

Teaching Activities and Facilities for Pre-School Children in District Karak

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Abstract

Pre-school education is offered in the government primary schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. Very little attention is given to the pre-school aged children in these schools. Therefore, this study was carried to explore teaching activities and facilities for Pre-school Children in district Karak. The objectives of the study were to explore the availability of teaching facilities and to investigate teachers' teaching activities while teaching pre-school children in the government primary schools. The population of the study were all the 438 head teachers of government primary schools for boys of district Karak, KP, Pakistan. Total 216 head teachers were selected as sample through proportionate cluster random sampling technique. The study was descriptive and survey method was adopted. Self-developed questionnaire was used for the collection of data. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and the use of Chi Square (χ^2) test. Non availability of Audio-Visual (AV) aids, unavailability of specialized teachers and the absence of separate classroom for preschool children were major findings of the study. Ensuring of AV aids, construction of additional classroom, recruitment of specialized preschool teachers and arrangement of refresher courses for them are the major recommendations of the study.

Keywords: preschool, primary schools, audio visual aids, teaching activities, facilities

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Introduction

The initial years of any individual are prominent in terms of his/her all round development. Two to five years old children are in the need of such environment that can help them to stimulate their senses. For the stimulation of five senses early education is provided to children of this age group. This early education in an organized formal setup in a group setting is called pre-school education. Pre-school education is necessary to be provided to the children in schools. Many countries including Pakistan provide pre-school education to the children of aged 2 to 5 years old. This pre-school education can also be referred as early childhood education and this is the major goal of the agenda, “Sustainable Development Goals (SGD)” to be ensured by the member states of United Nations.

Across the world, pre-schools play couple of functions. On one side it plays the role of imparting education to the children and on the other side it is looking after the children of working parents (Lidholt, 2000). In Pakistan, both public and private sectors offer pre-school education programs. The private sector offers pre-school education programs in various forms like Play group and Montessori etc. In these programs of private sector schools, both full day and half day programs are functional. However, in the public sector, preschool education is offered in single form. Usually, the pre-school age group children who attend the school are referred as non-admitted (pronounced as, “Nadakhil” in Urdu) students or in Urdu language it is also called as, “Kachi Class”. This pre-school education program is not a separate system in Pakistan rather it is a part of the primary schools.

The number of teachers is different in various primary schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. In majority of the schools, only two teachers are deployed, even in some primary level schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa single teacher performs his duties. Evidently, there is no possibility of separate pre-school teacher in most of the primary schools. So, a teacher teaching to pre-school children is teaching to multigrade students in Pakistani primary schools. As, single teacher has the absolute responsibility to teach at the same time to the students of multiple grades in school (Hargreaves, 2001).

Literature Review

Pre-school education requires the provision of conducive environment for teaching and learning. Conducive and simulative environment is possible using suitable teaching aids, effective teaching methods, appropriate assessment techniques (Rajapaksha & Chathurika, 2015) and various methods of documenting the development of pre-school children. Documentation of children's development can be done through diaries, portfolios, evidence based standardized forms and parents' questionnaires (Vallberg Roth, 2012). The purpose of documentation is to note the general and normal aspects of children development (Wehner Godée, 2000). The purpose of documentation is if there is any problem in the normal development of children then the teachers are supposed to correct and support such children (Lenz Taguchi, 2000).

For any society to be successful in the future, quality pre-school education is an important and unavoidable factor. It is a benchmark for further development of a society. It has been reported by Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann (2001) that the efforts for educating the pre-school children are highly valuable. Various stake holders like guardians, parents and community members should give due importance to investment in the education of pre-school children. The quality pre-school education enhances the learners' achievement in school and healthy behavior of children is improved. Investing in the quality pre-school education of children is helpful in the economic gains of a country (National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research, 2012).

Pre-school education is beneficial in the educational preparation of children. It is helpful for the later emotional, social and cognitive growth of children (Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006). Pre-school education is also necessary and crucial for the development of cognitive domain of children and enriching their healthy life skills (Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2003). It has been reported by Camilli, Vargas, Ryan & Barnett (2010) that pre-school education significantly affects the cognitive development of children.

