

Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education: A Case Study from Remote District of Central Punjab

Safdar Rehman Ghazi*

Muhammad Ajmal**

Asif Saeed***

Abstract

This study was designed to the effectiveness of early childhood education classrooms in terms of available facilities and practices in Public Elementary Schools of remote district of central Punjab. In this study survey design was used. The target population for this study was all the Head Teachers, ECE teachers and Caregivers constituted the population working in all public elementary schools in district Toba Tek Singh. However, using simple random sampling method 150 head teachers, 150 teachers and 150 caregivers (female) were selected. To collect data from the sampled participants a self-developed questionnaire was used as data collection instrument from the sample. The items set in the questionnaire was based on categories of Facilities and Practices. The questionnaire was also pretested on a small group of teachers from non-selected schools to evaluate the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha value for reliability of the questionnaire was found 0.71. It was found that there was scarcity of multimedia or projector, first aid box, washrooms, energy sources, necessary stationery, drinking water and new charts to restore the interest in learning of the kids in ECE rooms. Lack in teachers and caregivers use of different pedagogies to inculcate the basic concepts and making the ECE rooms helpful in teaching the mother language was also found.

Keywords: effectiveness, early childhood education, remote district

* Director IER, University of Science & Technology Bannu, Pakistan

Email: drsrghazi@yahoo.com

** Associate Professor, Department of DNFCE, AIOU Islamabad

Email: drajmal@aiou.edu.pk

***M.Phil Scholar, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Sub-Campus Toba Tek Singh

Email: asifctsc316@gmail.com

Introduction

The importance of ECE is worldly recognized and widely accepted. It is an essential factor in determining the next school achievements. It is considered a valuable venture (Barnett, Jung, Yarosz, Thomas, Hornbeck, Stechuk, Burns, 2008). Educational experts assert that funds which are invested on the education can generate many folds of the provided funds (Barnett, 2007). Students who avail ECE show substantial performance as compared to those who can not avail the facility. Cognitive development studies show that ECE provides good start to the kids (Magnuson, Waldfogel, 2003). ECE is very important for the kids and experts asserted that Early eight years are the time which provides the foundations for the next achievements in their life. Children try to do the things with their own to get experience and initiate new activities. Starting years included (3-5) of children are ECE necessary in the enhancement of language, era of attention, communication skills and abilities to solve problems. Gross motor skills develop by catching a ball, running, hopping, and climbing. By practicing and playing with the gadgets now kids can use small less complicated equipment's used in cutting, painting, drawing, writing to enhance listening and speaking powers. Cognition and mental abilities are polished through the simple patterns of ECE. Traditional, academic, and cognitive and developmental program of early childhood provide good achievements not only in institution but also in future life (Chambers et al. 2006).

Many researches show that early educational care can prepare the children and put them on right track for their successful future life. A systematic program in which young children participate to learn their first language and international second language before their entrance in Elementary schools which are fit for further optimum education (Cheung & Slavin, 2005). Pestalozzi asserted that the young children perceive effectively by practicing, playing, and by interacting with the provided environment, the world phenomena and other children. Early effective learning happens in well-equipped ECE rooms. Froebel and Pestalozzi assert that learning by play has significant importance in the Early development of the child. Positive emotional development is very important and a high rank quality of the child's Early life. According to Wawire (2006) and Hasan (2015) a well-planned early education provides

a set of experiences which are advantageous to their welfare, educational development and cognitive growth. They get these experiences by adequate equipped ECE rooms, educational materials like devices and gadgets, trained staff and healthy environment.

In Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan, a campaign was launched by the government regarding intention that every child should join school and continue his/her early education. The necessity of provision of friendly environment in the school for children was also under consideration of that campaign. Every child has right to get free early education in the public institutions and it varies directly with the availability of the resources. In Pakistan, no any progress in research work has been done on ECE from its existence. The actual cause is that, the developing countries and especially in Pakistan community members and poor parents do not have awareness about the importance of Early education. The National Education Policy (1998-2010) again take in the “Katchi” class for beginners in elementary schools which introduced the years govern to the primary education from 5–9. It is not implemented and even process has not started yet due to lack of resources and priorities. In Pakistan's priority area of Elementary education is (5–9 age groups). Having been achieved the universal Elementary Education (UPE), the next priority area is ECE (Government of Pakistan, 1998-2010).

