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Mapping Implementation of National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education in Private Schools of District Gilgit

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Abstract

The study was conducted to examine the ECE teachers' pedagogical skills, availability of required resources in ECE centers run by Aga Khan Education Service (AKES) in the District of Gilgit implementing Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum 2007. It was a descriptive study and conducted by following a sequential explanatory mixed-method design to collect the data. The population of the study was students, teachers, and heads of ECE centers run by Aga Khan Education Services in Districts of Gilgit. A semi-structured interview was designed on basis of the responses of ECE teachers and the results of the observational Likert scale of ECE teachers. The major findings of the study revealed that ECE teachers were facing problems in implementing the National curriculum 2007 due to overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching resources material, and lack of open space in the ECE setting. The finding of the study also exposed that ECE teachers were not behaving gently and were not providing individual attention to every child at ECE centers. However it was also revealed that the ECE teachers were applying daily routine, lesson review activities, and activity-based methods to improve their language skills. The study recommends for the provision of necessary ECE learning resources, standardized child-teacher ratio, teachers training, collaboration, and communication between the ECE teachers and parents to a successful implementation of the ECE curriculum 2007.

***Keywords*:** Early Childhood Education (ECE), curriculum, High scope, Active learning, implementation, ECE teachers, ECE centers.

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Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) prepares and equips a child with skills and attitudes that support his or her later school education. It (ECE) plays a major role in the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of a child (Segal, Bardige, Woika, & Leinfelder, 2006)**.** According to (Dewy, 1925), it provides opportunities to build up muscular coordination by walking, jumping, and playing games. Children also develop a social relationship and learn about their culture by working in groups on different activities. Cognitive development of a child during ECE is influenced through purposeful linguistic activities, problem-solving skills, and the ability to learn from the experiences of everyday life. Experiences in early childhood education development programs play a critical role in laying a foundation for advanced education and character formation. It has been observed that participation in a comprehensive early childhood program of good quality can significantly transform the developmental path of a child (UNISEF, 2000).

ECE also plays a significant role in language development by providing opportunities for children to learn about the alphabet, words, and sentences. Children are born with the ability to learn the language. ECE education provides children different activities to learn the alphabet, pronunciation, and the use of sentences. Children also learn emotional stability by working with peers in group activities. ECE provides opportunities to develop self-esteem throughout the early years and positive experiences in a quality environment are necessary at this period (Grotewell & Burton, 2008). This is because the kind of early support a child receives from parents, pre-school teachers, and caregivers determines how a child learns and relates to school and life in general (Okewole, Abuovbo, & Abosede, 2015). ECE also provides opportunities for investigation in active learning, providing social and emotional care as well as fostering a child's needs to realize his/her human potentials.

In Pakistan, pre-primary (katchi) education, although run in the public school system till the 1970s, yet it was never recognized official program. Realizing the importance of ECE, the Government of Pakistan announced the policy to "formalize" *katchi* and introduce an ECE curriculum in 2002, prepared a National Plan of Action (NPA) to achieve the Education for All (EFA) (2000-15) goals that reflect the targets, strategies, and programs about fundamental education. ECE curriculum 2007 developed by the Ministry of Education is based on High Scope Curriculum that is based on the cognitive approach developed by

Ypsilanti, Michigan, in 1962 to help three to four years old children to become more creative and independent thinkers by providing opportunities for active participation in learning, attention to the learning environment, the organization and implementation of flexible daily routine, working with families sharing educational experiences in respectful ways of interacting with others are the basic viewpoint of High Scope teaching approach.

The National ECE Curriculum 2007 aims to provide the holistic development of a child by developing critical thinking skills, nurture tolerance, respect for diversity, create a sense of identity, and in being Pakistani. It also develops an understanding of Islam and value for beliefs of all other religions. Developing a sense of independence, self-confidence, and positive self-image and equip a child with lifelong learning skills, opportunities for active learning, and decision making are the basic priorities to promote. (Syed, Asif, & Yousaf, 2011) .

The previous report on Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum implementation indicated that teachers and students faced problems with the availability of physical facilities, evaluation of students' learning, parent involvement, and cooperation, planning of learning activities, etc (Blaise & Nuttal, 2011).

Juma (2004) concluded that the lack of involvement of management, parents, and school staff hinders the effective implementation of the ECE curriculum. It was also found that the physical environment and collaborative relationship and networking were detected as constructive factors increasing the teachers' attitudes and motivation, as well as their teaching. Accordingly, environmental factors create difficulties on the shoulder of teachers and in that case, the issue of teachers' problems faced regarding the curriculum implementation is brought into the discussion. Furthermore, in Shakil's (2002) study, it was added that in terms of education and planning, the need for examples regarding which methods to use, what kinds of materials to be included in the daily plans, not describing the kinds of activities, parent involvement and mixed age group which causes hurdle to implement the curriculum.

In curriculum implementation, both individual and environmental factors are effective. Teachers, as human beings, bring their experience into classroom settings, and so their beliefs and competencies regarding how children learn and develop also affect the quality of the curriculum implementation. Cohen (2008) revealed that if the teachers' existing belief structures are not compatible with the philosophy of the curriculum, then they affect the success of curriculum implementation unfavorably and it has no optimistic change in society.

With this background, the study was designed to investigate classroom practices of ECE teachers concerning pedagogical skills, assessment practices, and availability of required resources at ECE centers to implement the ECE curriculum 2007.

The main purpose of the study is to explore Problems and challenges that teachers are facing to implement the ECE curriculum 2007 for pedagogical skills, assessment practices, and availability of required resources at ECE centers. Another purpose of the study was to examine the availability of facilities and resources in ECE centers. The present study helped to answer the following questions.

1. What facilities are available at ECE centers to implement National Curriculum 2007?
2. What are the problems of teachers' to apply pedagogical skills prescribed in the National Curriculum 2007?
3. What are the key challenges for ECE teachers to implement the ECE curriculum in 2007?

