

Teaching and Learning in Fragile Contexts (TLFC) Research Paper



Play-Based Early Grade Literacy Development: Using Indigenous Play Practices for Improving Literacy Development in IDP Contexts in Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents research findings on how indigenous play practices¹ can help children a) improve their literacy skills including reading, listening, and writing skills, b) enhance their agency and motivation for learning, and c) connect to them to their cultural and local play practices.

The research focused on children who were living with their parents in the IDP centers in Ethiopia and used data collected through qualitative and quantitative methods. The research was informed by postcolonial theory and developed empirical knowledge on how indigenous play-based methods and learning activities can enhance children's holistic literacy - literacy that includes not only the reading and listening fluency but also knowledge about local values, norms, and skills for social integration and survival. Accordingly, this paper discusses interrelated findings, including the intersectionality of children's challenges in displacement contexts, the power of indigenous knowledge in helping children improve their literacy, and the values of indigenous play practice to improve classroom pedagogic practices. Children in the displacement contexts do not have enabling social and physical environments in their homes, among their displaced communities, and in their schools. Such a condition debilitated their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn.

This paper shows that the use of indigenous play practices as methods and activities of learning helps the children improve their literacy skills, engage with the literacy learning activities with a sense of agency, and connect their learning activities in school to their cultural practices at home. The paper discusses that indigenous play-practices have the power to heal children from the trauma in displacement situations, strengthen their interactions and social relationships with their teachers and each other, and help them escape the challenges in the displacement conditions. Based on these findings, recommendations that enrich policies for early-grade literacy development in fragile social contexts have been presented.

Keywords: Fragile Context, Early Grade Children, Indigenous Play, Literacy, Ethiopia

¹ Indigenous play refers to play practices that exist as parts of local cultures and that children perform with each other and with closer adults as integral part of their everyday social and cultural activities. These include storytelling, riddling, folksongs, creative plays, games, dramatic activities etc. These are very popular children's play activities in across all Ethiopian cultures.

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INTRODUCTION

In Ethiopia, about 8 million people live in critical livelihood situations. Of these people, 13% are refugees, 55% are IDPs, and 32 % are IDP Returnees (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2024). An estimated 4.4 million people are displaced in rural and urban locations. The IDP population is bigger in four regions: Tigray, Amhara, Somalia, and Oromia. The majority (60%) of the displacements are due to armed conflicts in which many lives and properties have been destroyed. About 56% of IDPs have been displaced for more than one year, 23% for two to four years, and 11% for five or more years. Of these IDP populations, 54% are children (0 -17 years). Such protracted conflict situations have affected children by dislocating them from their homes, disrupting school systems, exposing the children to violations of rights, and putting them in recurrent tensions and psychological distress (UNHCR Ethiopia, 2024). Therefore, children in IDP and refugee contexts do not have access to appropriate education, including literacy education. They have limited access to quality early-grade literacy development opportunities and contextualized learning. These are prevailing problems across IDP centers in all regions of Ethiopia. This research was aimed to solve this problem by assessing children's literacy situation in the IDP contexts, identifying children's literacy gaps based on the assessment result, developing an indigenous play-based early-grade literacy development method and activities, using these methods and activities to improve children's level of literacy, and assessing their literacy situation at the end of the intervention.

Arguments in this paper are informed by the post-colonial theory to show how indigenous play practices can serve as good contexts for children to develop their literacy skills. Post-colonial theory resists the educational philosophies and practices originating from the global north. It presents such philosophy and practices as oppressive, coercive, and repressive to values, traditions, and norms of people in the global south (Brett & Guyver, 2021; Shahjahan, et. al. 2021). Accordingly, the post-colonial theory has served to deconstruct the global north knowledge hegemony and empower people's indigenous knowledge through education. From the perspectives of postcolonial theory, indigenous play practices (IPPs) help to decolonize early-grade learning and contextualize literacy education (Snow, 2020; Stephano and Woodward, 2020). According to this theory, African indigenous play practices that include storytelling, riddling, folksongs, folk dramas, games, and make-beliefs are profound resources of learning that can ensure meaningful literacy education (Weldemariam et.al. 2024). Following this perspective, scholars argue that educators must rethink or reimagine how indigeneity may be infused within materials for literacy education.

This paper aims at showing the extent to which indigenous play practices help children improve their literacy learning outcomes in displacement contexts. It intends to indicate

how children's literacy skill development, agency in learning, and learning materials' responsiveness to children's local contexts are interconnected. It discusses how indigenous play-based literacy development methods and activities can ensure literacy development and ensure children's agency in learning. Doing so, the paper presents empirical knowledge on how indigenous play-based methods and activities can ensure literacy skills development in the IDP contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Context

The research on which this paper is based was done in the displacement settings in Oromia and Tigray regional states, where a multitude of people were dislocated from their homes and local environments because of armed conflicts. The displacement area in the Oromia region was inhabited by the Oromo people who were displaced from their homes found in the place called East Hararge because of the armed conflict that took place in the border areas between the Somali and Oromia regional states in the period between 2016 and 2018 (Gutema, 2021). As a result of the conflict, about 500 people were killed, and 1.5 million people were displaced from their homes (Gutema, 2021). These people were settled in different places in the Oromia region, of which the previous Oromia special Zone, present Sheger City, is the one (Jafer et al., 2022). These people escaped the conflict without having any assets that helped them to save their lives and have been living in this settlement for over four years. As they were forced to flee with no assets, livelihoods, or networks, it has been difficult for them to earn an appropriate living in their settlement area. As a result, they have been leading insecure and uncertain life circumstances, and have been living on assistance from the government, the international community, and the host communities (Jafer et al., 2022). In short, they have been leading livelihoods full of challenges, such as poor housing conditions, shortages of food, lack of adequate family income, psychosocial instability, and feelings of dislocation (Jafer et al., 2022; Gutema, 2021).

The displacement in Tigray was more recent and problematic. It was induced by the armed conflict between the Tigray Liberation Front and the Federal Government of Ethiopia since 2020. Following the war, the region experienced a profound humanitarian crisis characterized by massive internal displacement. As a result of the conflict, hundreds of thousands of people remain displaced, facing severe and life-threatening conditions (OCHA, 2024). Between 2020 and 2025, the conflict affected over 2 million people, forcing nearly 40% of the population to leave their homes. As a result, the region has been characterized by the highest number of conflict-displaced people in Ethiopia, with over 800,000 to 950,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Gebreyesus, et al., 2024). In the displacement, the people have continued to face unsafe, frustrating, and stressful living environments with no appropriate school, adequate food, sufficient

shelter, or proper healthcare. This paper focused on people who are living in a displacement center near Mekele City, which is the capital city of the Tigray regional state. In the displacement center, there was one primary school with poor facilities and unqualified teachers, and the motivation of the children to learn and teachers to teach was very low. The everyday lives of families and children in the displacement center were full of depression and trauma because of the war and dislocations from home (Gebreyesus et al., 2024).