These little kids have curiosity to know about the new things that, how they look and how they work. Young ones are active and eager to know about new things. They want to touch and grasp whatever the thing is placed near them. They want to constantly exploring, manipulating, and experimenting. Early child education is a plan to put them on right track which can take them to successful life for the development of their own and for the development of the country as great men are the assets of the nation. This can be done if a teacher can have the ability to attain the attention of student and impressing them by good way of teaching and effective teaching which make the classroom a fun for the young children to get in the classroom (Li, 2006). Suitable care of children can improve their learning abilities and they showed better academic results in their next optimum education. Each area in the ECE classroom must be equipped for children in which they can work comfortably. Children get knowledge by taking part in games and group activities. They build strong relations by interaction and enhance their self-respect through proper

practices. The Early childhood experiences provide a range of opportunities in which children view themselves each other and their world (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005). The starting point of making the ECE classrooms, child friendly environment is to grasp the interest of a child and then to maintain and broaden it. This can lead to curiosity among the children for further learning (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013).

ECE classrooms provide proper environment to involve the kids in fundamental educational activities. The effectiveness of ECE rooms depends upon expert educator. ECE rooms attract the attention of the kids and maintain their interest in learning activities. The effectiveness of ECE rooms can be estimated by optimum utilization of the provided gadgets. This study will help to improve the effectiveness of ECE rooms provided in the schools. ECE rooms provide a facility for children to start their learning by using gadgets and devices with the teacher's help and guidance. This study is to find out the effectiveness of ECE rooms which are furnished and equipped in many Punjab high schools. The study will help in the policy making and it will indicate the grey areas in the proper usage of the facility of ECE rooms. Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) has started ECE project which has a substantial enrolment and betterment of school environment to change them into child friendly schools. Under this project Directorate of Staff Development has undergone growth ECE school-rooms in 1000 first schools in all Punjab through its District training and Support insides. This first move supported in the school record of names and retention of learners. Under this design, the supporters coming between groups have been made: about education general condition of the already having existence school-rooms are made different and made good-looking through Pan covered wire maps painting walls with some basic chief ideas, lines for happy learning of early year young persons. Learning facilities and resources are on condition that in agreement with the National work mapped out in school of ECE and learning necessary qualities.

The motto of Education for all has become the voice of the common people in Pakistan and the other nations. Funds were not properly managed for the implementation of ECE rooms in all schools. Models were not provided for the construction of ECE rooms in the schools. USAID's fund distribution management provoked an example and idea that how to implement ECE rooms in the public schools. Need was to think that how

these programs could be launched in Pakistan. In Toba Tek Singh the ECE programme was initiated at first preference, moreover, it was led to the success which was termed as “pilot project” in 2011 having target to be achieved up to 20% the total target, also known as the phase-1, after that phase-1. It had to be carried out to achieve the target up to 40% and finally under 3rd phase it was taken under policy to be made possible up to 100% in district Toba Tek Singh. Teachers, head teachers and care givers of the concerned ECE schools, were also trained about the use of learning resources for early year kids to get well their learning, promoting power of invention. They were also trained on the working well use of low price and no price material for learning and doing activities. Therefore, it is important to know the effectiveness of the classrooms in terms of facilities and practices.

Objective

To identify the effectiveness of the early child education classrooms in Public Elementary Schools at Remote District of Central Punjab.