Literature Review

This study is about the problems faced by teachers to pedagogical skills, assessment practices, availability of required resources, and support from the institutional level to implement the National ECE curriculum 2007. Therefore, this chapter highlights the review literature about the theoretical background, prior writings about ECE, ECE models, ECE Curriculum 2007, implementation strategies, available facilities, problems, and challenges relating to the topic of the study. According to Hyland (2010), ECE deals with children from an early age to elementary grade level. The period between zero to eight years of age is for ECE that focuses on the holistic development of a child (UNICEF, 2010). In the last few decades, the importance of ECE is a well-recognized world widely. Now, it is broadly recognized that development that takes place during the early age of a child's life can last for a lifetime. Childhood studies and developmental psychology revealed that young children are born with the ability of deep observation, conceptual understanding, and inquisitive brain (Nutbrown, 2006). Environment and genes play a vital role in the development of a child's brain. According to Juma (2004), ECE plays a significant role to overcome race and gender inequalities, financial disparities, and social issues. It helps to be a better human being for society. Poor quality of life unfairness, discrimination, and violence can be abolished through ECE interventions. According to the World Bank report, the investment of 1$

during in early ages of a child may bring a return of 7.6$ in coming future as an outcome of that investment. Moreover, Early Education provides a better future by broadening the emotional and academic settlement for long term goals. It increases the ratio of higher education graduation rates, which benefits the individuals in the short and long term.

Grant & Grant (2007) describes that globalization modifies many issues, such as development, increase in population, human right, and more importantly education. It has an impact on early childhood education to graduation level. Globalization can be seen all around the world. Information can spread easily through the internet all around the world. In the present world, knowledge is a source of power. So, countries start to reshape their curriculum at all levels (from early childhood to college level) according to universal trends, where expertise in different languages, skills in producing their technology, leadership qualities are being valued. So, countries are searching for the best curriculum models in ECE to bring the change form the grass-root level (Frede & Barnett, 1992). He further highlighted the need for fully knowledgeable and proficient people with competences and abilities, who are ready to cope with the new world demands quality early education become a fundamental factor.

Pakistan is an Islamic country and the role of parents is given importance in the upbringing of children in Islam. It is, therefore very essential to associate ECE with adult education and awareness programs and a feasible community-based system that facilitates healthy and well-informed paternity. The state should take responsibility for providing better early education at least until they achieve a fundamental literacy level (Syed, Asif, & Yousaf, 2011).

According to EFA (2000), ECE was recommended to be part of primary education till the end of 2015 and it was agreed by 189 countries that were part of that declaration. Therefore in 2002 national ECE curriculum was designed in Pakistan and later in 2007 it was revised and it is based on the High Scope Curriculum Model (Syed et al., 2011)**.** Provincial governments were asked for its implementation and it has become part of the Scheme of studies. THE National ECE curriculum aimed to meet the challenges of providing an appropriate learning environment for young learners.

The National ECE curriculum was prepared on the basic features of the High Scope curriculum which is inspired by Piaget's theory of cognitive development. This model of active learning is culturally relevant and very appropriate to the Pakistani context and society. A

systematic evaluation of the curriculum has now been undertaken and the National ECE curriculum has been revised in 2007.

A Statement of Objectives of ECE National Curriculum 2007

- Provision of holistic development of the child
- To develop a sense of Islamic culture and pride for being a Pakistani citizen.
- To inculcate acceptance for diversity and nurture patience and endurance.
- Encourage critical thinking
- Offer an environment for active learning

Provided a platform for exploration through self-initiated play and reflection of their work. According Government of Pakistan (2007) daily routine is an important aspect of the national curriculum and High scope teaching approach supports daily routine because :

- It helps children to feel sheltered
- provide a preplanned learning atmosphere
- Helps children to learn about the daily schedule
- An aware child of the importance of time and how to finish assign work on time.

Table 1: *Example of the Daily Routine*

Daily Routine	**Timing**	
National Anthem /Dua	15 min	
Greeting Circle	15min	
Work time Circle	40min	
Out time	30min	
Snack Time	30min	
Plan work (clean up, review)	90min	
• Planning time	15min	
• Area time(ghosha)	45min	
• clean up time	10min	
• Review time	20min	
Story and Rhyme time	20min	(Government of pakistan, 2007)

Figure 2.1: High scope wheel

Importance of ECE Curriculum

According to Rucker (2011), the ECE curriculum is a key factor in measuring child progress, and thus it is particularly important to construct the structure of the education system. Frobel is an educationist and founder of kindergarten; he is known as a more powerful educationist in the early childhood curriculum. He included gifts and occupation in his curriculum to teach children. Now a day, we are following the same pattern to educate children by using games and toys. The concept of educating children through play and toys was initiated by Frobel which is one of the major contributions in the field of early childhood curriculum.

Importance of Resources Material and Facilities

The classroom environment is a social circumstance in which students not only learn about academic lessons but also learn about social lessons like teamwork, sportsmanship, suitable behavior, and friendship. The classroom environment of early childhood is to capture the attention of a child and widen it because it is easy to make the mind of toddlers towards curiosity and wisdom (Gibbons, 2006).

According to Hussain and Juma (2006), the focal point of excellent teaching is the physical setting and successful use of the material inefficient manner. In other words, the material provided to students should be ample, planned, and put a constructive effect on children. It permits children to take initiative.

Age relevant material: Material needs to be carefully selected to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate and match the stage of development of the children. ECE children are just mastering language and motion. The material must be carefully evaluated to ensure its appropriateness according to age level. Young children need materials that they can act on. They quickly get bored with items that require no action on their part or that don't stretch the imagination. All early childhood materials should promote active involvement and exploration (Helm and Katz, 2001).

Well ventilated and spacious classroom: According to Perkins (1980), the shape and ventilation of the room have an impact on its arrangement and supervision. Classroom arrangement has great effects on the amount of natural light available through windows. For instance, the color used during art activities is enhanced by clear, bright light thus, it provides a positive and appealing environment in the Classroom.

Subject related learning areas: In ECE classroom indoor space is often organized into the learning area, which combines materials and equipment around common activities. Learning centers can include art, math, science, language, home, library, and verity of other areas that fit the unique interest, need, and characteristics of a group of children. Learning centers allow children to make choices from a range of available, developmentally appropriate activities. Learning center and their activities are planned, structured, set up, and facilitated by the teacher, the teachers determine how to engage in and carry out the activities (Sloane, 2000).