In general, the lives of the displaced people in both contexts were characterized by acute food insecurity, asset loss, widespread trauma, and violence, particularly targeted at women and children. They were struggling to access basic services such as schools, shelter, health services, and food in the displacement centers.

Research Design

The research project on which this paper is based employed a mixed methodological approach in which quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used. It used descriptive and quasi-experimental research designs. The quasi-experimental design was used to investigate the status of children's early-grade literacy and the extent to which the indigenous play-based methods and activities of learning can help children improve their literacy skills in the IDP contexts. The descriptive design helped to analyze situations that contribute to the low status of children's literacy skills in the IDP contexts, and how the indigenous play-based methods and learning activities empower children's literacy development, learning agency, and contextualized learning. This design also helped to understand children's interactions with and reactions to indigenous play-based literacy development methods, materials, and activities during intervention processes. Investigate whether and how indigenous play-based literacy development materials can improve children's literacy skills.

Research Population and Samples

The population for this research was children living with their parents/caregivers in IDP centers in the two regions – Tigray and Oromia, and their parents and teachers. One IDP center was selected from each region. More specifically, the IDP center in Sheger from the Oromia region, and the IDP center in Mekele from the Tigray region were considered. These sites were preferred because of the larger population of IDPs in the areas and their suitability for the data collection activities. Primary schools in which children from the IDP centers learn were selected, and 106 grade 2 children (60 from Oromia and 46 from Tigray) were considered from each IDP center as treatment groups (53 children) and control groups (52 children). The children participated as sources of quantitative and qualitative data. Teachers who were teaching literacy subjects for these early grades and randomly selected parents of the selected children were considered for participation in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Methods of Data Collection

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for data collection. First, we developed the indigenous play-based literacy development material that contains literacy learning methods and activities. Then, we did the quantitative and qualitative data collections in parallel. Before and after the quantitative data collection (quasi-experiment), we tested the literacy status of the children by using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool.

Developing Indigenous Play-based Literacy Development Materials: Based on the findings from previous research (Jirata, 2024, 2019, 2018), we designed and developed indigenous play-based literacy development materials containing literacy learning methods and activities. Then, we trained the early grade literacy teacher to use the materials for teaching and learning literacy in the classrooms selected as the treatment group. Previous research (see Jirata, 2024; 2019; 2012) shows that indigenous narratives and play practices have the power to motivate children, contextualize learning, and exercise literacy skills. More specifically, findings of Jirata, (2024) indicate that indigenous oral narratives are effective resources to empower girls and boys to learn and provide them with contexts in which they can develop their literacy skills. Other previous research outputs (Jirata, 2023; 2018; 2013) also witnessed that storytelling, riddling, folksongs, and other indigenous play activities can create contexts in which children can develop not only their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills but also critical thinking and social skills. It was based on these findings that we developed literacy learning material from indigenous play practices.

Quantitative Methods

Treatment Activities: In collaboration with early-grade teachers of the selected primary schools where children from the IDP centers learn, we implemented the indigenous play-based literacy development material for semesters (at least six months) in the treatment sections. We also print the material and provide it for the children so that they can use it at their own times. This was aimed at encouraging and supporting children's agencies to learn through indigenous play activities at their own paces. Accordingly, we gave more time to peer-based literacy development activities and observed how this material improved children's literacy skills and ensured their agency to learn through play.

After a short period of induction, the literacy teachers in the selected treatment schools started to use the material as a resource for teaching literacy besides the existing student-texts and teachers' guides. The teachers guided the children to perform the different aspects of the indigenous play practices in the classrooms. The teachers followed the literacy teaching method presented in the material and used it as an integral part of the resources for the literacy subject. The literacy teaching method

presented the material, which included the “I DO, WE DO, and YOU DO method’ and the learning activities in the material are structured following this method. The “I DO, WE DO, and YOU DO’ method was chosen because it combines teachers' scaffolding and child-centered learning activities. Through this method, the teachers demonstrated the learning activities and then performed the activities with the children. Accordingly, the teachers scaffold children through demonstrating the activities and doing the activity with them. Then, they allowed the children to perform the learning activities on their own. By doing this, the teacher encouraged and facilitated child-centered literacy development activities. Accordingly, the “I DO, WE DO, and YOU DO’ method helped to blend scaffolding with child-centered literacy development activities. In child-centered learning, the teachers observed children’s activities and provided support when they asked them. This method of teaching and learning helped the children observe a learning activity, try it with their teachers, and do it on their own. This method combines observation with practice and helps children learn through doing. Again, it shows that in literacy skill development activities, teachers' scaffolding is as important as child-centered practices. This method is informed by the principle of balanced-pedagogy in which teachers' planning of learning activities and scaffolding of children is given equal time and attention, as child-centered, which ensures children’s participation and agency in learning.

The method interconnects with two epistemological positions (theoretical perspectives) of children’s learning. The first is Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which states that adult-scaffolding is essential for children’s learning and development. According to this theory, teachers’ closer guidance helps children to learn effectively. The second is Piaget’s constructivist theory, which presents children’s learning because of the interactions they make with their immediate environments. According to this theory, children can learn better through interactions with their immediate environment and the learning materials. The theory indicates that when they are provided with a well-designed learning environment, children can meaningfully interact with it and learn in their own ways. Informed by these theoretical positions, the ‘I Do, We DO, and You Do’ method ensures the balanced pedagogy of literacy learning.

Pre- and post-treatment early grade literacy assessment: We assessed the literacy status of grade 2 children (both treatment and control groups) before we started the treatment (using indigenous plays for teaching and learning literacy skills). The children were boys and girls (8-10-year-olds) who lived with their displaced families in Oromia and Tigray IDP centers. We used the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool for the assessment of children’s literacy status. We called this assessment a pre-treatment assessment.

At the end of the treatment, we assessed children’s early literacy skills to identify the extent to which the treatment helped the children improve their literacy skills. We used the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool to assess the post-treatment literacy

status of the children. We assessed children in treatment and control groups. We used the outcomes of the post-treatment assessment to assess the difference between pre-treatment and post-treatment literacy outcomes of the children. We used descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to analyze the significance or insignificance of the difference between the pre-treatment and post-treatment literacy outcomes and discuss the extent to which the use of the indigenous play-based literacy development methods and activities enhance children's literacy skills.

