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Development and Validation of Storied Puppet Plays for Enhancing Cognitive Skills of Kindergarten Pupils

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Abstract

This study developed and validated storied puppet plays designed to enhance the cognitive skills of kindergarten pupils at Pareja Integrated School. It employed a descriptive-evaluative approach with a pretest-posttest component involving 60 kindergarten pupils and expert validation of the developed materials. The storied puppet plays were evaluated in terms of content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and updatedness. Results showed that content obtained an overall weighted mean of 4.80, interpreted as Very Highly Valid, while format and presentation and organization both obtained 4.20, and accuracy and updatedness obtained 4.49, interpreted as Highly Valid. Before the intervention, 66.7% of the pupils demonstrated Low cognitive skills, while 21.7% were Very Low and 11.7% were Moderately High. After exposure, 76.7% attained Very High cognitive skills, while 23.3% attained High cognitive skills. The mean score increased from 6.23 (SD = 1.93) to 17.27 (SD = 1.35), with a significant mean difference of 11.03, $t = -52.236$, $p < .001$. Pupils also rated the intervention Very Effective, with an overall weighted mean of 2.92. The findings demonstrate that the validated storied puppet plays significantly enhanced pupils' cognitive skills while generating favorable learner reactions.

Keywords: Cognitive Skills, Instructional Materials, Kindergarten Pupils, Puppet Plays, Storytelling

Introduction

Early childhood is a critical stage in human development, during which children acquire the cognitive, social and emotional development of kindergarten pupils is as essential as their academic growth. Among the different areas of development is particularly significant because it enables cognitive development is particularly significant because it enables children to think, understand, remember, solve problems, make decisions, and learn from everyday experiences. As children enter in kindergarten, they begin to explore their surroundings more actively, making it essential for teachers to provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences that nurture these cognitive abilities.

The need to strengthen cognitive skills is particularly evident in early childhood classrooms. The Department of Education (DepEd) promotes a play-based and child-centered approach in Kindergarten

Program. This approach acknowledges that young children learn best through play, exploration, interaction, and hands-on experiences rather than through traditional lecture-based instruction. Activities such as storytelling, singing, role-playing, games, and creative play help children become active participants in the learning process while developing their thinking skills in enjoyable and meaningful ways.

Despite these efforts, many kindergarten pupils continue to experience difficulties in developing essential cognitive skills. Some struggle to identify colors, recognize letters, classify objects, recall important details from stories, follow directions, distinguish similarities and differences, or predict what might happen next in a story. These skills are fundamental to children's readiness for formal schooling, and delays in their development may affect future learning

The need to strengthen cognitive and social-emotional skills is particularly evident in early childhood classrooms. Teachers are often tasked with addressing both academic competencies and developmental needs within limited instructional time. A regional study on early childhood development reported that 30% of kindergarten pupils had trouble in cooperative play and sharing (Department of Education, 2024). These findings indicate a developmental gap that warrants targeted intervention, as early social-emotional competence is closely associated with later academic achievement and overall well-being.

Storytelling and puppet play present developmentally appropriate strategies for addressing this concern. Grounded in play-based learning principles, these approaches provide children with structured opportunities to engage in imaginative and symbolic experiences. Through storytelling and guided puppet interactions, pupils can explore social situations, practice communication, and develop empathy within a supportive classroom setting (Erikson, 2021). Puppets serve as mediating tools that allow children to express thoughts and emotions in a safe and structured manner, thereby promoting positive social behaviors.

Despite their potential benefits, storytelling and puppet play remain underutilized in some early childhood classrooms. Traditional didactic methods are still commonly employed in teaching social behaviors, which may not fully align with the developmental characteristics of young learners. Teachers have also reported limited training and insufficient resources to implement structured play-based strategies effectively (Schoenfeld, 2021). As a result, opportunities to systematically enhance pupils' social-emotional skills through interactive and imaginative approaches may not be maximized.

Within the specific context of Pareja Integrated School, the researcher has observed a persistent challenge among kindergarten pupils regarding social interaction and emotional regulation. Despite the implementation of the standard curriculum, learners frequently have difficulty navigating peer-to-peer conflicts, which often result in social withdrawal or aggressive behavior during free-play periods. This gap is characterized by a lack of experiential tools that allow learners to 'rehearse social scenarios. At Pareja Integrated School, where classroom resources for socio-emotional enrichment are often limited to traditional storytelling, there is a vital need for a more interactive intervention. Consequently, this study introduces storytelling and puppet play as targeted strategies to provide these specific learners with a safe, symbolic medium for practicing empathy and communication, ensuring they meet the developmental milestones necessary for their transition to higher grade levels.

In response to this need, the present study investigates the efficacy of storytelling and puppet play in developing the socio-emotional skills of kindergarten pupils. By implementing a structured intervention and measuring changes in pupils' skills before and after exposure, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these strategies. The findings aim to inform classroom practices, support curriculum planning, and contribute to the growing body of research on play-based approaches in early childhood

education. Ultimately, the study aims to strengthen foundational socio-emotional competencies essential for young learners' holistic development.

Review of Related Studies

This section reviews recent literature and empirical studies relevant to storytelling, puppet play, play-based learning, and the development of social-emotional skills in early childhood.

Storytelling has long been recognized as a powerful tool in early childhood education, particularly in enhancing the cognitive development of kindergarten learners. It allows young children to enter imaginative narrative worlds where they can develop thinking skills such as comprehension, sequencing, problem-solving, and memory. Through structured storytelling experiences, learners are exposed to situations that require interpretation, prediction, and logical reasoning, which support the development of higher-order cognitive processes and meaningful learning.

In a study on storytelling as a pedagogical tool for young learners, Benabbes (2024) found that both oral and digital storytelling contribute to children's ability to process information, understand sequences, and interpret meaning within a given context. The study involved early childhood learners and highlighted that narratives help children organize thoughts, enhance language comprehension, and develop cognitive flexibility. These findings emphasize that storytelling strengthens both language and cognitive development in kindergarten settings.

Another study investigated the use of digital storytelling combined with group discussion among young learners. Zarifsanaiey (2022) reported that children exposed to structured storytelling activities demonstrated significant improvements in comprehension, critical thinking, and reflective abilities. Conducted using a quasi-experimental design, the study showed that guided discussions enabled learners to process information more deeply and make meaningful connections, thereby enhancing cognitive engagement.

