

## **An Analytical Study of Early Childhood Education Facilities in Public and Private Sector Schools in Azad Jammu & Kashmir**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to analyze a situation of ECE facilities available in public and private sector schools in AJ&K. The main objective of the study was to assess the availability of physical, academic, sports and learning environment facilities for ECE in public and private sector schools in AJ&K. The study was descriptive in nature and a quantitative approach was applied for conducting the research. A questionnaire was used for the collection of data from respondents. The sample consisted of 100 teachers, which were 50 from the public sector and 50 from the private sector by using a disproportionate stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire consisted of 46 items with four subscales was used in this study. Mean, standard deviation and t-test was used to analyze the data. Expert opinion was taken to check the validity of questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire was .705. The result of the study revealed that the availability of all four facilities is better in public sector schools than private sector schools. It is recommended that resources of teaching and learning for early childhood education need to be increased. It is also suggested that the curriculum for ECE should also be revised and implemented in private sector schools of AJ&K.

**Keywords:** early childhood education, facilities.

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## Introduction

In terms of physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of the child, early childhood is a vital stage of life. From natal to age six, growth of mental and physical abilities progress at an amazing rate and a very high percentage of learning takes place. It is that time when children mainly need a high quality of learning experiences and personal care. It is at this time that children primarily desire excessive-quality learning experiences with personal care.

Education initiates when youngster takes home from the hospital and continues as the child begins to participate in the gaming team and kindergarten. Human learning ability persists for the rest of their lives but does not reach the intensity of the preschool stage. With this in mind, babies and young children need active early learning experiences to help their intellectual, social and emotional development, which lays the foundation for future school success.

This is true even in early childhood when children aged three and four starts to adopt individual ethnicity. They also improve definitely biases and categorizes based on social class, traditional background and other foremost differences in the populace (Connolly, 2011).

According to Education for All, Global Monitoring Report, 2011 as cited Lasi, Jiwan, Batool, Dhanani & Shreshta (2017) early education environments like kindergartens signify the initial social environment outdoor the home. Schools regularly imitate social and community thoughts and behaviours, and these institutions often collapse to support mutual respect, patience, and analytical thinking. On the contrary, these foundations still do not respect, intolerance and prejudice, which makes society go to extremes.

According to the Canadian Study Board as cited Crosser (1996), the first five years of schooling are important for well-being and later success in school, work and community - more important than learning at any other stage of life.

Historically, ECE has not yet been officially recognized by the Pakistani public sector. In some public schools, the traditional Katchi (preschool) class is still primarily a familiar stage for formal education for younger brothers and sisters who are not enrolled (Hunzai, 2007). Such countries only accept a portion of a national curriculum.

The AJK Government Education Bureau is responsible for implementing the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program in the area. According to ECN's National Education Policy 2009, the AJK government decided to join ECE for all children aged 3 and over in 152 selected schools

with the help of UNICEF. Female teachers have been appointed to provide education for children enrolled in these schools. However, after the project was completed in 2012, UNICEF stopped providing financial assistance. Unfortunately, the AJK government was unable to pay teachers' salaries and ECE could not operate as planned. As a result, students enrolled in ECE schools become part of regular public schools, and some teachers at ECE schools are regularly absorbed by the education department. During the project, workshops and seminars were organized to train ECE teachers. The total annual budget of ECE is Rs. 180,000, not enough to improve the quality of government teachers. The Ministry of Education is trying to increase the enrolment rate of early childhood education through activity-based programs. The position of ECE teachers is not a regular position in the government education system and therefore no funds are allocated in the budget, so training for ECE teachers in Azad Jammu and Kashmir has not been provided (Khan, Bhatti, Hussain, Bano, 2017).

Exploratory research was conducted to capture the availability of facilities of ECE in AJ&K. The study was carried out to estimate and find out the availability of physical, academic, sports and learning environment facilities for Early Childhood Education in public and private sector schools of AJ&K.