Research Methodology

This study was descriptive in nature and a survey design was used in this study. The target population for this study was the head teacher, ECE teacher, care giver (female) at Public Elementary School Level in District Toba Tek Singh (285 Elementary schools in the District Toba Tek Singh in which 101 Male Schools and 184 Female Elementary Schools). Therefore, all the Head Teachers, ECE teachers and Caregivers (N=285 each) constituted the population of this study as these are the all public elementary schools in district Toba Tek Singh where ECE rooms has been established by the Govt. of the Punjab. However, 150 public elementary schools at district Toba Tek Singh was selected using simple random sampling method. In this way 150 head teachers, 150 teachers and 150 caregivers (female) were selected from the selected schools.

In this study to collect data from the sampled head teachers, ECE teachers and caregivers a self-developed questionnaire was used as data collection instrument from the sample. Initially, this questionnaire was developed based on objectives of the study consisting of 50 items. The

questionnaire was also pilot tested. This was pretested on a small group of educationists, experts and professors to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire. All input inside the forms of remarks, hints, thoughts, proposals, corrections and views have been considered to enhance, improvise and upgrade the extent of validity of the tool. To make certain that the measures and variables evolved as the gadgets in the questionnaire were appropriate, then the instrument become tested for its reliability. Finally, the items set in the questionnaire was based on two categories (1) Facilities have 12 items (2) Practices 31 items of Effectiveness of ECE Rooms. This close form questionnaire with five-point Likert type rating scale of Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA) to measure the effectiveness of ECE classrooms in public Elementary Schools at District Toba Tek Singh. For the purpose of reliability, the head teachers, ECE teachers and caregivers (N=10 from each group) were selected from non-selected schools to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. The collected data was entered in the software “Statistical Package for Social Sciences” and Cronbach Alpha value for reliability of the questionnaire was found 0.71 which was considered for the prudent start of the study for data collection. To ensure the ethical considerations; consent of the selected participants was also sought on a consent form before data collection process. After finalization the process of ethical considerations and the questionnaire; the data was collected personally by one of the researchers through the questionnaire from the selected Head Teachers, Early Childhood Education Teachers and Caregivers from the selected Elementary schools of the District Toba Tek Singh.

Findings

In this study the collected data was analyzed in MS-Excel 2007 using mean and standard deviation as a statistical method. The results of the study were presented in the following graphical forms. The results are shown in two figures: The following Fig. 1 shows the graphical representation of available facilities in Early Childhood Education classrooms in a rank order.