Pre-school age is the critical time for children's learning. The children who receive education at their pre-school age are well prepared academically and socially to enter the primary school education (Kirp, 2007). Research has shown that pre-school education programs in several countries revealed numerous positive effects on the children (Currie, 2001). In various research studies, it has also been reported that the academic performance of primary and high school children has positive correlation with their pre-school education (Barnett, 2008; Winter &

Kelley, 2008). Learning in the pre-school age is the prediction of high academic performance of children in their later learning stages (Foster & Miller 2007; Barnette & Frede, 2010). It has been established through the research findings that pre-school education has positive role in the academic development of children (Davis, 2009). Further, the research also reveals that academic success is dormant in the future of those children who have lack of opportunities to learn in their early age (Hart & Risely, 2003).

In the pre-school age, learning can be accelerated by getting hands on experiences, play (Engel, 2015) and through the use of relevant AV Aids. The use of AV Aids ensures the availability of beneficial environment for children to learn effectively (Specht, 2002). Further, the children of the pre-school age can be benefitted through the use of play-based instructional methods (Miller & Almon, 2009) and at this stage they need to be engaged in the learning-oriented playing activities. Ensuring children engagement in the purposeful activities, schools are required to purchase large number of items and materials (Kirp, 2007) including AV Aids with the hope of creating ideal learning situation for the children.

Pre-school children always flourish naturally in the inspiring and exciting activities (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012). If they are not engaged in the hands-on activities and the learning environment is not rational, interesting and exciting, then they search for getting attention and seeking stimulation somewhere else (Ritz, Noltemeyer, Davis, & Green, 2014) and there is a risk of their distraction from the desired direction and the chances exist that the children will exhibit unwanted behavior.

Creation of exciting and inspiring environment for preschool children requires well-equipped classroom in which hands-on learning is encouraged (LaParo, Thomason, Lower, Kintner-Duffy, Cassidy, 2012). According to Hyson (2003), there are certain important guidelines for effective pre-school classroom. In these, the most important are the provision of well-prepared specific trained teacher and age-appropriate contents. The rest are enhancing children's emotional and social competence, improving their problem-solving skills, enhancing their positive approach for learning, the use of accurate instructional methods by teachers for teaching academic contents affectively and applying appropriate methods for assessing children's learning.

For teaching various skills like literacy skills, numeracy skills and Art and creative skills to the preschool children in an efficient way, there is a need of various Audio Visual (AV) aids to be used by the teacher. The use of AV aids can play vital and exclusive role in the teaching learning process. Making the availability of AV aids for children and their

accessibility is the need of the time (Aina & Adekanye, 2013). AV aids are helpful in the clarification of the topics and through the use of AV aids the learning process becomes interesting and effective (Nwaboku, 2000). Despite the effectiveness of AV aids, in the developing countries, teachers and administration have no interest in the use of AV aids in their classroom. The importance and use of AV aids have not yet been recognized in the developing countries. While due attention is given to the provision and use of AV aids in the economically developed countries like United States, France and UK etc. (Alokun, 2004).

The pre-school teacher is required to set specific goals for them, plan intentional activities, prepare useful materials in other words AV aids and the strategies for implementing the intended activities. The construction of materials and preparation of AV aids for pre-school children is to achieve specific learning outcomes (Lillard, 2013).

Together with the use of various types of AV aids, there should be sufficient play area for the preschool children (Stannard, Jones, 2003). Play is the source through which children's emotional, social and critical knowledge can be developed from the grass root level. Through play children acquire the skills of conflict resolution, self-advocacy, negotiation and establishing connections with others (Milteer and Kenneth, 2011).

Objectives of the Study

The study focused on the following two objectives:

1. To investigate the activities of teachers while teaching preschool children.
2. To explore the availability of teaching facilities for preschool children.

Hypotheses:

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the opinion of head teachers regarding teaching activities for preschool children in their schools.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in the opinion of head teachers regarding availability of teaching facilities for preschool children in primary schools.