Safety and hygiene/monitoring health check: According to Epstein (2007), the environment for ECE classrooms must be developmentally appropriate, safe, secure, and comfortable, aesthetically pleasing, and appropriately stimulating. The environment must encourage movement and exploration while carefully ensuring safety and hygiene. Further, he added that the safety of children should be of primary concern to the teacher. It is important to be aware of safety considerations when arranging and equipping an ECE classroom. The environment must be adapted to the needs of very young children by including discrete areas for playing.

Pedagogical skills

Pedagogical skills are a set of teaching techniques which offer opportunities for the gaining of knowledge, attitudes within a particular social and material context. Teaching methods employed by the teachers have an excellent effect on the quality of ECD programs as well as child holistic development (Chikutuma, 2013).

Myers (2010) also described that pedagogical skills are essential to maintain flourishing teaching at all levels. Many educationists use Pedagogical skills to smooth the progress of students learning and improve their understanding by employing different teaching techniques in teaching. Teaching strategies relevant to the teaching contents influence the quality of the ECD program positively.

Language and literacy activities: The teachers' ability to engage in effective conversations with children is also an art. Dialogue between adults and small groups or individual children is essential for language learning**.** For instance, the study conducted by Ishee & Goldhaber (1990) on language and literacy concluded that language should be presented in a natural, meaningful way, in the context of the childhood experiences and interest. When a child shares verbally, such communications should be encouraged through uncritical acceptance. They further highlighted that correcting grammar or punctuation tends to inhibit rather than foster language.

Factors that Influencing Curriculum Implementation

In early childhood education, many factors create hindrances for the successful implementation of the curriculum.

Group size: Moderate group size results in children who are more socially and intellectually competent than whose spend their day in large groups. According to W. Steven Barnett (2009) group size was one of the important variables that define the quality of ECE education. In small group size, adults and children interact more, children were more cooperative, innovative, and verbal; and they scored better in cogitative and language tests.

ECE classroom setting and size: Classroom arrangement and careful selection of material also foster cognitive development by providing opportunities for children to classify, find relationships, match, compare, sort, and label. Children's growing sense of independence is supported when they can confidently and competently use the equipment and when space and material are arranged so they can see what is available and make autonomous choices(Barnett, 2005).

Child adult ratio: Currently, accessible literature shows that there are less researches related to the child-adult ratio which showed that the ratio significantly affects children's behavior and child-adult interaction. For instance, when there is a large number of children per teacher, there is less verbal interaction among teachers. Teachers in the classroom with lower ratios were more sensitive and responsive to the children than teachers who had more children in their class.

Teacher qualification and training: To make the ideal classroom for toddlers, there is a need to educate and train the teachers. Teachers' training in early childhood education is extensively needed for the proper development of children. This teacher education program has been established to improve the quality of the environment across ECE centers (Gibbons, 2006).

Lack of facilities: It has been observed that majority of ECE classroom lacks basic facilities and equipment that hurts the classroom environment. As a result, teachers and students may face problems to motivate and involve children in learning activities. The classroom environment may become boring and dull for teachers and students (Syed et al.,(2011)

Outdated instructional practices: One of the challenging aspects is that in early childhood education the curriculum and instructional practices are outdated and not appropriate for the learners. Teachers mostly use the

same activities in the classroom that are not fascinating for students to foster them towards learning(Hussain & Juma, 2006).

Parents involvement: Parent's involvement in the ECE setting plays a positive role to determine a child's progress in ECE. The role of parents is important to develop positive relationships between ECE teachers and society that may positively affect the emotional, psychological, and social development of a child. If parents are engaged in school affairs, they can solve many problems related to education, and it has also a positive impact on children's development and learning (UNICeF, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1936) and Lev Vygotsy's (1986) social constructivist theories are associated with ECE. Piaget's theory of cognitive development which holds that children construct their knowledge out of directed experiences has been the most influential theory in ECE which provided a theoretical base for this study. The Vygotsky also supported the Piaget's theory and further added that the construction of the knowledge occurs, when the learner interacts with its environment within the sociocultural context, for example when the learner interacts with their parents, peers, and people who are knowledgeable and having influence and do dialogue and discussion. For this, the researcher adopted both Piaget's and Vygotsky's perspectives on constructivist learning theory. Because they support the concepts of each other in the process of the construction of the knowledge. Piaget proposed the two major parts of cognitive constructivism; the first part is the developmental stage theory, which defined the learner at a different stage of the development. The second part is the cognitive ability of the learner to adapt to a new situation and it involves the process of assimilation and accommodation (Cobb, 1994).

Vygotsky's socio-historic theory stresses the importance of the social environment to development; children learning is often promoted through assistance from adults who help the child learn new skills within the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky proposed that social interaction, especially dialogue between children and adult is the mechanism through which specific skills are developed (Rodina, 2006). Vygotsky stressed creating a learning situation that would provide a child stimulating environment in which young children actively explore and participate, teachers need to promote discovery by modeling, explaining, and providing suggestions to suit each child's zone of proximal

development .Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1936) revealed that the interaction of internal and external factors promote cognitive development. Understanding and successive wisdom are based on the fundamental basic structure of child mental phenomena. From conception to the first few years of life, many critical cognitive changes that impact cognitive development. Developmentally appropriate education was his major focus. For holistic development, and environment, material, instruction, and curriculum are most commendable (Wood, Smith, & Grossniklaus, 2008)

Theory of Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget's theory of development is categorized into the following stages:

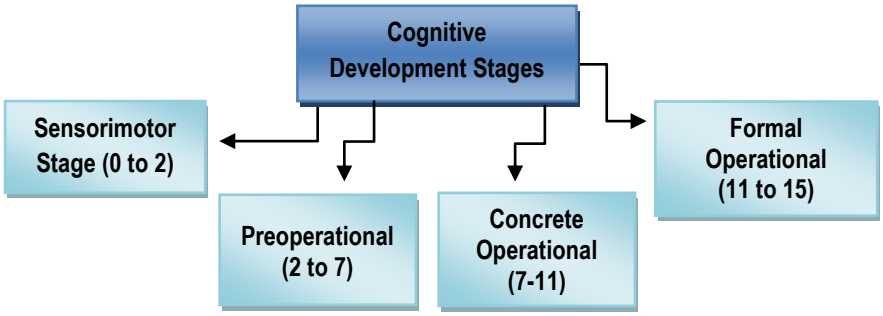

Figure 2.1: Piaget's four cognitive development stages

Piaget divided the cognitive growth of the learner into four stages, the current study focus on the second stage of the Preoperational stage. Because the focus of the study is ECE children, that are above the 3 to 5 year old.

