adaptability of a person cannot be separated from the formation of his personality during learning, both at school, at home, and in the closest environment around him (Steed & Shapland, 2019).

Along with the dynamics that develop and evolve, new science and technology, more and more new life challenges and progressive adaptation methods must be immediately

responded to and carried out for actors in the world of education, especially early childhood education. The response made by education actors aims to better equip students as a means of national integration (Mishra, 2012). A well-implemented balance of body, intention, taste and heart in the learning process must be the focus of achievement for the formation of a generation that is in line with the expectations of the Indonesian people, namely intelligent and competitive.

From an early age, children need appropriate learning experiences without compromising their rights and abilities. The tough national successors don't have to wait until they grow up to be able to develop through fun playing activities (Pramling et al., 2008). Curriculum, learning methods, infrastructure, and supporting devices for children's learning processes from an early age must continue to be developed properly to achieve learning goals (Aryani, 2020). The ways of learning that restrain children's growth and development must be abandoned immediately, because the golden age period will not be repeated in this phase of life. Children aged 0–8 years are in the golden age of their lives, which need to be utilized and stimulated properly in the process of building a child's learning experience (McLean et al., 2018). Various stimuli provided by the environment during the learning process will be beneficial for children to be able to reach their optimum point of competence.

Learning through play is one of the learning approaches that can be applied to early childhood education (Okita, 2012). Learning through play seeks to condition children through fun activities in the learning process through efforts to explore all the potential and social skills of children through the use of reason and all objects in the surrounding environment. (UNICEF, 2018). In learning through play, children learn to develop their potential in fun ways, without coercion, mutual respect and gratitude (Taylor & Boyer, 2019). Today many activities and games are growing rapidly without limits. Based on the research conducted, in fact, not all games that develop are in accordance with educational goals. Even some games are allegedly actually damage the personality development of children from an early age (Lai et al., 2018). Adults who are around children must be smart in choosing and sorting games that are suitable for growth and development and educational values according to the expected goals in every child's learning activity. The role of adults as learning facilitators has tremendous urgency for children's growth and development (Schwarz, 2002). Practicality, efficiency, and the sophistication of game tools should not necessarily be the reason for the blurring of the essence of the learning process in play activities that are built in a learning process in early childhood education.

Learning objectives are part of the vision of learning outcomes to be achieved in a learning activity (Wood, 2014). Learning activities in early childhood education cannot be separated from one point of view of how the process of playing while learning is carried out, because the essence of humans as social creatures created by God who has reason must still be put forward in a learning process. All learning activities through play adhere to the natural abilities of children, so that they can develop themselves. What kind of games can answer the needs and provisions of early childhood personal formation in a learning process, in what way should learning through play be properly facilitated, and how the playing process so that it can be in accordance with learning objectives must still be considered. Have all games been able to instill a sense of love for God as well as love for fellow humans and objects in the environment around children?

Because the synergy of nature, humans and God becomes a manifestation of planting a good personality for children in the future.

To answer this problem, the author will look at it from the point of view of the educational philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel or here in after known as Froebel. Froebel is one of the figures of the philosophy of progressivism in education. He has his own interesting views regarding early childhood education. How does Froebel view learning through playing for early childhood education, considering that education must be adapted to the demands of the times and cannot be separated from values for synergy with nature, humans, and God? Can learning through playing be applied as a form of fulfilling services for early childhood education in Indonesia? This article will discuss these questions as a form of study that tries to reveal ideas, methods, curriculum, how to evaluate the learning process through learning through playing from Froebel's point of view.

## 2 Methods

This research is qualitative research conducted through literature study. The author reviews the literature related to learning through playing and thoughts in Froebel's educational philosophy. This research was carried out through the following stages: 1) inventory, namely the researcher collected data in the form of literature related to material objects and formal objects of research, 2) classification, namely sorting data, 3) analysis, and 4) compiling and writing results. The method of analysis in this study uses description, interpretation, and critical reflection. The following is the methodical explanation: 1) description, where the researcher describes and provides limits on understanding about learning through playing in early childhood education, and Froebel's educational perspective; 2) interpretation, namely the researcher tries to capture and understand the main ideas in learning through play and contextualize these ideas so that they are relevant to Froebel's learning model; 3) critical reflection, namely the researcher tries to reflect critically on these ideas into the reality and reality of the world of early childhood education in Indonesia.

## 3 Results and Discussion

Learning through play was introduced in the UK in 2000, in the program "The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage". An organized learning atmosphere in a fun activity that is socially acceptable to children, dealing with humans or objects around them (Okita, 2012; Taylor & Boyer, 2019). These activities occur symbolically that are active, voluntary, and able to motivate children to want to know and explore answers through a fun activity. Learning through play which is commonly known today is also called learning through play.