Methodology

Survey method was exercised for achieving the objectives of the study and testing the hypotheses in light of the objectives. A close ended well-structured questionnaire was used for collection of data from the participants. The

questionnaire was validated through five experts and its reliability was checked through split half method which was 0.75. The questionnaire composed of two parts. Each part had ten items. The items of the first part were about the teachers' teaching activities to preschool students. The second part of the questionnaire consisted the items about the availability of teaching facilities for preschool children. Each item had four options of Fully Agreed, Partially Agreed, Disagreed and Not Sure. Fully agreed and partially agreed were merged together into a single one, i.e., Agreed, for the purpose of applying Chi Square (χ^2) test for analysis of data.

There are 438 primary schools for boys in district Karak, KP. Population of the study comprised of all the primary schools' head teachers of district Karak. In these 438 schools, 171 are in tehsil Karak, 175 are in tehsil Takht-e-Nasratti and 92 are in tehsil Banda daud Shah. Each tehsil of the district was considered as a cluster. Through cluster random sampling technique, total 216 head teachers, 46 from Banda Daud Shah, 84 from Karak and 86 from tehsil Takht-e-Nasratti were selected on proportionate basis. Chi square (χ^2) test and descriptive statistics was applied for analysis of data. Chi square (χ^2) analysis is done on the basis of obtaining data in categorical form. And Chi square (χ^2) test is used for analysis of categorical data. Furthermore, it finds significant difference between the expected and observed values in a given phenomenon (Mangal, 2012).

Results

Table 1:

Item wise responses of head teachers about teachers' teaching activities

Statement	Options			Chi Square Value ($\Sigma\chi^2$)
	Agree (%age)	Disagree (%age)	Not Sure (%age)	
In your school, the preschool children's teacher;				
-prepare daily timetable for teaching various skills to the preschool children.	117 (54.17%)	81 (37.5%)	18 (8.33%)	69.75
-himself prepares Audio Visual Aids for their preschool children.	110 (50.93%)	81 (37.5%)	25 (11.57%)	51.86
-set specific goals for education of preschool children.	119 (55.09%)	77 (35.65%)	20 (9.26%)	68.08

-observe/ maintain the daily attendance of preschool children	155 (71.76%)	46 (21.29%)	15 (6.95%)	150.19
-communicates the progress/status of preschool children to their parents.	114 (52.76%)	79 (36.57%)	23 (10.65%)	58.52
-ensures special/unique classroom environment for preschool children	110 (50.92%)	83 (38.43%)	23 (10.65%)	55.08
-documents the work of preschool children	117 (54.117%)	81 (37.5%)	18 (8.33%)	69.75
-teaches the literacy skills to the preschool children	175 (81.02%)	22 (10.19%)	19 (8.79%)	221.08
-teaches the numeracy skills to the preschool children	188 (87.03%)	16 (7.41%)	12 (5.56%)	280.44
-teaches the creativity and Art skills to the preschool children	180 (83.33%)	24 (11.11%)	12 (5.56%)	244.00

The critical value of Chi square (χ^2) at the 5% significant level with two degrees of freedom is 5.991. While in Table 1 the calculated chi square (χ^2) values of all the items are greater than the critical value of Chi square (χ^2). Which shows that there is a significant difference between the responses of the participants and the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected. Hence significant difference exists in the opinions of head teachers regarding teaching activities for preschool children in the primary schools of district Karak. Further, the table shows that teachers prepare daily time table for teaching various skills and prepare Audio Visual Aids themselves to the preschool children.

From the table it is evident that daily attendance of preschool children is observed/maintained, progress/status of preschool children to their parents is communicated, teachers ensure special/unique classroom environment for preschool children and document their work in their schools. All the three skills that is literacy, numeracy and creativity and art skills are taught to the preschool students in their schools.

Table 2:
Item wise responses of head teachers about available teaching facilities.