Guided storytelling sessions were also explored in relation to children's thinking and learning processes. In Tillott's (2024) study, learners who engage in structured story discussions develop the ability to analyze situations, recall information, and apply learned concepts to real-life contexts. The participants, composed of young learners, demonstrated improved cognitive organization and reasoning skills as a result of reflective dialogue integrated into storytelling activities.

Another classroom-based study examined the integration of storytelling and role-play among young learners. The findings revealed that such approaches enhance cognitive skills, including problem-solving, sequencing, and comprehension, while also promoting active participation in learning (Hosokawa et al., 2024). Conducted in a school setting with early childhood pupils, the study stressed that storytelling, when combined with interactive activities, supports cognitive development by encouraging learners to think critically and engage meaningfully with content.

Digital storytelling has emerged as an innovative instructional approach that supports the cognitive development of kindergarten learners by integrating images, narration, and interactive elements. This multimodal strategy enhances learners' engagement and enables them to process information more effectively by combining visual and auditory stimuli. Through immersive digital narratives, young learners can improve comprehension, sequencing skills, and critical thinking as they interpret and derive meaning from story content.

In a study exploring digital storytelling as a pedagogical approach, Zarifsanaiey (2022) found that integrating multimedia elements into storytelling improves learners' ability to understand concepts, organize ideas, and engage in reflective thinking. Conducted with students using a structured instructional design, the study found that digital storytelling enhances cognitive processing by enabling learners to actively engage with content and construct meaning through guided activities.

Another investigation on technology-supported storytelling emphasized the role of well-designed digital narratives in enhancing learners' thinking skills. Reports from the Digital Wellness Lab (2025) revealed that when digital storytelling is carefully facilitated by adults, learners demonstrate improved attention, comprehension, and reflective thinking. The study further stressed that adult guidance plays a significant role in helping young learners process information, thereby maximizing cognitive outcomes.

In a study of training teachers in digital storytelling practices, Li (2025) found that kindergarten teachers who underwent professional development effectively integrated digital storytelling into classroom instruction. The study involved early childhood educators and found that teacher preparedness contributes to better content delivery, resulting in improved learner engagement, comprehension, and cognitive skill development. This underscores the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary skills to implement technology-enhanced instructional strategies.

Another study compared digital and traditional storytelling approaches among young learners. The findings revealed that children exposed to digital storytelling demonstrated higher levels of understanding, recall, and engagement with story content compared to those exposed to traditional methods (Early Empathy Study, 2024). Conducted with early childhood learners, the study emphasized that technology-enhanced storytelling provides dynamic learning experiences that support cognitive development, particularly in memory, comprehension, and information processing.

Puppet play is widely recognized as an effective instructional strategy that supports the cognitive development of kindergarten learners by providing opportunities for active engagement, imagination, and symbolic thinking. Through puppetry, young learners can represent ideas, sequence events, and express their understanding in a concrete and meaningful way. This interactive approach allows children to process information, develop language skills, and enhance comprehension as they participate in guided role-playing and storytelling activities.

In a study on puppetry as an instructional medium for young learners, Umezawa and Arakaki (2024) found that puppet play provides a safe and engaging environment in which children can project their ideas and thoughts onto puppet characters. The study highlighted that this distancing effect enables learners to explore concepts, organize their thinking, and communicate more effectively, thereby supporting cognitive development, including idea formation and verbal expression.

Another investigation reviewed the educational and therapeutic applications of puppetry. Abu-Ras et al. (2025) found that puppet-based interventions facilitate children's ability to express ideas, participate in discussions, and process information more confidently. The review emphasized that puppetry encourages active engagement and supports cognitive functions, including language development, comprehension, and reasoning, among young learners.

A quasi-experimental study examined the use of puppet play among children with cochlear implants. Rezaei Dehnavi et al. (2025) reported that structured puppet activities led to significant improvements in communication, understanding, and interaction. Conducted among children with specific learning needs, the study demonstrated that puppetry enhances cognitive skills by strengthening comprehension, attention, and the ability to organize and express thoughts.

Another study explored the use of puppetry in special education settings. Findings revealed that regular puppet-based activities improved learners' participation, communication, and ability to articulate ideas, which are essential components of cognitive development (Mastrothanasis et al., 2025). Conducted through qualitative inquiry, the study highlighted the versatility of puppetry in promoting thinking skills and meaningful learning across diverse educational contexts.

The effectiveness of storytelling and puppet play as cognitive tools is also influenced by the role of teacher mediation and the quality of implementation. In a study conducted on instructional scaffolding, Roussell (2024) found that guided questioning and reflective dialogue significantly enhance learners' comprehension and critical thinking. The study emphasized that when teachers actively facilitate learning, children move beyond passive listening toward deeper cognitive engagement.

Another study investigated teachers' perceptions of puppet use in classroom instruction. Timmins (2024) reported that educators observed increased learner participation, attention, and understanding when puppets were integrated into teaching. However, the study also identified time constraints and limited resources as challenges, highlighting the need for institutional support to sustain effective implementation.

In the study conducted on play-based learning strategies in kindergarten classrooms, Hennen (2023) found that structured dramatization and storytelling improve learners' engagement, comprehension, and cooperative learning. The participants, who were kindergarten pupils, demonstrated enhanced cognitive skills when teachers confidently implemented play-based approaches, underscoring the importance of teacher readiness.

Another study examined the role of implementation quality in storytelling-based instruction. The findings revealed that storytelling alone is insufficient to produce meaningful learning outcomes unless accompanied by guided interaction and reflective discussion (Stoetzel et al., 2024). The study stressed that structured, well-facilitated activities are essential for promoting higher-order thinking skills, thereby reinforcing the need for carefully designed instructional materials, such as storied puppet plays.

A study conducted on puppet theatre among preschool learners revealed that structured puppet-based activities contribute to the development of children's thinking and interaction skills. The "Impact of Puppet Theatre Among Preschoolers" project (2024) found that learners exposed to organized puppet theatre programs demonstrated improved participation, engagement, and ability to follow sequences of events during play. Conducted among preschool children, the study emphasized that puppet theatre supports cognitive processes such as comprehension, organization of ideas, and collaborative learning, which are essential in early childhood development.