Various studies on learning through play highlighted by world researchers in children's education are activities that cannot be stopped at the same time. So we need a clear rule and role when playing (Vygotsky, 1967). The child as an actor in playing activities remains a learner, meaning that he must not forget the nature of his being (Kim Siew & Binti Md Nor, 2019). The essence of selfhood is the child's ability to remain

able to be himself and not have to be a different person and rush to become an adult like the big humans around him. Learning through play gives rise to a multitude of activities related to the different types of play, including constructive play, functional play, dramatic play and games (Smolucha & Smolucha, 2021). These three types of games can be implemented in children's learning processes with the aim and purpose of developing cognitive, physical, language, moral and religious abilities, as well as social and emotional in accordance with the tasks at each stage of development they go through.

Learning through play is a manifestation of various theoretical studies that have accumulated stating that it is a form of comfortable activity during the educational process (Negris De Souza et al., 2020). Children usually tend to choose learning that makes them interested, so in learning through play the teacher must be able to create an innovative game that is interesting for children to become a learning tool (Bahlmann Bollinger & Myers, 2020). In addition to an interest in learning through play, children must also showcase the strengths and abilities that can be raised by children during activities. When children start playing, they are more motivated to learn and develop positive characters (Arbutnot, 1975). The teacher's role in learning activities, the teacher plays and talks in every play experience in order to broaden the horizons of students' thinking (Nuttall et al., 2019). In these activities, children not only feel pleasure but also gain a new understanding that is useful for their lives.

In learning through play, for example in a game, children are not required to complete a game perfectly. The more important thing when children play is that children can enjoy the game, be happy, be happy, and learn to know something or meet new things. When the game is increased to a problem-solving level, children are trained to think, try to identify a problem, find the root of the problem, analyze and solve it even though it is in a simple form, for example playing pairs and pairs (Iswinarti & Suminar, 2019). It is a waste of time when children play, that is, when children cannot enjoy the game because they are too serious and result oriented. Play is sometimes seen as a futile activity that has no purpose other than fun. This is also a criticism directed at the learning through play educational method for early childhood. Play activities in early childhood education are underestimated because they are seen as just looking for happiness for children. Responding to this criticism, learning through play states that play must have a purpose, even though its orientation is not on the result. Play is a process-oriented action, not an emphasis on results. Learning through play is very concerned about the learning process when children play. Children who play do not have to complete the game perfectly. More importantly, children can learn from the process of playing. A game is not done unless it has certain benefits and goals for the child.

To maximize children's play activities, learning through play can be directed at five play areas. This area can be used as a focus for developing children's potential which can be achieved through play, namely cognitive, psychomotor, language, symbolic, and emotional. The game areas are (1) Creative play. This game area is a creative play area. This game is useful for children to express themselves, (2) Dramatic play. Drama games are carried out in children's activities by playing roles, breaking through the boundaries of reality, and finding something new and different outside themselves. Children are invited to imagine and imagine something that is outside of themselves. The game can be done by playing cooking, playing as a cop-criminal, and so on. The game is also

useful for honing children's ability to analyze the future, for example to dream and aspire for their future life, (3) exploratory play. This game is a type of adventure game. Children can be invited to explore the surrounding environment or invited to visit a new place. This adventure game can improve children's ability to make observations, discover new things, analyze, and solve problems. (4) Manipulative play. This game aims to train children's thinking skills and coordination between the senses. This game is manipulated so that children can think and act quickly and precisely. An example of a manipulative game is a puzzle game. Children are trained to use their brains to think, imagine, solve a problem or challenge at the same time their hands act to arrange the pieces to completion and, (5) Sensory play. This last play area is used to stimulate children to use their inner senses.

Early childhood education in Indonesia has long known learning while playing. Playing activities are passed through storytelling, singing, and coloring. However, the rules and objectives in playing are sometimes loose and cannot be controlled by the teacher who acts as a game developer in learning activities. The interest, comfort, safety and sharpening of children's abilities must be returned to the goal of playing to develop and be used in the early childhood education environment.

The goal of education according to Froebel is the overall development of the individual: all individual powers, and the individual's internal harmony, as well as a harmonious relationship with nature, society, and God. In general, the Froebel learning model contains a planned and systematic curriculum. Basic curriculum developed based on Gift and Occupation. Gifts are objects that can be held and used by children according to the instructions of the teacher. Children can learn about shapes, colors, sizes, and concepts obtained through counting, measuring, comparing, and distinguishing. Examples of gifts (Gifts) consist of 6 gifts in the form of a wooden box in which there are various items that will help children to gradually learn, from simple things to more complex ones. Occupations are materials designed to develop a wide variety of skills, the main ones being psychomotor through activities: sewing with a sewing board, making shapes by following dots, making candles, cutting shapes, crocheting, drawing, weaving, pasting, and folding paper.