Qualitative Methods

In-depth Interviews with Children: We did in-depth interviews with randomly selected girls and boys who were in grade 2 (8-10-year-old children). This interview involved structured child-friendly oral questions focusing on the kinds of play activities that girls and boys enjoy and prefer to perform at home, in village playgrounds, and at school. The interview included the way the girls and the boys want to do literacy activities in the classroom, their motivations to learn through indigenous play activities, and their access to their indigenous play practices in the IDP contexts. We did the in-depth interviews with children during treatment activities

In-depth Interviews with Teachers: We did in-depth interviews with teachers who were teaching children of early grades in the schools where children from the selected IDP centers learn. This interview was aimed at generating data about what methods the teachers use to develop early-grade literacy, the experiences and knowledge they have to design and implement indigenous play-based literacy development practices, and the challenges they have in the process of implementing the different methods and practices of early grade literacy development in the IDP contexts. Data from the teachers helped to understand the pedagogical practices related to literacy development and how indigenous play practices could improve it.

In-depth Interviews with Parents: In-depth interviews with parents focused on families' livelihoods in displacement contexts, parents' childcare practices and indigenous play activities at home. It included the extent to which IDP parents lead stable lives at their homes, tell stories to their children, play riddles with their children, and provide play opportunities for their children. This interview helped observe the extent to which parents were able to organize literacy development opportunities for their children at home and how life in IDP contexts may constrain such parenting traditions.

Observations in Primary School Classrooms: The participant observation included involvement in the everyday activities of children and teachers in the early-grade classrooms. We did the observation during the intervention activities. Observation focused on documentation of the pedagogic and play practices, how early graded literacy development activities were embedded in them, the kinds of materials available for children to improve their literacy skills, and the challenges prevailing in this aspect

were part of the pre-treatment classroom observations, and children’s reactions, motivations, and participation when learning through indigenous play practices. We used the observation to generate data about how the indigenous play-based literacy development method and activities can enhance children's agency in classroom activities and are responsive to children's cultural and local realities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Children’s Early Grade Literacy Status before Treatment

We assessed the early grade literacy status of grade 2 children (pre-treatment assessment) by using the EGRA tool, which measures the eight literacy components such as Print Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge, Sound Identification, Meaningful Word Reading, Non-meaningful Word Reading, Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension and Dictation. The following table presents the average percentage (mean) of the children who answered the EGRA questions correctly within the given time for each category.

Table 1: The EGRA outcomes of grade 2 children (n = 60) before the treatment in Oromia

	Treatment Mean (SD) (n=30)	Control Mean (SD) (n=30)	p-value	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Print Awareness	61.23 (26.50)	63.47 (26.86)	.747	d = 0.08
Alphabet Knowledge	29.03 (16.20)	32.87 (17.55)	.383	d = 0.23
Sound Identification	41.67 (16.63)	45.00 (18.52)	.466	d = 0.19
Meaningful Word Reading	36.83 (18.22)	43.47 (21.61)	.204	d = 0.33
Non-meaningful Word Reading	36.20 (18.50)	36.27 (21.19)	.990	d = 0.00
Reading Comprehension	5.63 (9.53)	6.27 (10.44)	.807	d = 0.06
Listening Comprehension	90.07 (17.76)	85.67 (18.85)	.356	d = -0.24
Dictation	31.40 (20.26)	31.67 (20.36)	.960	d = 0.01

Table 1 shows that, except for print awareness and listening comprehension, the proportion or mean of children who correctly answered EGRA questions within the given time is below average in Oromia, which shows that their EGRA outcomes for all

literacy components are poor. Majority of the children who responded to the EGRA questions correctly in both treatment and control groups is low, indicating children's EGRA outcomes for alphabet knowledge, sound identification, meaningful word reading, non-meaningful word reading, reading comprehension, and dictation are very low. This result portrays that the children are poor in reading letters, sounds, and words, and their performance in reading comprehension is the worst of all. Surprisingly, children's EGRA outcome in listening comprehension and print awareness is better than the outcomes for other literacy components, which can be attributed to children's exposure to the traditional oral practices at the normal home environments where they often participate in oral play practices, including storytelling, riddling, and songs. In the normal home environment, the children perform these practices with their grandparents, parents, and siblings, which suggests that oral play practices at home have the power to enhance children's performance in listening skills.

Table 2: The EGRA outcomes of grade 2 children (n = 46) before the treatment in Tigray

EGRA Variable	Treatment Mean (SD) (n= 23)	Control Mean (SD) (n= 23)	p-value	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Print Awareness	100.00 (0.00)	100.00 (0.00)	—	—
Alphabet Knowledge	23.52 (25.65)	31.64 (27.80)	.288	d = 0.30
Final Sounds	80.00 (32.53)	82.40 (20.06)	.755	d = 0.09
Awareness to Meaningful Words	20.76 (23.31)	25.92 (24.71)	.451	d = 0.21
Awareness to Non-meaningful Words	19.20 (17.89)	20.72 (18.33)	.768	d = 0.08
Reading Comprehension	17.80 (25.09)	28.80 (25.87)	.134	d = 0.43
Listening Comprehension	72.72 (27.05)	76.80 (18.87)	.539	d = 0.17
Dictation	22.62 (27.88)	31.50 (32.70)	.307	d = 0.29

Table 2 shows that, except for print awareness, final sound identification and listening comprehension, the mean of children who correctly answered EGRA questions within the given time is below average for all children, which shows that their EGRA outcomes for the five literacy components are poor. Majority of the children who responded to the EGRA questions correctly in both treatment and control groups is far below the expected outcomes for this level (grade 2), indicating children's EGRA outcomes for alphabet knowledge, meaningful word reading, non-meaningful word reading, reading comprehension, and dictation are very poor. This result portrays that the children are

poor in reading letters and words, and their performance in reading comprehension is the worst of all. However, children's EGRA outcome in listening comprehension, sound identification, and print awareness is better than the outcomes for other literacy components, which can be attributed to children's exposure to the traditional oral practices at home environments before the displacement. It was clear from the interviews with parents that before the displacement, children and their parents often participated in oral play practices, including storytelling, riddling, and songs. In the normal home environment, the children perform these practices with their grandparents, parents, and siblings, which suggests that oral play practices at home have the power to enhance children's performance in listening skills.