Another study presented in the EUDL Proceedings (2023) investigated the use of guided storytelling interventions among young learners. The findings revealed that narrative-based activities help children understand concepts, organize information, and interpret situations through repeated exposure to structured stories. Conducted with early childhood learners, the study found that storytelling enhances cognitive skills such as memory, comprehension, and perspective-taking, making it an effective instructional approach for developing young learners' thinking abilities.

Collectively, the reviewed literature affirmed that storytelling and puppet play are developmentally appropriate, interactive, and effective approaches for enhancing the cognitive skills of kindergarten pupils. Theoretical and empirical studies consistently demonstrate improvements in comprehension, memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking through structured narrative and play-based activities. Moreover, the quality of implementation and the role of teacher mediation emerge as critical factors in maximizing learning outcomes.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Cognitive Development, Theory of Jean Piaget (1952) and the Sociocultural Theory of Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory (1978), which posits that children's learning and development occur through social interaction and collaborative engagement. Vygotsky emphasized that cognitive and social growth are mediated by language, dialogue, and shared activities within a cultural context. In early childhood, play serves as a primary vehicle for development, enabling children to internalize social norms and practice meaningful interactions. Storytelling and puppet play align with the theory by creating structured social situations in which children participate in dialogue, role playing and cooperative activities. Through guided interaction during storytelling sessions and puppet dramatization, kindergarten pupils engaged in shared meaning-making activities that provides empathy communications and cooperation- core components of cognitive development.

Furthermore, the study is supported by Daniel Goleman's Theory of emotional Intelligence (1995) which underscore the importance of recognizing, understanding, and managing emotions in oneself and others. Storytelling exposes children to characters experiencing a range of emotions, while puppet play allows them to reenact scenarios that require emotional interpretation and response. Through guided reflection and interaction, pupils practice identifying feelings, managing emotional reactions, and responding appropriately to peers, thereby enhancing their emotional competence.

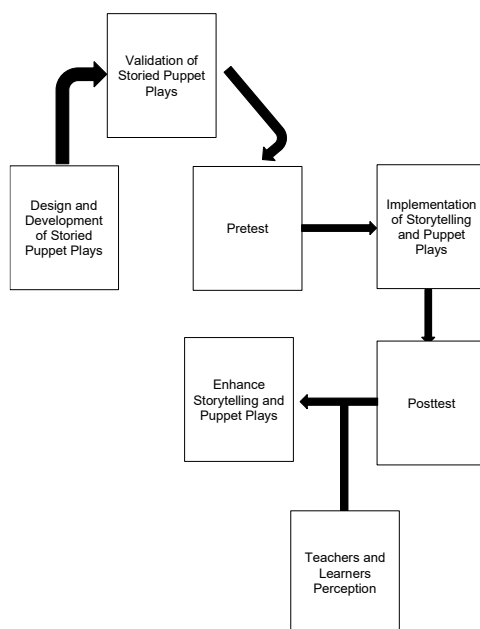
Collectively, Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory and Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory provide a coherent foundation for examining the effects of storytelling and puppet play on the socio-emotional skills of kindergarten pupils. These frameworks converge in emphasizing the role of interactive, imaginative, and socially mediated experiences in shaping children's development. By grounding the study in these theories, the research highlights the theoretical justification for employing storytelling and puppet play as structured interventions to foster empathy, cooperation, communication, and emotional regulation among young learners.

The research paradigm of the study was grounded in the principles of Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory and Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory, both of which emphasized that learning occurred through social interaction, guided experiences, and emotional understanding. The process began with the design and development of storied puppet plays that served as socially mediated learning tools aligned with Vygotsky's view that children learned best through interaction and play. These materials were then subjected to expert validation to ensure that they were developmentally appropriate and capable of promoting meaningful social and emotional engagement among learners.

After validation, a pretest was administered to determine the learners' initial level of socio-emotional skills. This was followed by the implementation of storytelling and puppet play, where pupils engaged in guided interaction, role-playing, and expressive communication. This stage reflected Vygotsky's emphasis on collaborative learning and scaffolding, as well as Goleman's focus on developing emotional awareness, empathy, and self-regulation. Upon completion of the intervention, a posttest was conducted to measure changes in socio-emotional competencies. In addition, teachers' and learners' perceptions were gathered to provide further insights into the intervention's effectiveness and relevance. The results obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data were then used to enhance the storytelling and puppet play program, making it more responsive to the developmental needs of kindergarten pupils.

The theories of Vygotsky and Goleman were most evident during the implementation phase of the study, where learning became both a social and emotional process. Through storytelling and puppet interactions, pupils engaged in meaningful social exchanges that reflected Vygotsky's concept of learning in

social contexts, particularly through guided support or scaffolding. At the same time, Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory was applied as pupils recognized and interpreted emotions, expressed their own feelings, and practiced appropriate social behaviors such as empathy, cooperation, and self-regulation. In this way, the intervention operationalized both theories by translating abstract concepts of social interaction and emotional development into observable and measurable classroom practices.



Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to design, develop, and validate storied puppet plays as an instructional material for enhancing the cognitive skills of kindergarten pupils. Specifically, it sought to: (1) design and develop storied puppet plays appropriate for kindergarten pupils; (2) determine the experts' evaluation of the developed storied puppet plays in terms of content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and up-to-datedness of information; (3) determine the level of cognitive skills of kindergarten pupils before and after exposure to the storied puppet plays; (4) determine whether a significant difference exists between the pupils' cognitive skills before and after exposure to the storied puppet plays; (5) determine the reactions of teachers and kindergarten pupils to the developed storied puppet plays; and (6) enhance the storied puppet plays based on the findings of the study.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive-evaluative research design to develop, validate, and determine the effectiveness of storied puppet plays in enhancing the cognitive skills of kindergarten pupils at Pareja Integrated School, Butuan City, during School Year 2026–2027. All kindergarten pupils were included through an intact-group approach. A researcher-made and expert-validated pretest-posttest assessment measured cognitive skills in matching, identifying similarities and differences, following directions, predicting outcomes, and classifying objects, while evaluation instruments assessed the quality of the developed materials and participants' reactions. Following parental consent, the pupils completed a pretest, participated in structured storied puppet play sessions, and subsequently completed a posttest. Weighted mean was used to analyze

expert evaluations and participants' reactions, while a paired-samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance determined differences between pretest and posttest cognitive skill scores. The findings served as the basis for enhancing the developed storied puppet plays.