In the learning process Froebel developed 3 principles, namely, (1), development of auto activity. Students are basically active individuals. If the child has not shown activity, it needs to be encouraged to be active so that he can carry out various productive activities (work), (2) freedom or an independent atmosphere. Children's auto activity will grow and develop if children are given opportunities according to their respective potentials. Through a free or independent atmosphere, children will have the opportunity to develop their fantasy or imagination power, especially the creativity to form something with the power of children's fantasy, (3) observation and demonstration. This activity is primarily intended to develop all the senses in the child's body. The facilities used during the study were wooden boxes, totaling 6 pieces, with each box containing items of various shapes, sizes, and colors. There are 6 gifts, namely: (1) Gift 1, a wooden box containing 6 balls of colored wool yarn, red, yellow, blue, orange, green and purple, six needles, a short piece of free wood that has been hollowed out by children learning about color concepts (basic and secondary) and learn to 'do something' with these objects., (2) Gift 2, Same as the previous gift but the wool yarn is replaced with objects with different shapes,

there are cylinders, cubes and balls. Children learn the characteristics of each object and how to use them creatively through guided play with the teacher, (3) Gift 3, consists of 8 cubes of equal size that form a large cube box. Children learn to count, learn about the relationship between parts and whole, (4) Gift 4, A box that is built from 4 rectangular blocks, 2 equal cubes, four rectangular blocks. Children learn even though the objects are not the same shape and size but can form a single unit, namely a large cube. (5) Gift 5, The cube shape is still there but this time the shape is more compound, consisting of a cube, a cube that is cut in half to form two triangles, another cube that is cut to form 4 triangles. Children learn about increasingly difficult and complex relationships. (6) Gift 6, The box is in the form of a cube, but the parts are no longer cubes or the parts that can be made into cubes require children's understanding and skills. Facilities for Occupation are folding paper, scissors, glue, geometric shapes, sewing board, roncean, pencil, etc. The evaluation system uses tests/tests.

Froebel's views on children were heavily influenced by Pestalozzi and the Greek philosophers. His childhood familiar with the church environment has shaped his outlook on life. According to Froebel, the whole universe originates from God, is controlled by God, and leads to God. Froebel thought that both man and nature reflected a unity with God. This view is the principle of unity. Froebel views children as individuals whose nature is both good and bad (Bowlby, 2016). Bad traits arise because of the lack of education or understanding that children have. Each stage of development experienced by children must be seen as a unified whole. Children have potential, and that potential will be lost if it is not nurtured and developed. Froebel adheres to the understanding of harmonious education, because according to his view educating is a process that aims to develop human beings. In accordance with his view, Froebel believes that if an adult can facilitate the growth and development of children, by establishing a "garden" that helps children develop optimally, then children will develop naturally. He uses the "park" as a symbol of children's education.

Froebel also divides the stages of child development into three, namely, (1) Infancy stage (dependence period), (2) childhood, and (3) childbearing age. In the infant stage, Froebel called it the "Introduction" stage, the basic part of education. At this stage parents are required to be active, and parents must pay attention to the baby before the baby shows actions or movements such as crying, it needs to be done for the baby so that a new unity occurs, namely inner growth where the baby will respect the people around him. At this stage of development, the baby is also called singling, namely sucking (oral), therefore people around the baby are able to develop a healthy, safe, attractive and pure environment. In addition, Froebel also strongly emphasizes that every movement of the baby must be considered, starting from the baby smiling, being silent, and also when the baby is in the mother's lap.

Childhood for Froebel is the beginning of education, because at this stage the child has started to pronounce nouns. However, the first word spoken by the child is usually slightly wrong and it is the duty of the parent or guardian to correct the word by pronouncing the word that the child says correctly. In addition to pronunciation, Froebel also emphasizes playing, because according to Froebel playing is a process where personality development is taking place, therefore the child's space for movement should

not be limited because if a child's activities are restricted then it is the same as binding his child's reasoning because he is not free to explore his environment.

The final period of early childhood, a child has begun to receive formal and systematic education, both under the guidance of teachers and under the guidance of parents. In this stage, Froebel also emphasizes that children tend to do something they like with full concentration, so it would be nice if parents pay attention to what the child is doing and provide support and when the work is completed, parents should praise the child's work. At this stage, the child has started to relate to the people around him.