## **Objectives**

Following were the objectives of this study:

1. To assess the availability of physical facilities for ECE in public and private sector schools of AJ&K.
2. To estimate the availability of academic facilities for ECE in public and private sector schools of AJ&K.
3. To find out the availability of sports facilities for ECE in public and private sector schools of AJ&K.
4. To evaluate and find out the availability of learning environment facilities for ECE in public and private sector schools of AJ&K.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the dissimilarities between level of available facilities among public and private sector schools in AJ&K?
2. What is the level of availability of physical, academic, sports and learning environment for ECE in public and private sector schools in AJ&K?

## Literature Review

The prominence of Early Childhood Education is well-recognized universally. It is now generally known that the effects of growths which occur during the pre-natal period, initial months and years of a youngster's life can last a lifespan a child obtains from parents and pre-school teachers as the kind-hearted early care begins how a child learns and narrates in school in precise and life in general. It is that kind of early care that a child develops all the key features of emotional intelligence, self-confidence, interest, commitment, self-discipline, connectedness, capability to correspond and cooperativeness. Bush (2001) pointed out that the year between birth and five years old is the basis for a successful (or other) life. This fact is recognized globally and every country is striving to provide quality early education and care for the young children. According to Mustard (2002), early childhood development has a long-term effect on the major parts of brain growth that have impact on all body tissues which include immune system, behavior, cognition, performance and skills.

The concept of the early childhood education has been confirmed by all of the giants of early childhood, Froebel, Montessori and Piaget.

Peerzada (2016) stated that Froebel is the first person in the history of education to provide preschool education in the form of a kindergarten - "Children's Garden." Froebel opened a school for young babies in Blankenberg (Germany) and called it Kindergarten, which means "Children's Garden", which aims to be a place where children can "flower". Froebel thinks this school is a garden where the teacher is a gardener who carefully takes care of the small human plants he cares for and helps them to grow into beauty and perfection. There is a sense of self-activity, play and joy in the school. Children have free activities, and Froebel sees this as a gentle type of education that is very organized. Kindertartens are designed to help children achieve optimal growth and development - by providing an environment that maximizes their potential. In kindergarten, all attempts are made to show the child's inner potential. However, this development is guided, not shaped and the development of children is nurtured and developed rather than enforced and required. The motivation for crèche is that come on and let us alive for children.

Schilling (2011) wrote in his article that in 1906, Maria Montessori opened her first school in a residential area in the poorest part of Rome, or called the "Children's Home." These children belong to poor families, both parents must work and no one takes care of the children. Most children are between the ages of 3 and 6. The first "Children's Home" is the seed of the Montessori teaching method. There, Dr. Montessori looks at the children as carefully as any scientist in scientific observation. She wrote detailed notes describing the activities and discoveries of 30 children. Based on the

work of early educators such as Itard and Seguin, Maria Montessori put forward some ideas and improved them. For example, she designed teaching materials (self-correcting learning objects), observed the children using them, and then redesigned the teaching materials according to the children's needs. Maria Montessori created a science laboratory for learning research. She observes children in order to be able to educate them better. Her teaching methods are indeed child-centred.

According to Nance (2009), the study of the “cognitive development stage” by the Swiss theorist and natural researcher Jean Piaget (1896-1998) helped to generate a variation of age-appropriate learning methods. Piaget believes that cognitive development has four main stages: 1) Sensory exercise phase, from birth to two years old, during which learning is mainly based on physical interaction and experience; 2) Preoperative stage, occurring between 2 and 7 simultaneously, through the use of symbols, memory and imagination, along with language. Mature use, thinking is non-logical, no reversibility and self-centred, more and more intellectual evidence; 3) concrete operation stage, Occurs between 7 and 12, during which the intelligence is proved by logically and systematically manipulating symbols associated with specific objects, and the thinking is operational, reversible and less self-centred; 4) the official operational phase, Occurs at the age of 12 and above, through the logical use of symbols associated with abstract concepts to prove intelligence, thinking is abstract, hypothetical, initially very self-centred.

The educational landscape in Pakistan is diverse and different educational models are working in a variety of capacities to meet the needs of a large population. The world is well aware that the child's early abilities have laid the foundation for future abilities. This, combined with the provision of quality education and care in all areas of development in the early years, increases the likelihood that children will succeed in the future.