Lev Vygosty (1986) social constructivist

According to Vygotsky, when a student learns under the guidance and support of an adult and by working with their more capable peers, this is called the zone of proximal development (Lamport, Graves, & Ward, 2012). ECE requires a supportive environment to achieve their success in future school. A supportive environment helps them to enhance their strengths and minimize weaknesses.

Most advantageous learning occurred in ZPD where the gap between known and unknown is being filled. He emphasized that children should

play an untraditional role in the classroom as they need to interact with each other and share their experiences for a better understanding. Dictating knowledge to a child is not appreciated in Vygotsky's classroom. Sharing of learning material, interaction, and cooperation should be encouraged in the classroom environment(Olney, 2014).

Children need help and cooperation from their normal peers and teachers in the learning process as mentioned by (McDuffie, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2009) that children get to benefit from peer coaching. In scaffolding, new concepts are introduced with the great help of the teacher, and the support gradually been removed when the child masters that new skill (Lamport et al., 2012). Vygotsky considers learning a shared process that takes place in a responsible social context. ECE environment provides an opportunity for children to learn and master new things with the help and support of their peers and teachers. When a student solves his or her problems under the guidance of adults and with the collaboration of his or her more capable peers, he or she is working on the zone of proximal development (Lakkala & Määttä, 2011). In the Vygotskian framework, children improve their performance when they are guided and assisted (scaffolding) by their adults (Gindis, 1999).

Methodology

In this study, the researcher examined the available facilities at ECE centers to implement the National Curriculum 2007. The study also includes the problems and challenges which ECE teachers faced in implementing the National curriculum 2007. The design of the study was a sequential mixed method. The researcher collected data of the first phase through structured observation and checklist which was in numeric form. Based on quantitative data interview protocols were designed to get perceptions of ECE teachers and heads of ECE centers. Consequently, qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to explore the answer to the research questions (Cresswell.2009). According to Creswell (2009), explanatory sequential method design is also called a two-phase model. In this design, phase one started with the quantitative data collection and analysis followed by the second phase qualitative data collection and analysis that build on the results of the initial phase (Creswell, 2006). The researcher applied random, criterion, and purposive sampling techniques to select the respondents of the study. ECE centers run by Aga Khan Education Service were selected through the Random sampling technique. In this way, eight (9) ECE centers were selected for the study (Gay, 2011). Purposive sampling was applied to

select two teachers from each ECE center who were teaching language and creative arts and having a diploma in ECE. In this way, the total number of teachers selected for the observation was 18. Three heads of the institutions and four teachers have also selected applying criterion sampling techniques for interviews. Only those heads were included who had the experience of managing ECE centers for more than three years.

Research Instruments

The following research instruments for data collection were used in this study:

1. Checklist for ECE teachers
2. Structured observational Likert scale for ECE teachers
3. Semi-structured interview with ECE teachers and heads of ECE centers

A checklist developed by Erden (2010) was adapted to collect the quantitative data about the facilities and resources available in ECE centers. Items of the checklist were relevant to assess the availability of resources and. It was validated by experts before it was administered. In the current study, an observational Likert scaled was used to observe the classroom practice of ECE teachers, which was more reliable than self-reporting. It also offers a better description of classroom activities and pedagogical skills used in the ECE classroom. Observation provides more reliable measures of the actual classroom rather than self-reporting (Borich, 2016). To generate the items of the structured observational Likert scale, the researcher reviewed the literature related to the ECE curriculum and the problems faced by teachers to implement it. The items were placed under the major categories relating to the teacher attributes, pedagogical skills, assessment techniques, physical environment, problem, and challenges of ECE teachers were included. Feature and objectives of the National Curriculum for ECE 2007 were considered while constructing the items of structured observational Likert scale. The researcher consulted the relevant experts to validate the instrument and made changes and adjustments before administered. The internal consistency of the instruments was checked through Cronbach's Alpha (α). Reliability statistics showed that the total number of items was forty-five and the value of Cronbach's Alpha was .79 which was acceptable and appropriate for proceeding research (Gay, 2010).

Data Analysis

Findings from the checklist to assess the availability of resources required for ECE classrooms

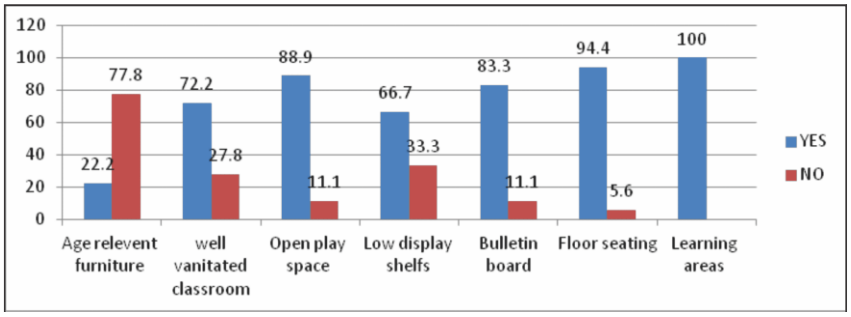

Figure 4.1: *Physical Environment*

Figure 4.1 indicates facilities available in the ECE classroom. Only 22**%** of ECE classrooms had age-relevant chairs, whereas 77% of the classroom is out of age-relevant tables and chairs which indicate the shortage of age-relevant tables and chairs. The figure shows that 72.2% of classrooms had an appropriate ventilation system in the classroom which indicates that the majority of the classroom is ventilated. 88.9% of the classroom had open play space and 11.1% had unavailability of open place space for outdoor activities. 66.7**%** of classrooms had low display shelves and 33.3% of classrooms are out of low display shelves in ECE classrooms. 83.3% of ECE classrooms had availability of bulletin boards in ECE classrooms, whereas 11.1% of classrooms are out of that facility. 94.4% of classrooms had availability of floor seating and 5.6 % of ECE classrooms are out of floor seating. 100% **of** ECE classrooms had availability of learning areas (Art area, Science area, language area, Home area, and Library area)