The social interaction of teachers and students in Froebel's learning model is student centered, because in this learning it is the students who do a lot of activities/activities through play activities, according to Froebel. Teachers have an important role in learning. Here Froebel emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role in preparing the learning experience, planning the learning experience as completely as possible, evaluating the plan for a deeper learning experience for the student. In this interaction between teachers and students, the teacher acts as a facilitator, motivator, and evaluator. The support system in Froebel's learning model is a school as a park. Where schools must be able to develop all the potential of children, school as a fun place for children to develop their potential and as a place to play. The following is an overview of Froebel's perspective on learning through play.

Education has an ontological role in the nature and elements that are integrated in the implementation process. Humans and all forms of existence become the dimensions of a true ontological symbol. Education is a process of self-reliance of good human beings. Humans are the focus in education. Education is a process of transferring knowledge, knowledge, and values from one human being to another (Hardika et al., 2020). Thus, education always presupposes the existence of two parties, namely those who already know who are usually called teachers, and those who do not know or students. The placement of each of these statuses creates a relationship between the two, and gives rise to learning styles, curricula, and forms of practice in the education system. The play-based learning curriculum places children as the subject of education. Learning through play does not place students as objects of education that must be filled with teaching materials and materials, but children will not be forced to listen to explanations from the teacher in the study room. This will hinder the development of potential and self-children. Children who are forced to passively listen to explanations will experience great conflict within themselves because children should be active in seeking and discovering new knowledge in the world around them.

This is in line with the view of progressivism which criticizes conservative education which considers students as objects that must be formed according to the wishes of the teacher. For progressivism, children must be educated according to their needs to face life that is moving forward. Students are prepared and honed their potential to face today's challenges. It is not the material/content that is more important in learning for children, but the ability and skills to behave, understand the process of adapting, the process of knowing, the learning process, and responding to or responding to the environment around them, so that they are trained to face the challenges of the times. Learning through play is an educational alternative that makes games a learning tool for children. Playing always presupposes a feeling of pleasure and happiness for the



perpetrators. Thus, children must always be the main subject in education. Children's happiness must be the main consideration in determining the learning system (Cantor et al., 2019). Understanding and learning processes are also adapted to the behavior and needs of children. With good games, children will learn well. A good education will eventually shape the intellectual, emotional, creativity, and life skills and scientific attitudes of children. Children will learn to observe, find problems, describe problems, and look for alternative solutions.

The role of the teacher in learning through play education for early childhood is no longer merely as a transmitter and provider of teaching materials, but as a facilitator and companion for students. Teachers must be able to manage children's play activities so that children can learn from the game. The teacher must be a stage manager, a stage game controller, for his students. Teachers must work harder to create interesting and fun games for children. The variations of the game must be made in such a way that the children do not experience boredom. A teacher must also build closeness with students, so that he can understand children better. The intentionality of the relationship between students and teachers is important to create closeness between the two. Each child has a unique and different nature. Children's needs vary. With a good understanding of each child, the knowledge transfer process will be more effective, and the learning success rate will be even greater. Every element of education, teachers, school administrators, parents, and the surrounding community must support each other. Learning is not limited to the classroom. But it happens wherever the child is. Learning activities are arranged in such a way that children remain enthusiastic, interested, and not bored.

Froebel wants "life skills" education for children (Smedley & Hoskins, 2020). Children are required to be ready to respond to all situations and conditions that surround them. Likewise with learning through play. Indirectly, children's play activities will be a life experience that looks natural and natural because it is adjusted to the child's development phase. Childhood is a time of play. Children should not lose their fun and joy to play because of the demands to learn. The combination of the two is a middle way that can be taken to answer it. Through learning through play, children will learn according to their nature as creatures who like to play (Bowlby, 2016). One of the important things in learning through play is the opportunity for children. A child must be given the widest opportunity to play and develop his potential. The greater the opportunity for children to play, the greater the possibility for them to learn more and discover new knowledge. Freedom is one of the main characteristics of progressivism education. Students have the freedom to learn. It turns out that free and democratic education is also found in learning through play education (Jarvis et al., 2014). This form of freedom is indicated by activities to fulfill children's rights to choose games according to their wishes while in playing activities. Children are free to make choices according to their interests. As Freud said, freedom of expression in children and a more open learning environment will make it easier for children to release their instinctive impulses in creative ways. A child is freed to create the game that is being played because this education is not concerned with the result, but the process the child can learn from the game.