Situations Affecting Children's Literacy Outcomes

Regarding children's low literacy status, the literacy teachers in the early grades (grades 1-3) of the selected primary schools expressed that children were very poor in all components of literacy skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and articulated that they were being challenged in their efforts to change this situation. One of the teachers who was teaching the Oromo language to grade 2 children in the selected intervention school stated that her students were very poor in reading, writing, and listening. The extract from the interview with the teacher has been presented below.

Interviewer: Thank you for your willingness to respond to my question. I want to talk to you about the status of literacy learning in the grade you are currently teaching.

Teacher: You are welcome. Thank you for your attention to solving our students' literacy learning problems

Interviewer: In which grade are you teaching, and which subject are you teaching currently?

Teacher: I am teaching the Oromo language to grade 2 and 3 students.

Interviewer: How is the status of literacy skills of your students?

Teacher: Most of my students in both grades are very poor in reading and writing. Although the Oromo language is their native language, they cannot read and write familiar words. They cannot even write their names. Most of them cannot even read and write letters correctly. Even, they do not know all the letters in the Oromo Alphabet. They cannot read or write even their names. Failing to read a word and write their names is a shame for grade 2 and 3 students.

Interviewer: If they cannot read and write words at this level, how can they learn other subjects?

Teacher: It is a critical problem. They cannot read their textbooks. Teachers read for them in the classroom. They cannot answer questions in writing. They cannot read and

understand exam questions and instructions. There is a burden on teachers. Because of these gaps, students have very poor performance in their learning.

Interviewer: *What do you think are the causes of such problems?*

Teacher: *To me, the causes of these problems are manifold. The first is the home situation of the children. The children do not have learning support from their families at home. The families do not have stable livelihoods and cannot support their children to learn better. The second is the limitation in the learning materials, including the student textbook and teachers' guides. Both learning materials have large amounts of content and do not allow children to take time to exercise. The third is the school administration that dictates to the teachers to finish the contents of the materials on time. The school administration gives more attention to the completion of the learning contents, but not to children's learning outcomes. As a result, the teachers rush to finish the contents without giving more time for children to practice. The fourth is a lack of collaboration between teachers and parents. Teachers give homework to children so that they can take time and practice literacy skills at home. However, the students do not have time to exercise their reading and writing skills at home. Parents do not pay attention to students' learning activities. I think they do not know how to support their children. Teachers and parents do not have time to come together and discuss how to support children's learning better at home and in school. We (teachers) also need capacity development training to be able to create different activities that children can do at home and enhance their literacy skills. These are the causes of the persisting problems in students' literacy skill performances.*

Interviewer: *What do you recommend as solutions for these problems?*

Teacher: *As causes of the problem are many, there could be many solutions. The first is psychosocial and economic support for families. The second is revising the contents and organization of the learning materials. The third solution could be providing teachers with the agency to choose content and learning methods that they think are more important for improving students' literacy skills. The fourth could be increasing parents' engagement with students' literacy development activities, and the fifth could be providing teachers with capacity development training on how to improve children's literacy learning outcomes.*

These responses are like the responses of the other literacy teachers who were interviewed from Oromia and Tigray regions. They all asserted that early grade children are very poor in literacy skills, mainly in reading and writing skills, and the causes of such literacy status are manifold. According to the teachers, the major gap was in children's home contexts where they live with their family members who were displaced from their original places, lost their assets, and disconnected from their normal livelihoods. Such contexts erode children's motivations and capacities to learn. The second is the limitations in the early grade language learning materials, including

students' textbooks and teachers' guides. The materials are loaded in content and do not give children adequate time to exercise their literacy skills. The children are busy covering the contents within the given time, but do not have adequate time to engage in in-depth literacy activities and agency to learn in the way they want to learn. The overloading of the learning contents also affected teachers' learning time management. Similarly, the teachers are busy covering all the content on time for which they are accountable. In other words, the literacy teachers are more responsible for covering the learning units and their contents in line with school schedules than for improving children's literacy learning outcomes. The other cause of the problem is teachers' capacity to develop and use effective literacy learning methods and activities. This indicates that teachers need on-the-job capacity development support to develop and utilize effective methods and activities to enhance students' literacy learning outcomes.

As mentioned above, the challenges in the IDP contexts are the primary factors that have affected children's performances in literacy development. One of the teachers from the IDP contexts in Tigray expressed this situation as follows.

The living situation in the IDP is not convenient for children to learn. Children live in tents with their parents. Some are living alone as they have lost their parents. They do not have adequate food, clothes, or psychological stability. They do not have learning resources or appropriate classrooms. Some of the children are not living with their parents. Parents are not supporting their children to engage in their learning as they do not have stable livelihoods. The parents are in severe economic challenges and do not give focus to their children's learning.

These statements indicate that children in the IDP contexts have multiple challenges that have affected their learning outcomes. The economic, social, and psychological stresses that children are experiencing in the displacement situations have discouraged them from attending school regularly, focusing on their learning activities, and improving their learning outcomes.

Similarly, analyses of the teaching and learning materials and experiences from classroom observation show that the early grade learning materials are overloaded with content and do not allow the children to take time for practicing literacy learning activities. Data generated through the analyses of teachers' guides and classroom observation show that the learning materials lack quality in content and organization. As a result, they rarely help teachers to enhance children's literacy outcomes. Content incoherence is another gap in the learning materials. It is expected that the contents are organized in such a way that children can learn the five literacy components sequentially, from phonological awareness to comprehension. In the literacy learning materials of grades 1- 3, phonological awareness was missing, and more time and space were given to one element of phonics, which was the identification of letters and letter sounds. However, sound formation, sound identification, and sound merging and

segmentation, which are important components of phonics, are missing. As a result, the children jump from letter identification to reading and writing short sentences without exercising on word formation and word reading. It was also noted that the literacy teaching and learning methods predominantly follow explicit pedagogy in which teachers focus on delivering content without context. Through repeated classroom observation, it was clear that the teachers do not have hands-on supplementary materials that help them enhance their skills in implementing activity-based and contextualized literacy learning. As is notable from interviews with teachers, the limitations in coherence and the lack of smooth transition between preprimary and primary education have also constrained children's literacy development. In pre-primary schools, play-based literacy learning activities are promoted, but activity-based learning has been exercised as a helpful pedagogic practice in the early grades of primary schools. In other words, the primary school curriculum prescribes activity-based learning, which was intended to create coherence with play-based learning, but teachers were not observed implementing activity-based learning. These conditions have significantly affected children's literacy learning outcomes in early primary education.