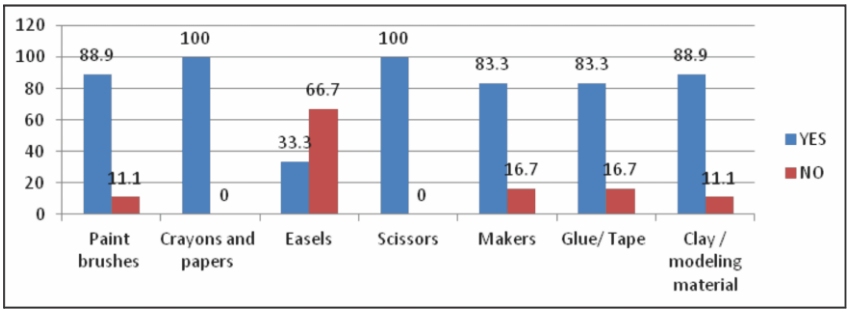

Figure 4.2: Availability of Art Corner

Figure 4.2 highlights that 88.9 % classroom had paint and brushes and 100 % of classroom had availability of crayons and papers, 33.3 % classroom had easels whereas 100% classroom had availability of scissors. 83.3% of classroom had availability of Glue and Tape. 89.9% of classrooms had facility of clay and modeling material.

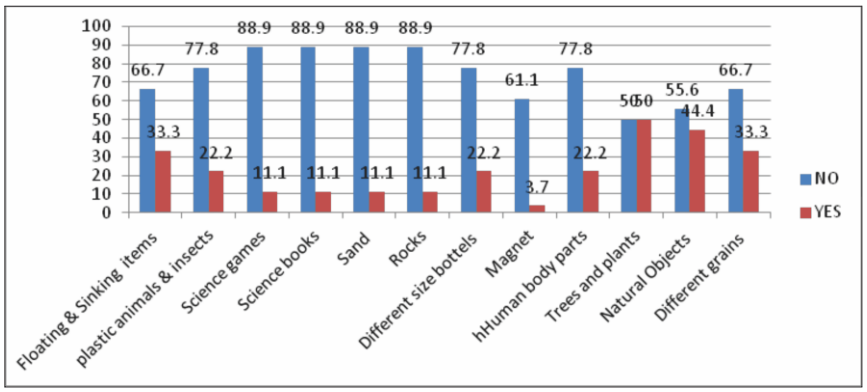

Figure 4.3: Availability of Functional Science Corner

Figure 4.3 highlights that 66.7% of classrooms had sinking and floating items.77.8% of classrooms had plastic animals and insects. 88.9% classrooms had science books. 88.9% classroom had sand and rocks for sciences understanding. 77.8% classroom had plastic bottle of different sizes in the art corner. 61.1% of classrooms had magnet in science corner .77. % classroom had human body (parts) in sciences corner. 50.0% classroom had trees and plants item in science corner. 55.6% classrooms had collection of natural objects. 66.7% classrooms had collection of different grains (rice, maze, wheat, cereals)

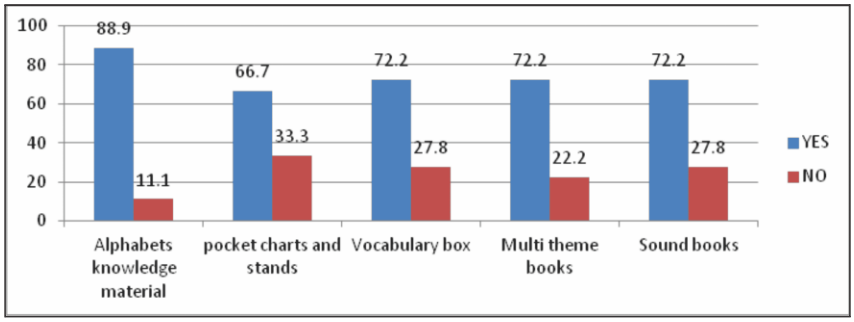

Figure 4.4: Availability of Functional Language Corner

Figure 4.4 highlights that 88.9% classrooms had Alphabetical knowledge material in language corner. 66.7% classrooms had pocket chart and stands in language corner .72.2% classrooms had availability of vocabulary box, multi theme books and sound books in language corner.

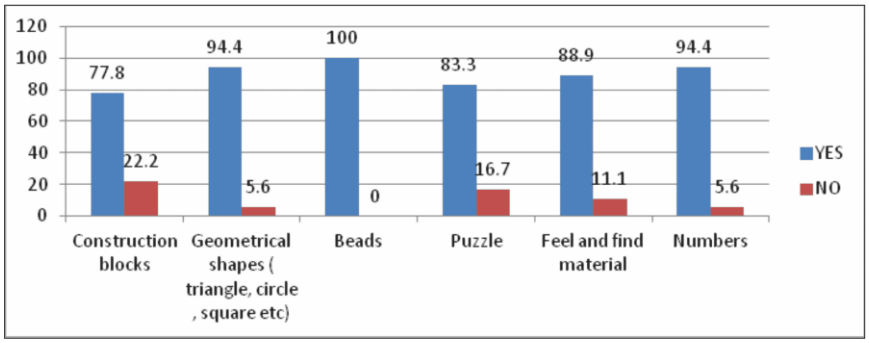

Figure 4.4 Availability of Functional Math Corner

Figure 4.4 highlighted that 77.8% classrooms had construction blocks. 94.4% classrooms had geometrical shapes (triangle, circle, square) available in math's corner .100% classroom had beads available and 83.3 % classrooms had puzzles in math corner. 88.9% classroom had feel and find material in math corner. 94.4% classrooms had numbers (figures) available in math corner.