Results and Discussion

Problem 1. How may storied puppet plays be designed and developed for kindergarten pupils?

Identification of the Target Cognitive Skills. The design and development of the storied puppet plays began with the identification of cognitive skills appropriate for kindergarten pupils, including matching objects and colors, matching uppercase and lowercase letters, identifying similarities and differences, following directions, predicting outcomes, and classifying objects. These skills provided the instructional direction for developing the stories and ensured that each play addressed specific learning objectives appropriate to the pupils' developmental level. This step addressed the content criterion by ensuring that the objectives, story content, activities, and expected pupil responses were aligned with the cognitive skills intended to be developed.

Selection of Developmentally Appropriate Story Themes. Developmentally appropriate themes were selected to provide meaningful contexts for the storied puppet plays, using familiar settings such as the home, school, market, farm, community, and Filipino celebrations. Characters such as children, animals, family members, and community helpers were incorporated to make the stories relatable to the experiences of kindergarten pupils. This step addressed the content and accuracy and updatedness criteria by ensuring that the themes, characters, examples, and situations were appropriate to the pupils' age, developmental level, and everyday experiences.

Integration of Cognitive Skills into the Stories. The identified cognitive skills were integrated into situations within the stories that required pupils to observe, remember, compare, predict, follow directions, identify relationships, or classify objects. Instead of presenting these skills as separate exercises, the cognitive tasks were incorporated naturally into the events and interactions of the puppet characters. This step addressed the content and presentation and organization criteria by ensuring that the cognitive activities were connected to the learning objectives and appropriately positioned within the narrative.

Development of Puppet Characters and Supporting Materials. Puppet characters and supporting instructional materials were developed to complement the stories and facilitate the cognitive activities presented during the plays. Colorful, safe, durable, and visually distinct puppets were prepared together with picture cards, letter cards, color cards, objects, and other manipulatives required for pupil participation. This step addressed the format and presentation and organization criteria by ensuring that the materials were child-friendly, recognizable, manageable, and supportive of the intended learning experiences.

Writing of the Story Scripts. The story scripts were developed using a consistent structure consisting of the title, learning objectives, target cognitive skills, characters, setting, props or materials, dialogue, interactive activities, and closing activity. This structure provided teachers with a clear sequence for preparing and implementing each storied puppet play while maintaining the connection between the narrative and its instructional purpose. This step addressed the format and presentation and organization criteria by ensuring that the components of each play were logically arranged, clearly presented, and practical for classroom implementation.

Incorporation of Pupil Participation. Pupil participation was incorporated into the storied puppet plays through questions and activities that required learners to identify, match, classify, predict, point, select,

arrange, or demonstrate actions. These interactive opportunities transformed the puppet plays from passive storytelling activities into participatory learning experiences where pupils could demonstrate the targeted cognitive skills. This step addressed the content and presentation and organization criteria by ensuring that the questions and activities were appropriately integrated into the story and directly connected to the intended cognitive outcomes.

Alignment with the Kindergarten Curriculum. The content, language, activities, and cognitive demands of the storied puppet plays were aligned with the competencies and developmental expectations of the Kindergarten curriculum. Learning through play, interaction, storytelling, and concrete experiences guided the selection and organization of the instructional activities included in each play. This step addressed the content and accuracy and updatedness criteria by ensuring that the developed materials were relevant to the curriculum, appropriate to the pupils' developmental level, and consistent with kindergarten learning expectations.

Preparation and Review of the Initial Prototype. The stories, puppet characters, activities, and supporting materials were assembled into an initial prototype consisting of storied puppet plays that emphasized one or more target cognitive skills. Each prototype was reviewed in terms of clarity, sequence, length, materials, developmental appropriateness, and consistency of the different components before undergoing formal evaluation. This step addressed the format and presentation and organization criteria by ensuring that each play followed a logical sequence and could be implemented conveniently within the kindergarten classroom.

Expert Validation of the Storied Puppet Plays. The initial storied puppet plays were submitted to qualified evaluators to determine their validity and suitability for kindergarten pupils based on the established evaluation criteria. The experts assessed the materials in terms of content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and updatedness, providing a systematic basis for determining the strengths and areas requiring improvement. This step ensured that the design and development decisions were subjected to expert judgment before the storied puppet plays were finalized for classroom use.

Revision and Finalization of the Storied Puppet Plays. The ratings, comments, and recommendations of the expert validators were analyzed and used as bases for revising the instructions, dialogue, activities, illustrations, cognitive tasks, and other components of the storied puppet plays. The revised materials were subjected to a try-out with kindergarten pupils to determine their suitability in an actual learning setting before the final version was prepared. Through this process, concerns related to content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and updatedness were addressed, resulting in validated storied puppet plays appropriate for enhancing the cognitive skills of kindergarten pupils.

Problem 2. How may experts evaluate the storied puppet plays in terms of content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and up-to-datedness of information?

Table 1. Experts' Evaluation of the Storied Puppet Plays

Criteria	Wtd mean	Interpretation
Content		
1. The story objectives are aligned with the cognitive skills being developed.	4.80	Very Highly Valid
2. The content is suitable for kindergarten pupils.	4.40	Highly Valid
3. The story promotes cognitive development through meaningful activities.	4.60	

		Very Highly Valid
4. The characters and situations are relevant to children's experiences.	4.00	Highly Valid
Overall Weighted Mean	4.80	Very Highly Valid
Format		
1. The puppet play follows a clear story structure.	4.40	Highly Valid
2. Language used is appropriate for kindergarten pupils.	4.00	Highly Valid
3. The dialogues are simple and understandable.	4.40	Highly Valid
4. The length of the story is appropriate for young learners.	4.60	Very Highly Valid
5. The puppet play format is easy for teachers to implement.	4.40	Highly Valid
Overall Weighted Mean	4.20	Highly Valid
Presentation and Organization		
1. Events are presented in logical sequence.	4.75	Very Highly Valid
2. The beginning, middle, and ending are clearly organized.	4.49	Highly Valid
3. Story transitions are smooth and coherent.	4.80	Very Highly Valid
4. Activities and questions are properly integrated into the story.	4.80	Very Highly Valid
5. The story maintains children's interest and engagement	4.80	Very Highly Valid
Overall Weighted Mean	4.20	Highly Valid
Accuracy and Updatedness		
1. Information presented in the story is accurate.	4.60	Very Highly Valid
2. Concepts are developmentally appropriate for kindergarten pupils.	4.80	Very Highly Valid
3. The story reflects current ECCD standards and competencies.	4.40	Highly Valid
4. Examples and situations are realistic and relevant to present-day learners.	4.60	Very Highly Valid
5. Learning concepts are free from misconceptions and errors.	4.00	Highly Valid
Overall Weighted Mean	4.49	Highly Valid