The qualitative data collected through interviews with parents and children also indicate that the social, emotional, and economic situations that dislocation from home impose on parents and children constrain children's motivation and capacity for learning. The interviews indicate that parents in displacement have experienced severe challenges, including economic scarcity, substandard shelters and facilities, inadequate nutrition, and psychosocial disorders. As expressed in the interview, such family conditions affected children's learning and well-being. As a result, the distresses at home eroded children's motivation to learn in schools. Interviews with parents reflect the nostalgia and frustrated voices on how conflict disorders human lives. The stable family lives in which children learn and grow normally are broken down because of the devastating conflict that human beings create and perpetuate. War and conflict destroy the macro, meso and micro learning and development contexts of children and distract their natural environments and processes of learning. Conflict harms the social, cultural, and economic contexts of children by disordering the macro functions, school systems, and family livelihoods. It affects families by disconnecting them from their homes, beloved social places, farmlands and extended family care. Accordingly, conflict affects all aspects of parents' and children's everyday lives and puts them at risk of multiple vulnerabilities. Such a situation strongly contributes to children's poor performance in learning, mainly literacy skill development.

Similarly, the qualitative data collected through interviews with children show that the social, emotional, and economic situations that displacement has caused families' limit children's motivation for and performance in learning. These interviews show how children understand their literacy learning outcomes and the reasons they give for their

low-level performance. The children expressed that the pivotal cause for their poor literacy performance is teachers' limitations to help them and a lack of materials that can support the development of their reading and writing skills. As noted from the interviews, there are three factors to which children's weaknesses in literacy skills can be attributed. The first is children's home conditions, dominated by displacement-induced economic and psychosocial stresses. In such a context, children do not have the intrinsic motivation to learn and improve their literacy skills on their own time and space. The second is teachers' poor commitment to understanding the home contexts of the children and supporting them accordingly. The children repeatedly expressed that their teachers do not understand their home and family contexts and provide them with any support to enhance their learning. The third is related to the fact that children are forced to read sentences before they master reading familiar words. This is how the reading lessons are structured in the teachers' book and students' textbooks. The reading lessons are not organized following the sequence of literacy development, and such a curricular fault has confused the learners by making them jump into the higher content before mastering the lower one. It has been notable that children do not have access to reading materials that can help them exercise reading and understanding texts.

In general, because of the stress at home, children lack intrinsic motivation to learn, even though they regularly attend school. With the intention of supporting children's school attendance and performance in such situations, the local government in Oromia launched a school feeding program that provides the preprimary and primary school children with breakfast and lunch in school as well as school uniforms and learning materials. This program attracted children to come to school, enabled them to attend school regularly, helped them to have adequate nutrition, and alleviated parents' burden and stress. However, as indicated in the interviews, the school feeding and support program has a limited impact on children's learning performance, mainly on their performance in reading and writing. Notably, school feeding has not impacted children's intrinsic motivation to learn. In other words, the stressful lifestyles of parents that children experience at home are more powerful than the support at school in affecting children's motivation to learn. This reality indicates that home conditions are more important than school situations in initiating and sustaining children's intrinsic needs and curiosity to exercise reading and writing and improving their learning outcomes. The family and home conditions are where children are connected socially and emotionally and share familial affection that sustains their psychosocial stability. As a result, the home social and economic context determines children's commitment to learning, curiosity for learning, and performance in learning.

Children's Literacy Status after Treatment

In this subsection, the status of children's literacy after the treatment was presented and analyzed for children from IDP centers in Oromia and Tigray. The post-treatment literacy outcome was measured by using the EGRA tool- the same tool used for pretreatment assessment. Accordingly, the EGRA outcome was computed for children in Oromia (treatment n=30 and control n=30) and in Tigray (treatment n=23 and control n=23). In both contexts, firstly, the outcomes of the treatment group were compared with those of the control group. Secondly, the post-treatment outcomes were compared with the pretreatment outcomes for the treatment group. The differences between the post-treatment outcomes and the pretreatment outcomes, as well as between the treatment and control groups, have been used as an indicator of children's improvements in literacy status. The following table compares the EGRA pretest and posttest outcomes of the treatment group in Oromia.

Table 3: Post-Pre-Test Paired-Samples t-test Results for Intervention Group (N = 30) in Oromia

Variables Compared	Mean 1 (Posttest)	Mean 2 (Pretest)	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	P values
Print Awareness	88.18	62.04	26.14	34.44	4.017	27	.000
Alphabet Knowledge	50.89	31.82	19.07	17.37	5.810	27	.000
Sound Awareness	44.21	28.50	15.71	16.73	4.971	27	.000
Initial/final Sound Awareness	68.21	44.29	23.93	16.85	7.513	27	.000
Awareness of meaningful words	58.57	44.07	14.50	19.70	3.895	27	.001
Awareness of non-meaningful words	47.71	36.86	10.86	17.49	3.285	27	.003
Reading Comprehension	10.64	6.29	4.35	10.53	2.188	27	.037
Listening Comprehension	100.00	84.64	15.36	19.11	4.251	27	.000
Dictation	56.43	32.50	23.93	20.06	6.311	27	.000

As shown in Table 3, there is a significant difference between the pretreatment and post-treatment results, indicating that children's literacy skills have been improved significantly. The table presents that the difference between the two tests is significant in all variables ($P < 0.05$ in all variables), including print awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound awareness, initial/final sound awareness, awareness of meaningful words, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and dictation. These results show that the treatment has a positive effect on children's literacy status. It helped the

children improve their literacy skills in all aspects of the literacy outcomes. Similarly, when compared with the control group, the literacy outcomes of the treatment group have been greater, indicating the effect of the treatment. The following table shows the comparisons between the treatment and control groups.

Table 4: Independent Sample t-test for Posttest Intervention with Posttest Control Group in Oromia

Variables Compared	Mean 1 (Intervention)	Mean 2 (Control)	Mean Difference	t	df	P values
Print Awareness	88.18	69.00	19.18	3.467	56	.001
Alphabet Knowledge	50.89	35.87	15.03	3.898	56	.000
Sound Awareness	44.21	31.57	12.65	3.354	56	.001
Final Sound Awareness	68.21	54.00	14.21	4.728	56	.000
Awareness of meaningful words	58.57	45.87	12.70	2.969	56	.004
Awareness of non-meaningful words	47.71	40.67	7.05	1.572	56	.122
Reading Comprehension	10.64	6.00	4.64	2.026	56	.047
Listening Comprehension	100.00	80.17	19.83	5.617	56	.000
Dictation	56.43	32.00	24.43	7.205	56	.000

Table 4 presents that the difference between the control group and the treatment group is significant in all aspects of literacy, showing that the treatment has a significant effect on children's literacy development. In all aspects of literacy except awareness of non-meaningful words, the difference between the control and treatment groups is significant ($P < 0.05$ in all variables except one), which shows that the children under the treatment performed better than the children who did not have exposure to the treatment. These results indicate that the treatment, which was the use of indigenous play practices for literacy development, helped the children improve their literacy outcomes. In other words, the analysis shows that indigenous play practices helped the children increase their literacy skills.