The private sector is Pakistan's largest provider of organized preschool education. The establishment of school education is one of the for-profit enterprises in Pakistan. In the past few decades, the company has flourished to bung up the gap caused by educational institutes of the public sector and the quality of education has deteriorated. These private sector schools offer their services to middle and upper-class families because of expensive fee structure and claim to deliver excellence with a special focus on English education (Coleman, 2010). In Pakistan, 31% of students attend private educational institutes. Though more than half per cent of teachers taught in private schools don't possess specialised diplomas and are therefore categorized to be untrained in the field of early childhood education (Lynd, 2007). Deeni Madaris School is the second largest educational institution in Pakistan, targeting mainly the children of poor families (Anjum, 2017). Deeni Madaris does not offer early education, just

as ECE courses are organized by good secular schools to promote the overall development of children. Along with that Deeni Madaris provide free of cost religious education, place to live and food for the students. However, some of these Madaris also have nurseries that provide Islamic and Quranic teaching only (Coleman, 2010).

Ahmad, Anjum and Rehman (2015) compared public and private schools in Pakistan that provide public early childhood education. They found that public schools did not pay attention to the physical needs of students, but by focusing on the situation, private schools improved slightly to provide better classrooms. Drinking water and infrastructure. There are no well-trained teachers in public and private schools. Public institutions do not pursue parents to make them aware of the importance of early childhood education, nor do they arrange refresher courses for them, but private schools are better because private education students are private. The school is personally concerned and their classes are well arranged.

For parents, teachers, administrators, and caregivers, it is important to understand what children need at each stage of their early life to advance their progress to the next level (Mishra, 2005).

Clearly, well-implemented and well-directed early childhood programmes promote improved education, health, social capital and equal human development indicators, which have straight and prolonged paybacks for children. It is expected that Pakistan will completely investigate the hurdles and issues and plan to take suitable action to implement quality early childhood education programs in both the public and private education sector (Hunzai, 2006). The article determined on Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

### **AJK Primary Education**

AJ&K is an underdeveloped low-income state and community education is an important sector. While 28% of the financial plan in the region is used for education, it is still not sufficient to keep quality education and an ideal location in the state. The education system is the same as Pakistan: preschool (02), elementary school (05), intermediate (03), middle school (02) and high school (02). From the perspective of the AJK primary education department, there are 4202 public primary schools in the state, 9589 primary school teachers and dropout children account for 43%, the dropout rate is 35%, the teacher absenteeism rate is 12%, and the language scores are very poor. Big. 41% of schools do not have buildings, 87% of schools do not have electricity, 73% of schools do not have drinking water, and 82% of schools do not have border walls (Farooq & Kai, 2016).

## Methodology

Pakistan Education Statistics (2015-16) stated that there were 4202 primary schools with 8479 primary school teachers in the public sector and 742 in private sectors with 2954 primary school teachers in AJ&K. The sample for the present study 10 public and 10 private sector schools were chosen randomly. The questionnaire was distributed to 50 public and 50 private sector school teachers by using disproportionate stratified random sample technique. A self-developed questionnaire by the researcher was used that consisted of 46 items out of which 35 items based upon "Yes/No" and 11 items were developed on three-point scale. When analysing the data, the researchers used statistical techniques for mean, standard deviation, and t-test on SPSS.

Table 1  
*Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of the Early Childhood Education Facilities Scale*

Subscales	No. of elements	Alpha
Availability of Physical Facilities	10	.786
Availability of Academic Facilities	20	.736
Availability of Sports Facilities	11	.818
Availability of learning Environment Facilities	05	.748

Table 1 shows the Alpha reliability factor of Cronbach in the questionnaire, as can be seen from the table. It can be understood that availability of physical facilities has an alpha coefficient of .786, availability of academic facilities has an alpha coefficient of .736, availability of sports facilities has an alpha coefficient of .818 and availability of learning environment has an alpha coefficient of .748.

## Results

Table 2  
*Availability of Physical Facilities*

Edu Sector	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Public	50	14.50	2.3283	5.264	98	.000
Private	50	11.50	1.2317			

Table 2 indicates the results of independent sample t-test. The table indicated that there was a significant difference found in terms of availability of physical facilities. Furthermore, the result showed that public (M = 14.50, SD = 2.32) and private (M = 11.50, SD = 1.23) with respect to availability of physical facilities ( $t(98) = 5.264, p = .000$ ) which was  $< .05$ . This indicated that the availability of physical facilities of the public sector was better than the private sector.