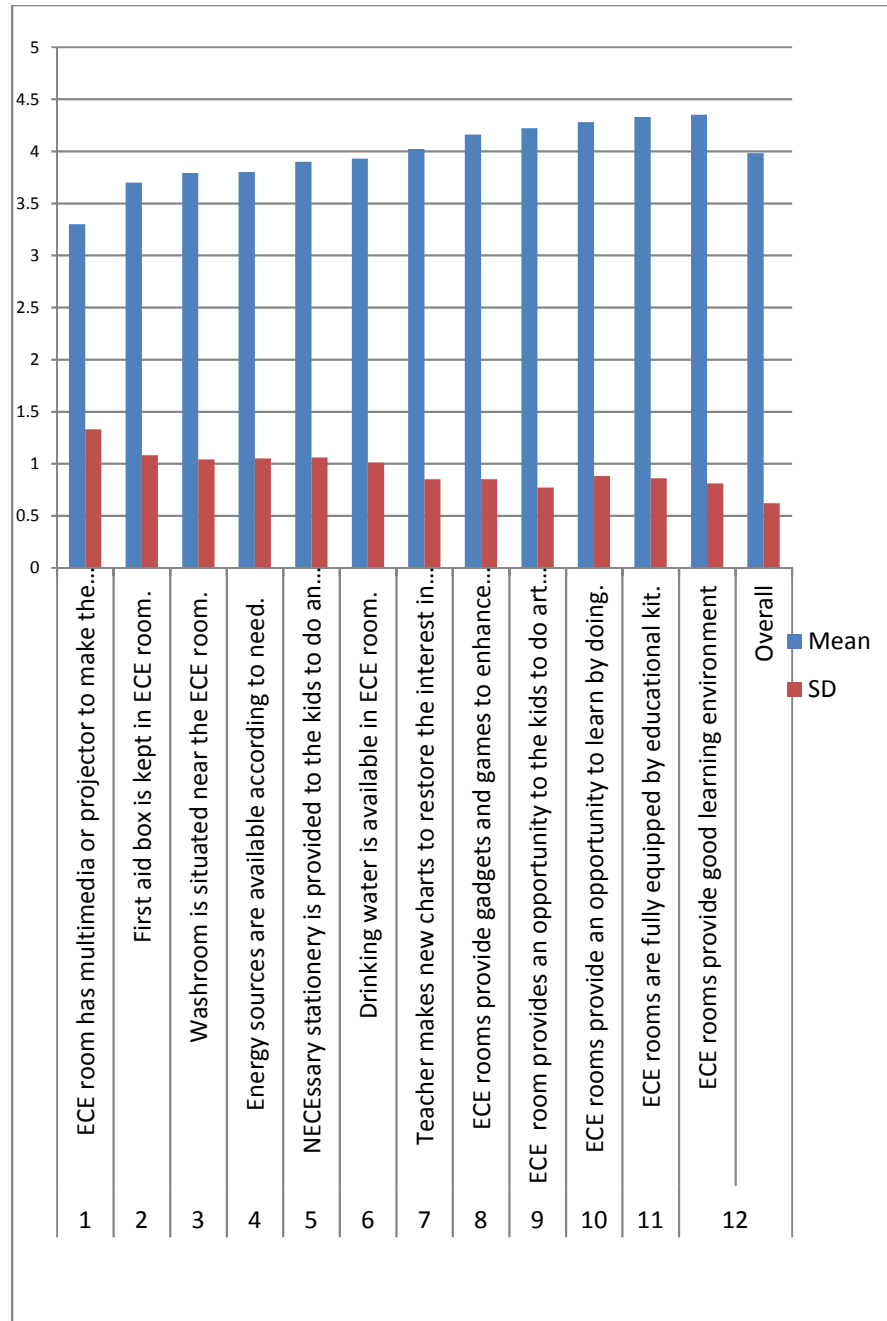


Figure 1: Rank order of ECE rooms Facilities

The Figure 1 shows the low means (<4) for the statements “ECE room has multimedia or projector to make the learning interesting”, “First aid box is kept in ECE room”, “Washroom is situated near the ECE room”, “Energy sources are available according to need”, “Necessary stationery is provided to the kids to do an activity in the ECE room”, “Drinking water is available in ECE room” and “Teacher makes new charts to restore the interest in learning of the kids in ECE room”. However, high means (>4) are shown for the statements “ECE rooms provide gadgets and games to enhance learning”, “ECE room provides an opportunity to the kids to do art work”, “ECE rooms provide an opportunity to learn by doing”, “ECE rooms are fully equipped by educational kit” and “ECE rooms provide good learning environment. Therefore, low level means can be seen regarding the overall classroom facilities.

The following Fig. 2 shows the utilization of available facilities or practices in the Early Childhood Education classrooms in a rank order form.