Similarly, data from the IDP contexts in Tigray clarifies significant differences between the control group and treatment group in literacy outcomes. The data also shows significant differences between the pretreatment and post-treatment literacy outcomes of the children in the treatment group. The following table presents a comparison between the pretreatment and post-treatment literacy outcomes of children in the treatment group.

Table 5: Post-Pre-Test Paired-Samples t-test Results for Intervention Group (N = 23) in Tigray

Variables Compared	Mean 1 (Pretest)	Mean 2 (Posttest)	Mean Difference	T (df)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Alphabet Knowledge	32.26	55.48	+23.22	t(22) = 8.94	.001
Final Sounds	82.30	97.48	+15.17	t(22) = 4.15	.001
Awareness of Meaningful Words	26.70	50.17	+23.48	t(22) = 8.10	.001
Awareness of Non-familiar Words	21.65	37.74	+16.09	t(22) = 6.35	.001
Reading Comprehension	30.65	39.57	+8.91	t(22) = 2.38	.026
Listening Comprehension	77.65	80.96	+3.30	t(22) = 1.22	.235
Dictation	34.35	49.48	+15.13	t(22) = 3.76	.001

As shown in Table 5, except for listening comprehension (P = 0.235), there are significant differences between the post-treatment and pretreatment outcomes of all components of literacy (P < 0.05 in all variables except one), clarifying that the treatment had a significant impact on children's literacy outcomes. The treatment helped the children improve their literacy outcomes in print awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound awareness, initial/final sound awareness, awareness of meaningful words, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and dictation.

The difference between the literacy outcomes of the control and treatment groups is also significant, showing that the treatment group performed better than the control group in literacy. The following table compares the literacy outcomes of children in control and treatment groups.

Table 6: Independent Sample t-test for Posttest Treatment (n=23) with Posttest Control in Tigray

Measure	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	P values
Print Awareness	Treatment	100.00%	0.00%	—	—	—
	Control	100.00%	0.00%			
Alphabet Knowledge	Treatment	74.13%	31.89%	2.225	44	0.026
	Control	41.05%	30.22%			
Final Sounds	Treatment	97.50%	8.47%	2.036	44	0.048
	Control	88.18%	20.62%			
Awareness of Familiar Words	Treatment	85.33%	194.03%	3.073	44	0.001
	Control	40.41%	30.89%			
Non-Familiar Word Reading	Treatment	66.50%	23.46%	2.51	44	0.012
	Control	28.73%	19.31%			
Reading Comprehension	Treatment	61.25%	118.47%	1.76	44	0.052
	Control	35.45%	27.56%			

Listening Comprehension	Treatment	81.67%	17.61%	-1.109	44	0.274
	Control	107.50%	112.76%			
Dictation	Treatment	51.71%	39.02%	0.604	44	0.549
	Control	44.64%	40.33%			

Table 6 presents that in most of the literacy components, the difference between the control group and the treatment group is significant. It is significant in alphabet knowledge ($P = 0.026$), final sounds ($P = 0.048$), awareness of familiar words ($P = 0.001$), non-familiar word reading ($P = 0.012$), and reading comprehension ($P = 0.052$). These results indicate that the treatment group performed better than the control group in these areas of literacy. However, the difference between the control and treatment groups in listening comprehension ($P = 0.274$) and dictation ($P = 0.549$) is not significant, indicating that the treatment group did not perform better than the control group. This is attributed to the common challenge of children's listening comprehension and writing skills in both displacement and non-displacement contexts.

The IDP context in Tigray is more severe than in Oromia. It is characterized by challenges that prevent children from learning and performing as they did when they were at home. One of the parents living with her children in the displacement contexts in Tigray stated:

The living environment in displacement is not conducive to children's learning. During rainy days, children can't attend class because the classrooms are tents and cannot protect them from the rain. Children do not have books and places for reading. They do not have adequate daily food. They do not have learning facilities in the school. There are no qualified teachers, and even the existing ones do not have the motivation to teach. Because of such conditions, the children are not learning appropriately and do not have sufficient performance in learning.

Such displacement situations have caused visible constraints to children's learning in Tigray, where there is active and unstable displacement during this study. Despite these situations, the post-treatment literacy assessment outcomes of the intervention group are far better than those of the children in the control group. This result implies that the treatment has a positive impact on children's literacy skill development. In other words, the use of indigenous play practices as resources for teaching and learning literacy has helped children improve their literacy skills in Tigray.

Why Indigenous Play Practices Help Children Improve Their Literacy Skills?

Analyses presented in this paper indicate that the use of indigenous play practices such as storytelling, riddling, singing, and gaming helped children in displacement contexts improve their literacy skills. Based on the qualitative and quantitative data, the research

presents that the different forms of indigenous play-practices enhance children's literacy skill development. The research was informed by a post-colonial theory implying that indigenous play practices can serve as good contexts for children to develop their literacy skills and ensure 'good classrooms' in fragile social and economic situations. Findings of this study align with arguments of postcolonial researchers such as Akpan (2011), Kennedy-LaReau (2023), Kervin et al. (2017), and Ehrlich (20019) that present play practices as resources for children to have better cognitive power and socio-emotional well-being. Accordingly, this research indicates that the indigenous play-based early-grade literacy development practices have lasting effects on their literacy development and academic lives.