Table 3  
*Availability of Academic Facilities*

Edu Sector	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Public	50	29.10	3.8484	4.306	98	.000
Private	50	24.90	1.9973			

Table 3 shows the results of an independent sample t-test. The table shows that there was a significant difference found in terms of the availability of the academic facility. Furthermore, the result showed that public (M=29.10, SD=3.848) and private (M=24.90, SD=1.997) concerning the availability of academic facilities ( $t(98) = 4.306, p=.000$ ) which was  $< .05$  for early childhood education. Moreover, it was found that the average academic facilities of public schools were better than the average academic facilities of private schools.

Table 4  
*Availability of Sports Facilities*

Edu Sector	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Public	50	18.55	2.9285	4.512	98	.000
Private	50	14.95	2.0384			

Table 4 displays the results of an independent sample t-test. The table indicates that there was a significant difference in terms of the availability of sports facility. Furthermore, the result showed that sports facilities of public (M=18.55, SD=2.92) and private (M=14.95, SD=2.03) with respect to availability of sports facilities ( $t(98) = 4.512, p=.000$ ) which was  $< .05$ .



for early childhood education Moreover it was found that average sports facilities of public schools were better than the average sports facilities of private schools in AJ&K.

Table 5  
*Availability of Learning Environment*

Edu Sector	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Public	50	8.20	2.9285	6.040	98	.000
Private	50	06.05	2.0384			

Table 5 indicates the results of independent sample t-test. The table indicated that there was a significant difference found in terms of availability of the learning environment. Furthermore, the result showed that public ( $M = 8.20$ ,  $SD = 2.928$ ) and private ( $M = 6.05$ ,  $SD = 2.038$ ) for the availability of leaning environment ( $t(98) = 6.040$ ,  $p = .000$ ) which was  $< .05$ . This indicated that availability of learning environment of the public sector was better than the private sector.

## Discussion

The present study aimed to analyse the situation of ECE in public and private sector schools. According to the first objective of the study, it is revealed that physical facilities of public sector schools were greater than in private sectors schools. Nazir & Khurshid (2014) found that there was a lack of physical facilities for ECE in private and public-sector schools. From the second objective of the study, the result shows that academic facilities of public schools were better than the average academic facilities of private schools. The reason may be that the academic section is not aware of the present ECE curriculum plan, so it is not followed and implemented in private sector schools. To the third objective the results show that the average sports facilities of public schools were better than the average sports facilities of private schools in AJ&K. The basis may be that sports facilities are very expensive and because of this fee range in private schools are very high. Majority of the population lives in rural areas so they cannot afford to pay fees. According to the last objective, the result revealed that learning environment facilities of public schools were also better than the average sports facilities of private schools. The reason

may be that there is a lack of learning environment facilities in private sector schools' due to untrained or less number of teachers.

### **Conclusion**

1. Availability of physical facilities of public sector schools were better than the physical facilities of private schools.
2. Availability of academic facilities of public sector schools were better than the average academic facilities of private sector schools.
3. Availability of average sports facilities of public schools were better than the sports facilities of private schools.
4. Availability of learning environment facilities of public schools were better than the average sports facilities of private sector schools.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are offered on the basis of this study:

- Early Childhood Education needs special attention as basic pillar of education and need to treat as well managed manners.
- For the change in the system of early childhood education, quantity of teachers per school's requirements should be increased and trained on continuous basis.
- National Curriculum Plan must be implemented, evaluated and revised keeping in view the requirements of the child's current age especially in private sector schools.
- ECE material and activities should be assessed and noted by teachers and examined by management on regular basis.
- The result of the study revealed that private schools have lack of physical, academic, sports and learning environment for ECE in AJ&K. It is therefore recommended that Ministry of Education should focus on situation of available facilities for ECE in private sector schools. There should also have evaluation process for early childhood education system in private sector schools who are dealing with ECE.

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