Legend: 1.00-1.49-Not Valid; 1.50-2.49-Slightly Valid; 2.50-3.49-Valid; 3.50-4.49-Highly Valid; 4.50-5.00-Very Highly Valid

Table 1 presents the experts' evaluation of the storied puppet plays in terms of content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and updatedness. Based on the reported overall weighted means, content obtained 4.80, interpreted as Very Highly Valid, while format and presentation and organization both obtained 4.20, and accuracy and updatedness obtained 4.49, all interpreted as Highly Valid. These findings indicate that the experts generally considered the developed storied puppet plays appropriate instructional materials for kindergarten pupils, particularly in terms of their instructional content, organization, developmental suitability, and potential to support cognitive learning.

In terms of content, the alignment of the story objectives with the cognitive skills being developed obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.80, interpreted as Very Highly Valid, followed by the promotion of cognitive development through meaningful activities at 4.60, likewise interpreted as Very Highly Valid. These findings indicate that the content of the storied puppet plays was strongly connected with the intended

cognitive competencies and provided purposeful activities through which kindergarten pupils could practice thinking and information-processing skills. This finding is supported by Benabbes (2024), who found that storytelling helps young learners process information, understand sequences, interpret meaning, organize thoughts, and develop cognitive flexibility. Similarly, Hosokawa et al. (2024) reported that combining storytelling with interactive activities promotes problem-solving, sequencing, comprehension, and meaningful engagement, supporting the experts' favorable assessment of the cognitive content embedded in the storied puppet plays.

On the other hand, the relevance of the characters and situations to children's experiences obtained the lowest weighted mean of 4.00, although it remained Highly Valid. This suggests that the characters and situations were generally considered appropriate but could still be strengthened by incorporating experiences, settings, and situations that are more immediately familiar to kindergarten pupils. Tillott (2024) provides relevant support for this interpretation by emphasizing that structured story discussions help young learners analyze situations, recall information, and apply learned concepts to real-life contexts. This suggests that making characters and situations more closely connected with children's actual experiences may further facilitate the transfer of concepts from the stories to meaningful real-life understanding.

For format, the appropriateness of the story length for young learners received the highest weighted mean of 4.60, interpreted as Very Highly Valid, while the clear story structure, understandable dialogues, and ease of implementation by teachers each obtained 4.40, interpreted as Highly Valid. These results indicate that the format of the storied puppet plays was generally manageable for young learners and practical for classroom implementation. Stoetzel et al. (2024) support this finding by emphasizing that storytelling is most effective when activities are structured and carefully facilitated rather than presented as passive narratives. Their finding reinforces the importance of having clearly designed instructional materials with manageable sequences, activities, and opportunities for guided interaction.

The favorable evaluation of the format is also consistent with Hennen (2023), who found that structured dramatization and storytelling improved kindergarten pupils' engagement and comprehension when teachers confidently implemented play-based approaches. This suggests that an instructional format that teachers can easily understand and implement is important because the effectiveness of play-based instruction depends partly on the quality and consistency of its classroom delivery. Thus, the experts' favorable evaluation of the format indicates that the developed materials possess features that can facilitate organized and purposeful implementation.

On the other hand, the appropriateness of the language used for kindergarten pupils obtained the lowest weighted mean of 4.00, although it was still interpreted as Highly Valid. This implies that the language used in the materials was generally acceptable but may still be simplified to make words, expressions, instructions, and dialogues more accessible to young learners. Umezawa and Arakaki (2024) found that puppetry creates an engaging environment in which children can organize their thoughts and communicate their understanding through puppet characters, underscoring the importance of language that young learners can easily comprehend and use during interaction. Simplifying the language where necessary may therefore strengthen pupils' understanding and facilitate more active participation in the puppet-play activities.

In terms of presentation and organization, smooth and coherent story transitions, proper integration of activities and questions, and maintenance of children's interest and engagement obtained the highest weighted means of 4.80, all interpreted as Very Highly Valid. The logical sequencing of events likewise received a very favorable evaluation of 4.75, interpreted as Very Highly Valid. These results indicate that the storied

puppet plays were presented in an organized and interactive manner that allowed instructional activities to occur naturally within the development of the stories.

This finding is strongly supported by Roussell (2024), who found that guided questioning and reflective dialogue enhance learners' comprehension and critical thinking by moving children beyond passive listening toward deeper cognitive engagement. The proper integration of questions and activities within the storied puppet plays therefore appears consistent with instructional practices that promote active thinking rather than simple story listening. Zarifsanaiey (2022) similarly reported that structured storytelling combined with guided discussion enables learners to process information more deeply and make meaningful connections, further supporting the high evaluation given to the integration of activities and questions within the stories.

The very high rating for maintaining children's interest and engagement is also supported by Timmins (2024), who reported increased learner participation, attention, and understanding when puppets were incorporated into classroom instruction. Likewise, Abu-Ras et al. (2025) found that puppet-based interventions encourage active engagement while supporting language development, comprehension, and reasoning. These findings suggest that the engaging presentation of the storied puppet plays is not merely an aesthetic feature but an important instructional characteristic that can sustain pupils' attention and create opportunities for cognitive participation.

On the other hand, the clear organization of the beginning, middle, and ending obtained the lowest weighted mean of 4.49 within presentation and organization, although it remained Highly Valid. This suggests that the general structure of the stories was acceptable but that the boundaries among the different stages of the narrative could still be made more evident to young learners. The EU DL Proceedings (2023) reported that repeated exposure to structured stories assists young learners in understanding concepts, organizing information, and interpreting situations. This supports the importance of maintaining a clearly organized narrative sequence because young learners benefit when information is presented within an understandable and predictable structure.