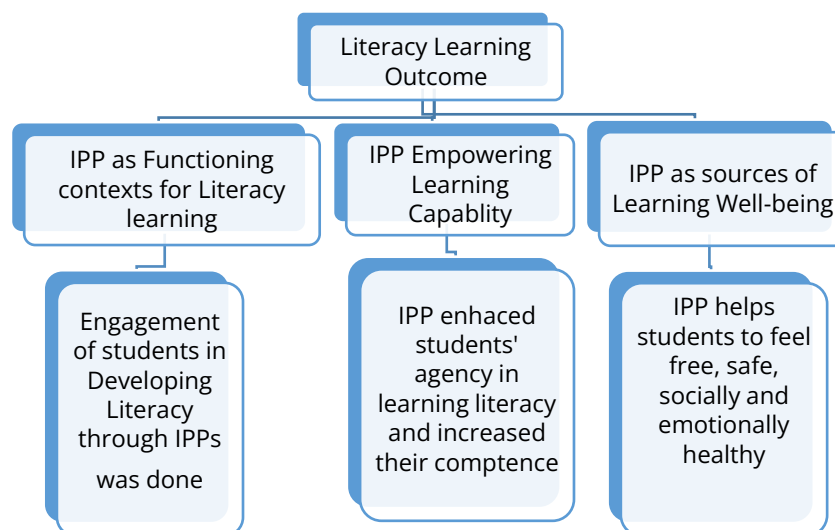
It is clear from the children's post intervention literacy outcomes and interviews with teachers, parents and children that indigenous play practices such as storytelling, riddling, folksongs, make-believe and imitative play practices and oral games are highly relevant for children in fragile contexts because they can help children get relief from tensions, overcome social challenges, create pleasure, develop their vocabulary power, recognize and manipulate individual sounds, understand written words for meaning and context, develop speaking and listening skills and connect them themselves to their local values. Similar to this finding, Jirata (2024), which is a research report done among the war-affected Guji community in Ethiopia, shows that indigenous oral narratives are useful for the empowerment of girls and literacy development in fragile situations because they are not only about reading and writing skills but also scenarios in which children connect themselves to their normal life and learn through meaningful entertainment. This research implies that indigenous play-based early-grade literacy development activities are suitable for children's learning in fragile contexts and can help them remain connected to their normal ways of life, practices, and values.

In the displacement contexts that cause economic, social, and psychological difficulties to displaced families and constrain their capacity to provide their children with appropriate care, indigenous play practices provide therapeutic values. The indigenous play practices strengthen children's mental connections to their original places and relieve them from fear, trauma, and a sense of distress. Indigenous play practices such as storytelling, riddling, and folksongs are popular entertainment performances among early graders in Ethiopia in particular, and Africa in general. In these practices, children are fully engaged and deeply motivated to engage in learning activities. .

In general, results from Oromia and Tigray reveal that the use of indigenous play practices has helped the children improve their literacy outcomes even in the stressful displacement contexts. It has been clear that the indigenous play practices as methods and activities for literacy skills development are effective in supporting children to improve their literacy outcomes. Besides, interviews with teachers, parents, and children, as well as classroom observations, confirm that the indigenous play practices provide children with the contexts in which they have learning agencies. Similarly, the

indigenous play practices empower children’s learning agency by fostering self-confidence, autonomy of activities, and child-friendly challenges. Such plays provide children with the opportunity to choose activities and roles, direct themselves and negotiate with each other, create and recreate play activities, and enhance their imaginative power. Accordingly, the indigenous play practices enabled children to learn in the way they want to learn, participate in learning activities with a sense of freedom, take responsibility for their learning, direct themselves, and develop self-motivation and confidence in themselves. Likewise, the indigenous play practices are integral parts of children’s local play cultures and ensure culturally responsive learning for children. Therefore, the indigenous play practices connect children to the cultural values, norms, and practices of their communities, which in turn help them grow connected to the cultures of their societies.

Furthermore, this study implies that indigenous play practices, when used as learning resources, heal children from distress and improve literacy learning outcomes that constitute three fundamental elements. These are indigenous play practices (IPP) as functioning contexts for literacy learning, indigenous play practices (IPP) as empowerment of literacy learning capability, and indigenous knowledge as sources of literacy learning wellbeing. The following figure presents these elements.



The repeated classroom observations and interviews with teachers and the children indicate that the functioning role of IPP refers to children’s engagement with the practices to develop their literacy skills. It includes how IPPs improve children’s motivation to learn, the time they spend on learning through play practices, the level of their cognitive development, motor and social skill development, and confidence to act in learning through play practices. The learning capability concepts entail how IPPs support and facilitate children’s literacy learning. It also includes how IPPs serve as children’s ecological and cultural opportunities and make learning activities relevant and

meaningful. Learning well-being is the outcome of the functioning of IPPs and the IPPs as a tool to empower the learning capability of children. It refers to the progress that children show in terms of knowledge, skill, and attitude through participation in IPPs. Accordingly, learning progress in literacy is the result of children's genuine engagement with IPPs and the learning support and opportunity that their social, cultural, and natural environment provides them. Providing such contexts, the PPPs enable children to improve their literacy skills in their early grades.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Post-colonial theory deconstructs the educational philosophies and practices originating from the global north and presents such philosophy as oppressive, coercive, and repressive experiences to indigenous practices of people in the global south (Brett & Guyver, 2021; Shahjahan, et. all., 2021). Accordingly, the post-colonial theory has served to review the global north knowledge hegemony and activate people's indigenous knowledge through education. From the perspectives of postcolonial theory, indigenous plays help to decolonize early-grade learning and contextualize literacy education (Snow, 2020; Stephano and Woodward, 2020). According to this theory, African indigenous play practices that include storytelling, riddling, folksongs, folk dramas, games, and make-beliefs are profound resources of learning that can ensure meaningful literacy education (Weldemariam et.al. 2024). Following this perspective, scholars argue that educators must rethink or reimagine how indigeneity may be infused within materials for literacy education.

This study shows that children's literacy outcomes before the treatment were low, indicating that their literacy status was poor. Except for print awareness and listening comprehension, children's EGRA outcomes for all literacy components are poor. Put in other words, children's EGRA outcomes for alphabet knowledge, sound identification, meaningful word reading, non-meaningful word reading, reading comprehension, and dictation are very low, showing that the children are poor in reading letters, sounds, words, and their performance in reading comprehension is the worst of all. However, children's EGRA outcome in listening comprehension and print awareness is better than the outcomes for other literacy components, which can be attributed to children's exposure to the traditional oral practices at home where they often participate in oral play practices, including storytelling, riddling, and songs. In the home environment, the children perform these practices with their grandparents, parents, and siblings, which indicates that oral plays at home are powerful to enhance children's performance in listening skills. Regarding children's low literacy status, the literacy teachers in the early grades (grades 1-3) of the selected primary schools expressed that the children were

very poor in all components of literacy skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and articulated that they were being challenged in their efforts to change this situation.