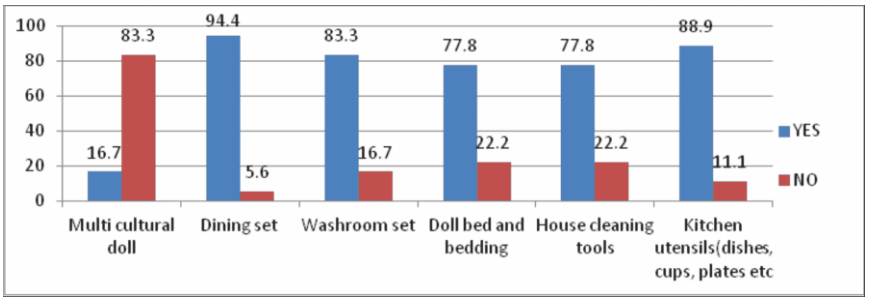

Figure 4.5: Availability of Functional Home Corner

Figure 4.5 highlights that 83.3% of classrooms had availability of multi-cultural dolls in home corner. 94.4% classrooms had facility of dining set in home corner. 83.3%of classrooms had availability of washroom set in home corner. 83.3% of classrooms had doll bed and bedding. 77.8% of classrooms had house cleaning tools in home corner.

88.9% classrooms had kitchens utensils (dishes. cups, plates). 100% of school had set in home corner. 83.3% of classrooms had availability of washroom set in home corner. 83.3%of classrooms had doll bed and bedding. 77.8% of classrooms had house cleaning tools in home corner. 88.9% classrooms had kitchens utensils (dishes, cups, plates).

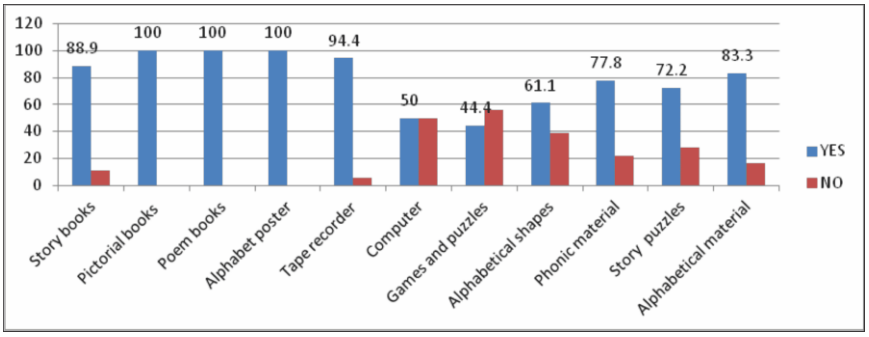

Figure 4.6: Library Corner

Figure 4.6 highlights that 100% of school had facilities of story book, pictorial books and poem books in library corner. 94.4% classroom had alphabetical poster displayed in library corner.50.0% classrooms had a facility of tape recorder in library corner. 44.4% of classrooms had facility of computer in library corner. 61.1% of classroom had a facility of games and puzzles in library corner. 77.8% of classroom had alphabetical shapes in library corner. 72.2% of classroom had a facility of phonic material in library corner. 83.3% of classrooms had availability of alphabetical material in library corner. 100% of classrooms had availability of clean water.55.6% of classroom had facility of first aid box. 22.2% of classrooms had arranging regular health checkup of young children. 88.9% of classrooms were cleaned.

The data analyses of checklist to assess the availability of resources required for ECE classrooms showed that, most of the classrooms have availability of material required for ECE classrooms. Some of the items such as age relevant chairs, easels, multicultural dolls and computers were lacking in the ECE classrooms.

This section presents data analyses of observational scale to assess pedagogical skills, and problems and challenges faced by ECE teachers during classroom practices. ECE teachers were observed two times during the classroom practices. To analyze the data collected through observation scale percentages, mean and standard deviation were

calculated. Mean is the arithmetic average of score and frequently used to measure central tendency (Gay, 2000).

Part 1: ECE Teacher Attributes and Pedagogical Skills

This section of the structured observational Likert scale contains six items related to teachers attributes. ECE teachers were rated on five point Likert scale about teacher attributes.

Table 2: *Findings from Observational Scale*

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Mean(SD)
ECE teachers behave gently	18	100	2.33(.689)
ECE teachers effectively interact with children in learning activities	18	100	2.83(.707)
ECE teacher care and support all the children equally	18	100	3.67(.840)
ECE teacher addresses individual differences during classroom practices	18	100	2.89(.471)
ECE teachers encourage and respond questioning	18	100	3.28(.896)
ECE teachers have trust based relationship with children	18	100	2.56(.856)
Teacher attributes	18	100	2.9(.33)
Pedagogical skills	18	100	2.18(.963)
Teacher follows daily routine to help of children in learning activities	18	100	4.33(.767)
Teacher uses verity of questioning techniques during teaching	18	100	3.72(.826)
Teacher follow the objectives of ECE National Curriculum 2007	18	100	4.33(.767)
ECE teacher encourages independent learning skills in children	18	100	3.89(.583)
ECE teachers apply activity based approach in teaching	18	100	3.67(.786)
ECE teacher encourages children to participate in learning activities	18	100	2.78(.548)
ECE teacher uses a variety of low cost material to organize art and craft	18	100	4.17(.857)
ECE teacher encourages children to share their ideas	18	100	2.56(.705)
Pedagogical skills	**18**	**100**	3.6796(.37