With respect to accuracy and updatedness, the developmental appropriateness of the concepts obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.80, interpreted as Very Highly Valid, followed by the accuracy of the information and the realism and relevance of examples and situations, both with weighted means of 4.60 and interpreted as Very Highly Valid. These findings indicate that the concepts incorporated into the stories were perceived by the experts as appropriate to the developmental capabilities of kindergarten pupils and sufficiently relevant to their learning experiences. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 generally supports the importance of age-appropriate and meaningful storytelling experiences, with Benabbes (2024) emphasizing the role of narratives in strengthening information processing, sequencing, language comprehension, and cognitive flexibility among young children.

The developmental appropriateness of the materials is further supported by Rezaei Dehnavi et al. (2025), who found that structured puppet activities can strengthen comprehension, attention, communication, and the ability to organize and express thoughts among children. Similarly, Umezawa and Arakaki (2024) explained that puppetry provides young learners with a concrete and engaging means of exploring concepts and expressing ideas. These findings support the experts' assessment that appropriately designed puppet activities can correspond with the cognitive and communicative characteristics of young learners.

On the other hand, the indicator stating that learning concepts were free from misconceptions and errors obtained the lowest weighted mean of 4.00, although it remained Highly Valid. The reviewed literature

in Chapter 2 does not directly examine the factual accuracy or freedom from misconceptions of the developed materials; therefore, it cannot be used as direct empirical evidence for this particular validation criterion. Nevertheless, Stoetzel et al. (2024) stressed that meaningful learning through storytelling requires carefully designed and well-facilitated instructional materials, suggesting the importance of continued review and refinement of the concepts presented in the stories. The comparatively lower rating therefore provides a reasonable basis for carefully reviewing the instructional content to ensure clarity, correctness, and consistency before continued classroom implementation.

Overall, the experts' evaluation indicates that the storied puppet plays demonstrated favorable qualities across content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and updatedness. This overall finding is consistent with the synthesis of Chapter 2, which established that storytelling and puppet play are developmentally appropriate and interactive approaches capable of strengthening comprehension, memory, problem-solving, critical thinking, participation, and other cognitive processes among young learners. The reviewed literature likewise emphasizes that the benefits of these approaches depend substantially on careful instructional design, meaningful interaction, structured implementation, and effective teacher mediation; hence, the favorable expert validation provides further support for the suitability of the developed storied puppet plays as instructional materials for kindergarten pupils.

Problem 3. What is the level of cognitive skills of the kindergarten pupils before and after being exposed to stories and puppet plays?

Table 2. *Level of Cognitive skills of the Kindergarten learners before and after exposed to storied puppet plays*

Score Ranges	Before Manipulatives		After Manipulative		Descriptive Rating
	f	%	f	%	
17–20	0	0	46	76.7	Very High Cognitive Skills
13–16	0	0	14	23.3	High Cognitive Skills
9–12	7	11.6	0	0	Moderate Cognitive Skills
5–8	40	66.7	0	0	Low Cognitive Skills
0–4	13	21.7	0	0	Very Low Cognitive Skills
<i>Total</i>	60	100.0	60	100.0	

Table 2 presents the level of cognitive skills of the 60 kindergarten learners before and after exposure to the storied puppet plays. Before the intervention, the largest proportion of learners, consisting of 40 or 66.7 percent, obtained scores ranging from 5–8 and were classified as having Low Cognitive Skills, while none reached the High or Very High categories. This distribution indicates that the learners generally demonstrated limited cognitive skills prior to their exposure to the storied puppet plays.

Before the intervention, the next largest group consisted of 13 learners or 21.7 percent who obtained scores ranging from 0–4, corresponding to Very Low Cognitive Skills. Meanwhile, 7 learners or 11.6 percent were within the 9–12 score range and demonstrated Moderate Cognitive Skills, representing the highest cognitive level attained during the pre-intervention assessment. These findings further show that the learners' initial cognitive performance was concentrated primarily within the lower score ranges before the use of the storied puppet plays.

Before exposure, the pupils' cognitive skills were concentrated primarily in the Low category, with 40 pupils or 66.7 percent, while 13 or 21.7 percent were classified as Very Low and only 7 or 11.7 percent reached the Moderately High level. In relation to this initial condition, Benabbes (2024) established that storytelling provides young learners with opportunities to strengthen information processing, sequencing, interpretation, language comprehension, and cognitive flexibility. The literature therefore provides support for the use of structured storytelling experiences as an instructional approach for developing cognitive competencies that may initially be limited among young learners.

After exposure to the storied puppet plays, the distribution shifted considerably, with 46 learners or 76.7 percent obtaining scores ranging from 17–20 and demonstrating Very High Cognitive Skills. The remaining 14 learners or 23.3 percent obtained scores ranging from 13–16 and were classified as having High Cognitive Skills, while no learner remained within the Moderate, Low, or Very Low categories. This pattern reveals a marked improvement in the learners' cognitive skill levels following their exposure to the storied puppet plays.

After exposure, 46 pupils or 76.7 percent attained the Very High level of cognitive skills, representing the largest proportion in the post-intervention assessment. A closely related finding was reported by Zarifsanaiey (2022), whose study showed that learners exposed to structured storytelling activities demonstrated improvements in comprehension, critical thinking, and reflective abilities, particularly when opportunities for guided discussion were incorporated. This literature supports the observed movement of the kindergarten pupils toward the highest cognitive skill category following their exposure to the stories and puppet plays.

On the other hand, the High Cognitive Skills category represented the smaller post-intervention group, with 14 learners or 23.3 percent, compared with the 46 learners or 76.7 percent classified under Very High Cognitive Skills. Although it was the lower of the two post-intervention categories, its interpretation remained High Cognitive Skills and therefore should not be regarded as an unfavorable outcome. More importantly, the absence of learners in the Moderate, Low, and Very Low categories after the intervention demonstrates a substantial upward shift in the distribution of cognitive skill levels.

Overall, the comparison between the before and after results shows a clear movement from predominantly Low and Very Low Cognitive Skills before the intervention to entirely High and Very High Cognitive Skills after exposure to the storied puppet plays. The concentration of 76.7 percent of the learners in the Very High category after the intervention provides descriptive evidence that their cognitive performance improved following the learning experience. Thus, the results suggest that the storied puppet plays provided a promising instructional approach for enhancing the cognitive skills of kindergarten learners, although statistical testing is necessary to determine whether the observed improvement is statistically significant.

