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## KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN PREPARING LEARNERS' SCHOOL READINESS: ACADEMIC, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored the strategies employed by kindergarten teachers in preparing learners' school readiness in terms of academic, social, and emotional domains. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, data were gathered from kindergarten teachers in the 2nd Congressional District of the Province of Cotabato. Findings revealed that teachers utilize play-based and hands-on learning, foundational literacy and numeracy instruction, differentiated teaching, and structured classroom routines to enhance academic readiness. For social and emotional readiness, strategies such as emotion recognition activities, role-playing, social-emotional learning (SEL), and teacher modeling were applied. Teachers also used various assessment methods, including observational, informal, and standardized tools such as ECCD checklists, to address diverse learner needs. The study found that a safe, structured, and supportive classroom environment plays a crucial role in promoting holistic development. Overall, the research concludes that effective, adaptive, and child-centered strategies significantly contribute to learners' readiness for formal schooling.

### INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten education serves as a critical foundation for young learners, acting as a bridge between home and formal schooling. At this stage, children develop essential academic, social, and emotional skills necessary for success in elementary education. School readiness is a key concept that involves a child's ability to meet academic demands, interact socially, and regulate emotions effectively. However, disparities in early childhood education quality, limited access to resources, and varying socio-economic conditions contribute to differences in readiness levels among children. Additionally, teachers often face challenges due to

insufficient training and lack of awareness regarding developmental needs. This study aims to explore the strategies used by kindergarten teachers in preparing learners' school readiness, focusing on academic, social, and emotional aspects, as well as identifying how teachers adapt their methods to meet diverse learner needs.

## **METHODS**

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to capture the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in preparing learners for school readiness. The research was conducted in the 2nd Congressional District of the Province of Cotabato, including municipalities such as Antipas, Arakan, Magpet, President Roxas, and Makilala. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, consisting of kindergarten teachers with at least three years of teaching experience. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, supported by interview guides, audio recordings, and field notes. The researcher served as the primary instrument in gathering and interpreting data. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and emerging themes from the collected data. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data security were strictly observed throughout the study.

## **RESULTS**

The findings revealed that kindergarten teachers employ a variety of effective strategies to enhance learners' academic readiness. These include play-based and hands-on learning activities, which promote engagement, critical thinking, and early literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers also use structured routines, interactive lessons, and differentiated instruction to address individual learning needs. Assessment methods such as observational techniques, informal evaluations, ECCD checklists, and diagnostic tests are used to monitor learners' progress and tailor instruction accordingly.

In terms of social and emotional readiness, teachers implement strategies such as emotion recognition activities, storytelling, role-playing, cooperative games, and SEL integration. These approaches help learners develop empathy, self-regulation, communication skills, and positive relationships with peers. Teacher modeling and consistent classroom routines further support emotional development. Additionally, teachers gather information through multiple sources, including observations, parent communication, and structured assessment tools, to better understand learners' needs.

The study also found that a safe, predictable, and supportive classroom environment plays a significant role in enhancing both academic and socio-emotional development. Such environments foster confidence, reduce anxiety, and encourage active participation among learners.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results highlight the importance of using holistic and child-centered approaches in preparing kindergarten learners for school readiness. The effectiveness of play-based learning and differentiated instruction supports the idea that young children learn best through active engagement and meaningful experiences. The integration of social-emotional learning aligns with theories emphasizing the role of emotional development in academic success. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory underscores the influence of various environmental factors, including family, school, and community, in shaping a child's readiness for school.

Despite the effectiveness of these strategies, the findings suggest the need for continuous teacher training, adequate resources, and stronger home-school collaboration to address existing challenges. The study concludes that kindergarten teachers play a crucial role in fostering holistic development, and their adaptive strategies significantly contribute to learners' preparedness for formal education and lifelong learning.