

Integrating Movement, Sensory Experience, and Narrative: Educators' Perspectives on Author-Designed Sensorimotor Stories

ABSTRACT

Background

Author-designed sensorimotor stories represent an integrative approach that combines movement, sensory experiences, and narrative to support children's engagement, self-regulation, and learning in early childhood settings. This approach is grounded in theories of sensory integration, which emphasise the functional interdependence of sensory processing and motor responses in early development (Lane et al., 2019), as well as perspectives from embodied cognition that highlight the role of bodily action in learning (Shapiro & Spaulding, 2021). Within early childhood settings, there is a growing need for pedagogical approaches that support engagement, regulation, and participation while remaining feasible within everyday routines. Although sensory storytelling and movement-based approaches are discussed in the literature, they are often treated as separate practices (Preece, 2015; Vidaković Samaržija & Vuković, 2023). In response, the authors developed the concept of author-designed sensorimotor stories to intentionally integrate sensory and motor experiences within narrative-based activities.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to explore educators' perceptions of the use of author-designed sensorimotor stories in early childhood settings, focusing on their integration into daily routines, perceived changes in children's behaviour and skills, and challenges related to implementation.

Methods

A qualitative research design was employed. Data were collected through an online questionnaire with open-ended questions. The study included 35 early childhood educators with varying levels of professional experience, most having more than 15 years of work experience. Sensorimotor stories were implemented in regular early childhood groups, including groups with children with developmental delays or atypical development. Group sizes ranged from small nursery and one-to-one contexts to large kindergarten groups with more than 20 children. Data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

Several key themes were identified. Educators most frequently used sensorimotor stories during morning routines, group gatherings, or as an alternative to traditional story reading. Participants reported increased children's attention, motivation, and active participation, as well as improved self-regulation and smoother transitions between daily routines. Changes were also noted in social, communication, motor, and functional skills, including greater independence and more inclusive participation, particularly in heterogeneous groups that included children with

developmental delays. Reported challenges included group heterogeneity, diverse sensory needs, maintaining attention in larger groups, and the increased preparation time and flexibility required from educators.

Conclusion

Educators perceive author-designed sensorimotor stories as a valuable and adaptable tool that can be meaningfully integrated into everyday early childhood practice. The approach supports children's engagement, self-regulation, and inclusion, while underscoring the importance of professional flexibility and contextual adaptation.

Literature

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