Mean score of item was less than 3 which indicate that ECE teachers sometimes behave gently and most of the time they don't behave gently. Regarding the interaction between the children and activities the mean score of items was 2.83 which indicate that it is less than average mean of item, which shows that ECE teachers were not in support of the statement. However, the teachers sometimes effectively interact with their children in learning activities. Regarding the support and care of the children results

indicated that ECE teacher sometimes practices equal care and support for all children. Regarding the individual difference Mean score of item was 2.89 which is less than 3 that indicates that most of the time ECE teacher do not address individual differences during classroom practices. Results also revealed that ECE teacher frequently responds to children questions during classroom practices (M=3.28). ECE teachers sometime trust in children during classroom activities, teachers were not holding positive teachers attributes to teach ECE children (M=2.9). Pedagogical skills are also assessed results indicated that ECE teacher sometimes facilitates discussions during learning activities. Mean score of item was less than 3 (M=2.18). ECE teacher frequently follows daily routine to help children during classroom practices (M=4.33).results also indicated that ECE teachers uses verity of questioning techniques during teaching (M=3.72).regarding the curriculum implementation result indicated that mean score of item was 4.33,which indicated that ECE teachers very frequently follow the objectives of ECE National Curriculum 2007 during classroom practices. ECE teacher very frequently encourages independent learning skills in children during teaching (M=3.89).results indicated that ECE teachers frequently use activity based methods in teaching (M=3.67). Regarding the children participation in learning activities Mean score on the item was below the average mean that indicate ECE teacher do not encourage children to participate in learning activities(M=2.78).result also shows that ECE teacher very frequently uses a variety of low cost material to organize art and craft activities (M=4.17). The overall mean score for section pedagogical skills used in ECE classrooms. Table indicates that the total mean value was 3.6 which indicate that most of the time ECE teachers used appropriate pedagogical skills at ECE classrooms

Part 2: Problems and Challenges

This section of the structured observational likert scale contains seven items related to problems and challenges faced by ECE teachers at ECE classroom.

Table 3: *Problems and Challenges*

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Mean(SD)
ECE teacher faces problem to organize learning material	18	100	3.00(.840)
ECE teacher faces problem due to shortage of learning material	18	100	2.83(.924)
ECE teacher faces problems at ECE classroom because of limited space	18	100	2.83(1.043)
ECE teacher faces problems in making children	18	100	2.83(1.043)

comfortable at ECE centers			
ECE teacher faces problem in time management	18	100	3.22(.808)
ECE teacher faces problem to clearly define the learning areas	18	100	2.72(.752)
Problems and challenges	**18**	**100**	**2.73(.48)**

Results indicated that ECE teacher frequently faces problem to organize learning material (M=3.00). Regarding the shortage of learning material, mean score didn't support the statement that ECE teacher sometime faces problem due to shortage of learning(M=2.83). Mean score didn't support the statement that sometime ECE teacher faces problems at ECE classroom because of limited space mean score of item was 2.83.regarding the ECE center mean score was 2.83 which didn't support the statement that ECE teacher frequently faces problems in making children comfortable at ECE centers. ECE teacher didn't faces problem in time management**.** Mean score didn't support the statement which means that ECE teacher faces problem in transition of activities (M=2.33). Mean score didn't support the statement that sometime ECE teacher faces problem to clearly define the learning (M=2.72). The overall mean score was 2.73 which show that the ECE teachers were facing problems as the mean value is below the cut point score.

Qualitative Data Analysis

On the basis of yield extreme or outlier quantitative results, it was decided to get in-depth interviews from ECE teachers and Head of ECE centers. In the interpretation phases of the study findings of both phases were triangulated to obtain the complete opinion of teachers about pedagogical skills, assessment practices, facilities they were provided with and challenges they faced while implementation of National curriculum 2007.

Four ECE teachers and three heads of ECE centers were selected for interviews to Cross-check the data. Only those teachers were selected for interviews that have teaching experience of more than three years and also have a diploma in ECE. Those head teachers were selected who had more than five years of experiences in management. To analysis the qualitative data collected from semi structured interviews thematic analysis was used.

Table 4: *Demographic Data of the Participants*

	ECE Teachers				Head of ECE Centers		
Participants	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female
Experience	3 years	3 years	4 years	3 years	5 years	8 years	5 years
Academic Qualification	M.A	M.A	M.A	M.A	MSC	MSC	M.A
Professional Qualification	B.Ed/ Certificate In ECE	Diploma In ECE	Certificate In ECE	B.ED. Certificate In ECE	B.ED/ M.ED	B.ED/ M.ED	B.ED/ M.ED

Table indicates that four ECE teachers and three head of ECE centers provided qualitative data for the present study. Four female and one male participant was selected for interviews. Three participants were having three years of experience, one participant was having four years of experience, two participants were having five years of experience and one participant was having eight years of experience. As table shows, two ECE teachers were having M.A degrees along with Diploma in ECE, and two was having B.ED along with certificate in ECE. Two heads of ECE centers were having MSC degree, while one head of ECE center was holding MA degree. All three heads of ECE centers were holding M.ED degrees. Interviews and analyzed under the provisional themes e.g Learning environment (physical), Pedagogical skills Problems and challenges and Suggestions

Learning environment (physical)

Learning Environment should be helpful in classroom setting for enhancing teaching learning environment. Majority of the participants said that overcrowded classes are major problems in a classroom for learning environment. For example participants A stated that:

> "the learning environment is essential part of teaching and learning process, in order to sustain overall worth in classroom setting constructive learning environment is basic condition." Participant B stated that "Crowded classroom decreases the quality of teaching and it prevents us from one to one dealing with ECE children." Participant C shared, "It is always very tiring to have a crowded classroom, I have 44 students in our classroom. I always feel trouble during preparing material for activities and implementing it. Further she added, "I want to

> interact with every child, but somehow it's very difficult in a crowded classroom, as you know this age group needs proper consideration that's why there should be standard student teacher ratio and it should be followed for productive environment and for better outcome".

Participant B stated,

> "Because of limited space in classroom I limit children's movement; I always go for teacher directed activities and table activities, which require less movement. I have space outside the classroom, but I can't take kids out all the time due to limited time" (B interviewee).

Majority of participants highlighted that limited resources in the ECE classroom prevent them form completion of activities with its flow; but one ECE teacher was very satisfied with the material provided and has no complaints regarding it , Participant A stated that "I am not satisfied with the provided resources by the ECE management , sometime it is very difficult for us to give material to each and every student ,especially when we are teaching them art and craft lessons, so I limit the activities into groups which create conflicts, as ECE children are not good at sharing." (A, interviewee).