The study presents that the causes of children's low literacy status in a conflict situation are threefold. The first is the displacement conditions in which families lead extremely poor livelihoods characterized by tensions, trauma, social disconnections, and malnutrition. The interview with parents and children in Oromia and Tigray shows that conflicts cause displacement and psychological disorders not only to children but also to the communities in which they live. Displacement causes multiple forms of dislocation, of which economic, socio-cultural, and physical dislocations are the major ones. The economic dislocations happen because the conflicts remove families' economic bases, including farms, cattle herding places, and the different forms of domestic economic practices. These situations lead families to severe economic challenges and deteriorated livelihoods. The socio-cultural dislocations include disconnections from social networks and cultural systems, as the conflict results in the breakdown of social fabrics and the detachment of families and communities from their places and cultural belongings. As a result, the disconnection from their original place caused the people multiple forms of challenges that directly affected their children. Furthermore, conflict causes psychological disorders, such as fears, trauma, hopelessness, and stress, not only to children but also to everybody (adult men, adult women, youth) who are exposed to the situation. Such a situation affects children in many ways. It removes them from their schools, teachers, and friends. Conflict also destroys schools and limits children's access to learning. Similarly, in conflict situations, children's psycho-social readiness to learn is affected seriously, resulting in poor learning outcomes. These statements indicate that children in the IDP contexts have multiple challenges that have hindered their learning outcomes. The economic, social, and psychological stresses that children are experiencing in the displacement situations have discouraged them from attending school regularly, focusing on their learning activities, and improving their learning outcomes. As a result of the stress at home, children lack intrinsic motivation to learn, even though they regularly attend school.

The second is the very poor learning support in the primary school system in conflict contexts. There is fragmentation in the teaching and learning systems because of scarcities of pedagogic resources, poor school support for children, and teachers' lack of understanding of children's home contexts. The other cause of the problem is teachers' capacity to develop and use effective literacy learning methods and activities. This indicates that teachers need on-the-job capacity development support to develop and utilize effective methods and activities of enhancing students' literacy learning outcomes. Such a primary school environment discourages children's learning engagement and performance. The third is the gap in the early grade language learning materials, including students' textbooks and teachers' guides. The materials are loaded in content and do not give children adequate time to exercise their literacy skills. It is

expected that the contents are organized in such a way that children can learn the five literacy components sequentially, from phonological awareness to comprehension.

The study has clearly demonstrated that indigenous play practices are useful to mitigate gaps in children's literacy skills and enhance their learning outcomes, mainly literacy learning outcomes. This has been evidenced through the treatment that involved the application of indigenous play practices for teaching literacy for early grade children in the displacement contexts. The study shows that there is a significant difference between the pretreatment and post-treatment results, indicating that children's literacy outcomes have been improved significantly. This shows that the treatment has a positive effect on children's literacy status. It helped the children improve their literacy skills in all aspects of the literacy outcomes. Similarly, when compared with the control group, the literacy outcomes of the treatment group have been greater, indicating the effect of the treatment. The difference between the control group and the treatment group is significant in all aspects of literacy, showing that the treatment has a significant effect on children's literacy development. It is clear from the children's literacy outcomes in displacement contexts of Tigray and Oromia that indigenous play practices such as storytelling, riddling, folksongs, make-believe and imitative play practices and oral games are highly relevant for children in fragile contexts because they can help children get relief from tensions, overcome social challenges, create pleasure, develop their vocabulary power, recognize and manipulate individual sounds, understand written words for meaning and context, develop speaking and listening skills and connect them themselves to their local values.

Indigenous play practices help children in conflict situations because they have the power to foster resilience, cultural identity, and social connection, providing safe spaces for healing, emotional regulation, and rebuilding trust. These practices are culturally grounded and bolster children's coping mechanisms, restoring normality and strengthening bonds with their parents and peers. In displacement contexts, such play practices matter a lot because they restore routine and joy into disrupted lives, helping children regain a sense of stability. Indigenous games, songs, and storytelling connect children's cultural background and safeguard them from feelings of fear. It is also clear that indigenous play provides non-verbal outlets for trauma, allowing children to express fear, grief, or hope safely. Doing so, indigenous play practices enhance children's endurance and problem-solving capacity, helping them adapt to unstable environments. They help children cope with trauma, reduce anxiety, rebuild trust, foster peer relationships, manage cultural loss, and release stress. Above all, indigenous play practices enhance interactions among children and between children and teachers, connect home cultural practices to in-school learning activities, help children to recreate their social contexts, and provide them with contextualized literacy development activities.

Recommendations

Based on the results discussed above, the following policy recommendations are forwarded.

Develop Indigenous Play-Based Literacy Learning Materials for Children

The Ministry of Education and regional education bureaus, in collaboration with partners, need to consider the following.

- Produce indigenous play-based literacy development material that helps children develop their literacy skills in their times and spaces.
- Validate and distribute the materials so that all primary school children have access to them.

Collect and Organize of Indigenous Play Practices

Universities and colleges of teacher education, in collaboration with community organizations, need to:

- Identify, collect, and develop indigenous play practices as literacy learning resources for children.
- Allocate human and financial resources for the identification, collection, organization, and development of these play practices is essential.

Integrate Indigenous Plays Practices into Curriculum of Preprimary and Primary Education

The Ministry of Education and the regional education bureaus should implement the following.

- Embed indigenous storytelling, riddles, songs, and games into primary literacy subjects of primary schools.
- Produce indigenous play-based teacher guides that help teachers link play activities to literacy competencies.

Integrate Indigenous Knowledge into Pre-service Teacher Training Program

The Ministry of Education, regional education bureaus, and colleges of teacher education should consider the following.

- Train teacher educators to employ indigenous plays as teaching methods and activities
- Train early-grade teachers to have the capacity to facilitate indigenous play as a literacy tool.

- Encourage co-teaching with elders and community members to sustain indigenous play practices.

Implement Short-Term In-Service Capacity Development Training for Teachers

The regional education bureaus need to do the following.

- Develop a short-term training manual for using indigenous play-based literacy development
- Provide capacity development training for teachers in the utilization of the indigenous play practices for teaching literacy.

Implement Community Engagement for Children's Literacy Development

Pre-primary and primary schools need to implement the following.

- Partner with families and local leaders to co-create literacy-rich play environments.
- Establish "story corners" and play events in schools where children engage with oral play practices.

Monitoring & Evaluating Literacy Gains

The Ministry of Education and the regional education bureaus should:

- Develop indicators for measuring literacy gains from indigenous play (e.g., vocabulary growth, narrative skills).
- Pilot programs in diverse regions to assess scalability.

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