The distribution shifted from predominantly Low and Very Low levels before exposure to entirely High and Very High levels after the stories and puppet plays were introduced. Supporting this overall pattern, Hosokawa et al. (2024) found that the integration of storytelling with interactive activities enhanced problem-solving, sequencing, and comprehension while encouraging learners to participate meaningfully in the learning process. This finding reinforces the observed improvement in the present study by showing that combining narratives with interactive experiences can provide a learning environment conducive to the development of cognitive skills among young learners.

Problem 4. Is there a significant difference in the level of cognitive skills of kindergarten pupils before and after exposure to stories and puppet plays?

Table 3. Paired *t*-test between level of cognitive skills before and after exposure to stories and puppet plays

Test	Mean	SD	Correlation	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Interpretation/Remarks
Pretest	6.23	1.93	.553 @ p=.000	11.03	-52.236	.000	Reject H_0	Significant
Posttest	17.27	1.35						

Table 3 shows the result of the paired-samples *t*-test which was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in the level of cognitive skills of the learners before and after the utilization of the storied puppet plays. As shown in Table 4, the mean posttest score ($M = 17.27, SD = 1.35$) was higher than the mean pretest score ($M = 6.23, SD = 1.93$). The mean increase of 11.03 points was statistically significant ($t = 35.04, p < .001$). These results indicate that the utilization of the storied puppet plays was effective in significantly improving the learners' cognitive skills level. Furthermore, the lower standard deviation in the posttest suggests that student performance became slightly more uniform after the intervention.

The posttest obtained the higher mean of 17.27 ($SD = 1.35$), compared with the pretest mean of 6.23 ($SD = 1.93$). Corroborating this improvement, Rezaei Dehnavi et al. (2025) reported that children exposed to structured puppet activities demonstrated significant improvements in understanding, communication, and interaction, with puppetry supporting comprehension, attention, and the organization of thoughts. Their findings lend support to the higher cognitive performance demonstrated by the kindergarten pupils after exposure to the stories and puppet plays.

The pretest recorded the lower mean of 6.23 ($SD = 1.93$), reflecting the pupils' cognitive skill level prior to their exposure to the intervention. In support of the developmental potential of storytelling for learners with emerging cognitive competencies, Benabbes (2024) found that structured narratives help children process information, understand sequences, interpret meaning, organize thoughts, and develop cognitive flexibility. This provides a relevant basis for understanding why exposure to purposeful storytelling activities may contribute to the development of cognitive skills from an initially lower level.

The mean difference of 11.03, with a *t*-value of -52.236 and a *p*-value of .000, resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis and established a significant difference between the pupils' pretest and posttest cognitive skills. Lending further empirical support to this result, Zarifsanaiey (2022) reported that structured storytelling coupled with guided discussion produced significant improvements in comprehension, critical thinking, and reflective abilities by enabling learners to process information and construct meaningful connections. This evidence reinforces the present finding that structured stories and puppet plays can serve as an effective instructional intervention for strengthening cognitive skills among kindergarten pupils.

Problem 5. How do the kindergarten pupils react to the storied puppet plays?

Particulars	Wtd Mean	SD	Interpretation
Did you like the puppet story?	2.92	0.28	Very effective
Did puppet characters were interesting?	2.93	0.25	Very effective
Did you understand the story?	2.92	0.28	Very effective
Did the puppets make you happy?	2.98	0.13	Very effective
Did you pay attention while the teacher was telling the story?	2.98	0.13	Very effective
Would you like to watch another puppet story?	2.98	0.13	Very effective
Did you learn something from the story?	2.95	0.22	Very effective
Overall Weighted Mean	2.92	0.38	Very effective

The table presents the kindergarten pupils' reactions to the storied puppet plays in terms of their interest, understanding, enjoyment, attention, willingness to participate again, and perceived learning. The responses obtained an overall weighted mean of 2.92 with a standard deviation of 0.38, interpreted as Very Effective. This overall result indicates that the pupils reacted very favorably to the storied puppet plays and that the approach was able to generate positive responses during the learning experience.

The most favorable reactions were observed in the pupils' happiness, attention during storytelling, and willingness to watch another puppet story, with each indicator obtaining the highest weighted mean of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 0.13, interpreted as Very Effective. These results suggest that the storied puppet plays provided an enjoyable experience, sustained the pupils' attention, and generated continued interest in participating in similar learning activities. The consistently low standard deviations further indicate that the pupils shared relatively similar positive reactions toward these aspects of the experience.

Learning from the story also received a notably high weighted mean of 2.95 with a standard deviation of 0.22, followed by interest in the puppet characters at 2.93 with a standard deviation of 0.25, both interpreted as Very Effective. This pattern indicates that the pupils' positive reactions extended beyond enjoyment because they also perceived that they gained something from the stories and found the puppet characters engaging. The results therefore show that the storied puppet plays combined affective engagement with a perceived learning experience among the kindergarten pupils.

The indicators concerning whether the puppets made the pupils happy, whether they paid attention while the teacher was telling the story, and whether they would like to watch another puppet story obtained the highest weighted mean of 2.98 (SD = 0.13), interpreted as Very Effective. Providing empirical support for these highly favorable reactions, Timmins (2024) reported that the integration of puppets into classroom instruction resulted in increased learner participation, attention, and understanding. This supports the finding that the storied puppet plays were able to capture the pupils' attention while creating an enjoyable experience that encouraged their continued interest in similar activities.

On the other hand, liking the puppet story and understanding the story obtained the lowest weighted means of 2.92, with standard deviations of 0.28, yet both were still interpreted as Very Effective. Their position as the lowest-rated indicators should therefore not be considered a negative reaction, since the ratings remained within the highest descriptive category. Instead, the findings indicate that pupils continued to

respond positively to the stories in terms of both enjoyment and comprehension despite slight variations in their responses.

Liking the puppet story and understanding the story both obtained the lowest weighted mean of 2.92 ($SD = 0.28$), although both remained within the Very Effective interpretation. Relevant to this result, Umezawa and Arakaki (2024) found that puppetry provides children with an engaging environment where they can explore concepts, organize their thinking, and communicate their understanding through interactions with puppet characters. Their findings support the positive ratings for enjoyment and understanding while reinforcing that being the lowest-rated indicators does not imply an unfavorable pupil reaction.