Data gathered from participant's shows that ECE teachers face problems in clear definition of learning areas and were very concerned about it. Two participants, A and B shared that they always tried to define each corner clearly, but somehow they failed due to limited space and crowded classroom. One out of four participants was satisfied with their classroom learning areas. A told that **"**Learning centers allow the children to relax and play but here due to limited space I cannot clearly define all learning. So, children take time to learn and differentiate the learning areas (gosha's)." (A, interviewee). Participant D stated that "limited space in classroom creates difficulty for us to set each learning corner clearly, which create trouble for children in recognizing each corner." (D, interviewees)

Pedagogical Skills

This section provides discussion about the selection and use of pedagogical skills under the following subtheme: The gathered data from the interviews showed that most of the ECE teachers were implementing different innovative methods to tackle the individual differences in the ECE

classroom and were very concerned about the importance of addressing it during the classroom activities. As participant B told that, "to deal with the individual needs I design activities according to average mental level of children, and I make pairing and groups of sharp and slow learners that's how I try to tackle individual differences. I consider all their needs, it includes intellectual, cultural, learning style needs etc." Participant C stated, "we (ECE) teachers always try to serve each student according to their individual needs, but it is impossible due to time constraint, for couple of weeks we were trying to figure out each students individual needs and differences , then I design further activities accordingly."

She further added "In ECE classroom specially in ECE (1) first couple of weeks are very challenging for teacher". She elaborated "at the end of the session, I overcome on all the barriers and able to create questioning environment, and every students, can ask questions and discuss about their ambiguities." Two participants out of three had shared that they design different activities to create discussion and questioning environment in ECE classroom.

All the participants were asked about the use of strategies for language and literacy, which were most important factors for foundation of a child. To develop competences in talking, listening, reading and writing, all participants expressed their ability in implementing different strategies for language and literacy such as listening; telling stories, rhythms with actions and repeating correct pronunciation after them. For language development naming different things in the school environment, home and outdoors, and discussing the pictures are most common activities used in ECE classroom. All the four participants told that to implement these strategies, they planned their activities before lesson. As a participant stated "we (ECE teachers) always try to design fun activities for language and literacy that can help to develop their literacy skills." (C, Interviewee)

Participant C elaborated, "children always enjoy creative art work, because I always let children to express themselves. These activities are challenging for teaches, because It create trouble in the classroom due to limited space and lack of helper teacher." (C, Interviewee).

Problems and Challenges

Analysis of the interview data indicated that the negative response of parents towards ECE education. They had always faced non-cooperative behavior of parents when they were called to discuss any issue related to their child's education. It is revealed that parents see the early childhood

education centers as a playing area rather than a learning environment. For parents, children do not learn academic skills such as science and math in early childhood education so this leads parents to underestimate the significance of early childhood education. Parents show zero interest in parents' teacher meetings, and not willing to know about their child progress and needs.

Qualitative data analysis showed that one of the biggest issues faced by a ECE teacher in an ECE classroom was age difference of ECE children. At the time of enrollment there is no criteria for age limit in ECE (1) and ECE (2), which creates challenging environment for us during teaching. For instance, some of the children are above the age level. Those over- age children create problems in teaching and learning process. All participants shared the same problem they mostly face during teaching. All the participants told that they had faced language problems especially at the beginning of the session, because children come from different social and cultural background and they have different mother tongue. At the beginning, it is very challenging for us to tackle it. It takes us couple of weeks to make them understand Urdu and English. It was also analysis from the interviews that social behavior of a child is also very challenging for ECE teachers, since children just came out of home environment and are unable to adjust in ECE classroom environment , it take us a long time to make children discipline. Participant A said, "when the children come to classrooms initially, mostly they are unable to speak Urdu or English language. All the responsibility would be on teacher's shoulders. First parents should be the helpers to overcome on language barriers." (A, Interview)

Suggestions for Quality ECE

All Three participants demanded for the English Language Training courses to teach ECE children. They demanded that AKES should take practical steps to make ECE centers more successful and effective. Just workshop is not sufficient to fulfill the vision of ECE centers. Second main suggestion made by the ECE teachers was about the Training workshop for parents. They argued that the parents' involvement and their literacy about ECE should not be ignored while planning for the effective implementation of National Curriculum 2007.ECE centers. Analysis of interview data indicates that reasons of having problems in planning for creative art and language and literacy activities. All of the ECE teachers stated that there was an inadequacy of resources for doing different kinds of activities. For example participant C stated that, "I

can't make innovative activities in my classroom because there are no available resources." (C, Interview)**.** Further she added, "I have availability of basic material, by using it I can only design sample and less challenging activities." (C, Interviewed)

Conclusion

On the basis of quantitative and qualitative findings of the current study, it is concluded that ECE centers of AKES have some short comings that creates major hurdles for the proper implementation of National ECE curriculum 2007. It can be concluded that ECE teachers had competences and skills but problem related to physical facilities were preventing them from proper implementation of the curriculum. Teachers had not sufficient space in ECE classrooms for proper completion of the classroom activities. The study also concluded that teachers were enough qualified and had skills but overcrowded classroom prevent them to complete their targeted activities. Age differences in classroom were also one of the causes of trouble for ECE teachers, which prevent them to lead teaching learning process effectively. It is also exposed that ECE teachers were not behaving gently and were not providing individual attention to every child at ECE centers. However, it was also revealed that the ECE teachers were applying daily routine, lesson review activities and activity based methods to improve language skills. ECE teachers use, checklist, observation and portfolio to asses academic performance of ECE children. It can also be concluded that Shortage of learning material, unclear definitions of learning areas, transition in activities, making children comfortable in ECE classroom and parents involvement was also a major reason which affect the proper implementation of curriculum. The teachers also need training to practice activity based methods and promote independent learning skills in children at the beginning stage.

ECE plays an important role for the holistic development of a child. Every individual in ECE centers play significance role in providing the best environment where child develop holistically. Following are the recommendations of the study based on major findings:

- Continuous capacity building workshops are required to be organized for teachers to fulfill the academic and professional requirements to implement ECE curriculum 2007.
- Community may support ECE centers in financial and material terms for providing most priorities equipment and resources for the

successful implementation of ECE curriculum 2007. For this purpose, ECE centers work to restore the trust and maintain positive relationship with community and parents.

- ECE centers may organize seminars for parents to sensitize them about the importance of their participation and support for the education of child at ECE program.

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