The democratic form of education in learning through play is also found in the form of games for children. The game is adapted to the interests, talents, and potential of children by sticking to five areas of play, namely creative play, dramatic play, exploratory



play, manipulative play, and sensory play. The creation of interesting games for children is the responsibility of the teacher, so that the game continues to provide fun, knowledge and does not end in vain. The curriculum in it is also very flexible and flexible according to the needs of students. The curriculum in Indonesia may be very different from the curriculum in America or Europe. The curriculum is democratic. The curriculum is open, and ready to accept criticism, suggestions, and input from various parties to achieve perfection. Character education is one of the priority agendas in the Indonesian government's national education system today (Mahanani et al., n.d.). Children are not only educated to be smart and master science and technology. But children must also have characters that are in line with the values and identity of the Indonesian nation. According to Creasy, character education is an effort to encourage students to grow and develop with competence to adhere to moral principles in their lives and have the courage to do the right thing even though they are faced with various challenges (Griffin Freeman, 2013).

Learning through play actually does not ignore character education (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). It only frees up a set of values or characters as to what will be embraced and taught to students. Froebel's view, which is included as a figure in progressive education, emphasizes experimentalism on value issues as factual material for investigation. Traditions and temporary habits are no longer enough to be used as the basis for determining values in a society that has the characteristics of very fast change. According to Froebel, placing value based on greater usefulness for many people. In learning through play, the character of students also needs to be instilled from an early age so that children always have an identity. The characters to be built in learning through play, if abstracted from the five areas of play that are the focus of children's intelligence development, include creative, hard work, discipline, courage, honesty, democracy, curiosity, tolerance, social care, love for the homeland. The teacher's role in forming the character of students is done through the types of games that the teacher offers.

Answering the first question, learning through play is a flexible and open education, so it is possible to be applied in any place, and in any situation is quite large depending on the readiness of the implementer. Learning through play can be carried out in various forms, ranging from simple to those that require modern and sophisticated equipment (Thornton & Clutton-Brock, 2011). Learning while playing can be done indoors or outdoors. With tools or without tools, ideally, the more complete the visuals and game or learning aids, the more opportunities for children to learn more. Indonesia with its rich culture and nature is a giant laboratory that is ready to become a play and learning space for children anytime and anywhere. The needs of these students are the responsibility of all parties, both the government, educators, parents, and the community (Gimazutdinov, 2020). The awareness of these parties needs to be built to make the children's education process successful. However, awareness alone is not enough. Awareness without being accompanied by the readiness of material support also cannot guarantee the success of education (Mishra, 2012). Many parents in Indonesia still have low awareness of the importance of early childhood education, let alone are ready to spend large enough funds for early childhood education costs. With education, it is hoped that humans can develop into relatively better, more cultured, and more human beings as an effort in education (Thornton & Clutton-Brock, 2011). So that in learning through play, children

are invited to play while learning something from the game. The next problem is the extent to which a teacher can create creative and educational games for children. The quality of educators must be improved. Teachers are required to be innovative, creative, and have sensitivity to the child's soul in order to be able to attract children's hearts, and develop the potential that exists within them according to their talents and interests (Marsh & Raimbekova, 2022).

Early childhood education in Indonesia is already familiar with learning while playing. Learning is done by singing, playing, coloring, and so on. However, the philosophical basis and educational orientation in it need to be further strengthened, so that its implementation is not just educating or teaching without knowing the footing, direction, and goals of the education that is being carried out. Learning through play can be used as an alternative of philosophical footing for early childhood education in Indonesia. However, it must continue to undergo adjustments to the values prevailing in Indonesian society. Learning through play must also be aligned with the goals of character education that the Indonesian government is intensifying to build Indonesian people who are characterized, strong, tough, and ready to face all the challenges of the times. Learning through play in Froebel's perspective is always open to improvement and change. It should not be standardized except in basic and principal matters.

## 4 Conclusion

The concept of educating through learning through play in Froebel's perspective of early childhood education is an educational concept that is in line with progressivism education. Learning through play upholds the values of freedom to play and learn, as well as develop the potential in children according to their interests and talents. Children are not objects of education who must receive lessons according to the wishes of the teacher but are subjects who must be facilitated and accompanied during the learning process, so that children are able to face all conditions around them, including even unexpected situations to achieve independent learning. The relationship between teacher and student must be intensive to understand each other. Learning through play as an education system for early childhood in Indonesia has been implemented according to the needs of Indonesian children. The school and the community must be ready to work harder to prepare various innovative models in learning through play activities that support children's development and creativity. In the practical implementation of learning through play requires quite a lot of material for the preparation of places and learning tools, besides also requiring serious thoughts, ideas, ideas, and creativity from related parties, both government, schools, and teachers as implementers in the field.

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