Statement	Options			Chi Square Value ($\sum\chi^2$)
	In your school for preschool children	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	
sufficient readymade AV Aids for teaching literacy skills are available	84 (38.89%)	107 (49.54%)	25 (11.57%)	48.82
sufficient readymade AV Aids for teaching Numeracy skills are available	82 (37.96%)	109 (50.45%)	25 (11.57%)	51.08
sufficient readymade AV Aids for teaching creativity and Art are available	89 (41.20%)	111 (51.39%)	16 (7.41%)	68.69
there is separate class room	71 (32.87%)	126 (58.34%)	19 (8.79%)	79.65
specialized teacher is available	78 (36.11%)	120 (55.56%)	18 (8.33%)	73.00
proper work plan exists.	76 (35.19%)	119 (55.09%)	21 (9.72%)	67.02
full day teaching schedule exists	140 (64.81%)	47 (21.76%)	29 (13.43%)	98.58
specific course contents are available.	135 (62.5%)	51 (23.61%)	30 (13.89%)	85.75
sufficient play area is available.	159 (73.61%)	41 (18.98%)	16 (7.41%)	162.02
there is liberty to bring refreshing materials with them.	162 (75%)	38 (17.59%)	16 (7.41%)	172.11

The Chi Square (χ^2) critical value at 0.05 level of significance with the two degree of freedom is 5.991 which is much less than all the calculated Chi Square (χ^2) values reflected in Table 2. It shows that the null hypothesis H_02 is rejected and there is a significant difference in the responses of head teachers regarding the availability of teaching facilities in the primary schools of District Karak, KPK.

From the table 2, it can be inferred that significant difference in the teachers' responses exists negatively in the first six items. In other words, sufficient ready-made Audio-Visual Aids for teaching of literacy, numeracy and creativity and Art skills are not available in the schools. Similarly, separate classroom, proper work plan and specialized teacher for preschool children does not exist in the primary schools.

While in the last four items of table 2, there is positive significant difference among the responses of teachers regarding the availability of teaching facilities in schools. It shows that the facilities like sufficient play area, teaching schedule, specific course contents and liberty for bringing refreshing materials with them exist for preschool children in the primary schools of district Karak.

Discussion and Conclusion

In majority of the primary schools, literacy skills are taught to preschool children. Similarly, in primary schools, numeracy skills are taught to the preschool age children. Creativity and Art skills are also taught to the preschool children in primary schools. There is insufficient availability of readymade AV Aids for teaching Literacy, Numeracy, Creativity and Art skills to preschool children. In majority of the schools there is no separate classroom, no specialized teacher and no proper work plan exists for preschool children. Sufficient play area is available for preschool children in schools, specific course contents are available for them and full day teaching schedule exists in most of the primary schools.

Results regarding the availability of teaching facilities reflect mixed findings. Some of the facilities like separate classroom, specialized teacher and AV Aids for pre-school children do not exist in the primary schools. While some of the facilities for instance, sufficient play area, specific course contents and teaching schedule for preschool children exist for preschool children in primary schools. On the other hand, results about teachers' teaching activities (table 1) show uniformity. Since the items in table 1 are related to teachers, it reveals that teachers are doing their efforts to teach the preschool children efficiently. Their responses show that

teachers are trying their best to ensure to document and communicate the progress of preschool children to their parents. Teachers are setting specific goals, preparing AV aids themselves for preschool children. There may be exaggerations in the responses of some head teachers while filling that part of the questionnaire which is related to teachers' activities. This may be due to the short comings of quantitative research.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended for the administration to ensure the availability of the AV aids to the preschool children.
2. It is recommended for the policy makers to plan for construction of additional rooms in the existing primary schools for preschool children.
3. A teacher having special preschool teachers training should be recruited in the primary schools.
4. It is recommended for policy makers to arrange in-service trainings and refresher courses each year about preschool education to the existing primary school teachers.
5. Similar research study is recommended to be carried on in other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in the country as well.
6. This was quantitative study and it may have short comings. For overcoming its short comings and depiction of real picture, further similar research studies are recommended to be conducted by applying qualitative approach.

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