Overall, the consistently Very Effective ratings demonstrate that the kindergarten pupils reacted positively to the storied puppet plays across all indicators assessed. Their strongest reactions were reflected in happiness, sustained attention, and willingness to experience another puppet story, while even the lowest-rated aspects remained Very Effective. These findings imply that the storied puppet plays were well received by the pupils as an engaging, enjoyable, understandable, and learning-oriented classroom experience.

The pupils' reactions obtained an overall weighted mean of 2.92 ($SD = 0.38$), interpreted as Very Effective, demonstrating a generally favorable response to the storied puppet plays. In harmony with this overall finding, Hennen (2023) found that structured dramatization and storytelling improved kindergarten pupils' engagement and comprehension, particularly when play-based approaches were effectively implemented by teachers. This literature reinforces the overall result by demonstrating that interactive storytelling and play-based experiences can foster engagement while supporting meaningful learning among kindergarten pupils.

Problem 6. On the basis of the findings of the study, how may the storied puppet plays be enhanced?

Based on the findings of the study, the storied puppet plays may be enhanced by retaining the components that received Very Highly Valid evaluations while refining those that obtained comparatively lower ratings. Particular attention may be given to strengthening the relevance of characters and situations to children's experiences, simplifying language where necessary, improving the organization of the beginning, middle, and ending, and ensuring that all learning concepts remain clear and free from possible misconceptions. These enhancements would further strengthen the content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and updatedness of the storied puppet plays.

The stories may also be enhanced by incorporating a wider variety of familiar characters, settings, objects, and situations drawn from the everyday experiences of kindergarten pupils. Dialogues may be made shorter and more conversational, while transitions between story events may include visual cues, puppet movements, songs, or interactive prompts that help pupils follow the sequence of the narrative. Such improvements would preserve the highly evaluated structure of the materials while making the stories more relatable, understandable, and engaging for young learners.

The interactive activities embedded in the puppet plays may likewise be expanded because the findings showed substantial improvement in the pupils' cognitive skills after exposure to the intervention. More opportunities for matching, classifying, recalling, predicting, identifying similarities and differences, and following directions may be incorporated at appropriate points without making the stories unnecessarily long. Activities may also be arranged from simple to more challenging tasks to accommodate differences in pupils' cognitive abilities and encourage progressive skill development.

The pupils' highly favorable reactions should also guide the enhancement of the materials, particularly since happiness, attention, and willingness to watch another puppet story obtained the highest ratings. Future versions may therefore provide additional stories, varied puppet characters, manipulatives, and opportunities for pupils to respond directly to the characters while maintaining the elements that generated enjoyment and sustained attention. In this manner, enhancement should focus not on changing the fundamental approach but on enriching the features that contributed to the pupils' positive learning experiences.

Overall, the enhanced storied puppet plays may retain their validated instructional features while incorporating revisions based on expert evaluation, pupils' cognitive performance, and their reactions to the intervention. Continuous review, classroom try-out, teacher observation, and revision may be undertaken to ensure that succeeding versions remain developmentally appropriate, engaging, accurate, and responsive to kindergarten pupils' learning needs. Through these enhancements, the storied puppet plays may become more refined instructional materials for supporting cognitive skill development among kindergarten pupils.

Conclusions

Based on the findings the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The storied puppet plays were systematically designed and developed by integrating appropriate cognitive skills, developmentally suitable stories, interactive activities, child-friendly materials, and curriculum-aligned learning experiences. The structured development process ensured that the stories and puppet plays served both an entertaining and instructional purpose for kindergarten pupils. Hence, the developed materials provided an appropriate platform for promoting cognitive learning through storytelling, interaction, and play.
2. The storied puppet plays met the established standards for content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and updatedness, as reflected in ratings ranging from Highly Valid to Very Highly Valid. The favorable expert evaluations demonstrate that the materials possessed the necessary instructional and developmental qualities for their intended users. Therefore, the storied puppet plays may be considered valid instructional materials for use with kindergarten pupils.
3. The cognitive skills of the kindergarten pupils improved considerably following their exposure to the stories and puppet plays. The shift from predominantly Low and Very Low cognitive skill levels before the intervention to entirely High and Very High levels afterward demonstrates a marked improvement in pupil performance. Thus, exposure to the storied puppet plays was associated with meaningful gains in the cognitive skills demonstrated by the kindergarten pupils.
4. There was a statistically significant difference between the cognitive skills of the kindergarten pupils before and after their exposure to the stories and puppet plays. The substantial increase from the pretest mean to the posttest mean, supported by a p-value of .000, provides sufficient basis for rejecting the null hypothesis. Therefore, the storied puppet plays were effective in significantly improving the cognitive skills of the kindergarten pupils.
5. The kindergarten pupils responded very favorably to the storied puppet plays, particularly in terms of happiness, attention, willingness to participate again, understanding, and perceived learning. Their consistently Very Effective ratings indicate that the intervention was able to create an enjoyable and engaging learning experience while sustaining their participation. Hence, the storied puppet plays were not only educationally beneficial but were also well accepted by the kindergarten pupils.

6. The storied puppet plays may be further enhanced by retaining their highly rated and effective features while refining components that received comparatively lower evaluations. Improvements may particularly address the contextual relevance of characters and situations, age-appropriate language, story organization, conceptual accuracy, and variety of interactive cognitive activities. Therefore, continuous refinement based on expert evaluation, pupil performance, classroom observations, and pupil reactions can further strengthen the quality and instructional value of the storied puppet plays.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Kindergarten Pupils. They may actively participate in storied puppet play activities to further develop cognitive skills such as matching, classifying, recalling, predicting, identifying similarities and differences, and following directions.

Teachers. They shall integrate the validated storied puppet plays into appropriate classroom learning activities to provide kindergarten pupils with engaging opportunities to strengthen their cognitive skills through storytelling, interaction, and play.

Parents. They can reinforce the cognitive skills developed at school by using simple storytelling, puppet play, matching activities, classification tasks, and other age-appropriate learning experiences at home.

School Administrators. They may support the sustained implementation of storied puppet plays by providing appropriate instructional materials, opportunities for teacher development, and resources necessary for play-based learning activities.

Researchers. They can conduct further studies on storied puppet plays using other cognitive skills, larger groups of kindergarten pupils, longer intervention periods, or different educational settings to establish broader evidence regarding the effectiveness of the developed materials.

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