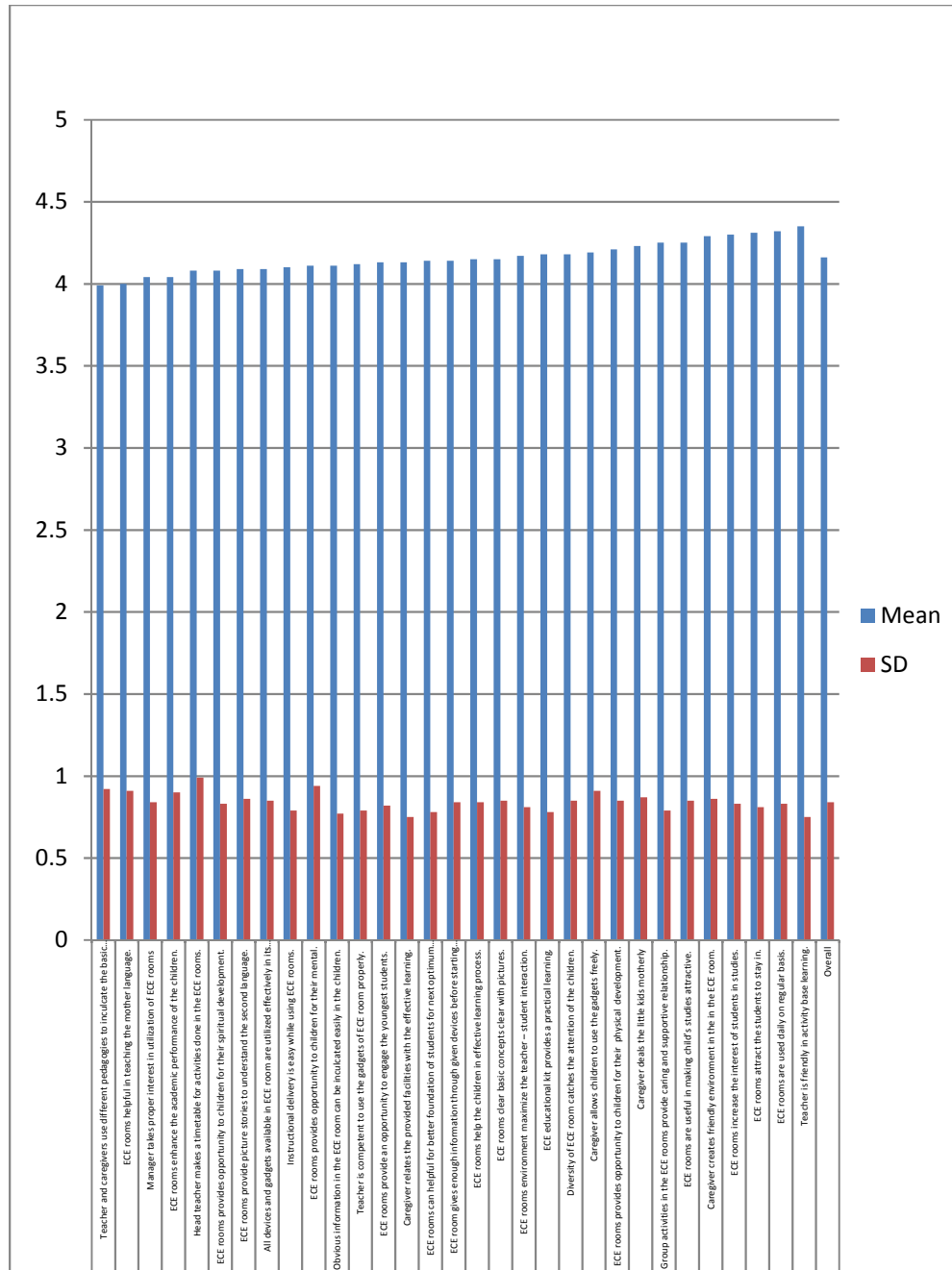


Figure 2: Rank order of ECE rooms Practices

Figure 2 shows the low mean (<4) for the statements “Teacher and caregivers use different pedagogies to inculcate the basic concepts” and “ECE rooms helpful in teaching the mother language” while high mean (>4) can be seen for the statements “Manager takes proper interest in utilization of ECE rooms”, “ECE rooms enhance the academic performance of the children”, “Head teacher makes a timetable for activities done in the ECE rooms”, “ECE rooms provides opportunity to children for their spiritual development”, “ECE rooms provide picture stories to understand the second language”, “All devices and gadgets available in ECE room are utilized effectively in its true sense”, “Instructional delivery is easy while using ECE rooms”, “ECE rooms provides opportunity to children for their mental”, “Obvious information in the ECE room can be inculcated easily in the children”, “Teacher is competent to use the gadgets of ECE room properly”, “ECE rooms provides an opportunity to engage the youngest students”, “Caregiver relates the provided facilities with the effective learning”, “ECE rooms can helpful for better foundation of students for next optimum education”, “ECE rooms gives enough information through given devices before starting the books”, “ECE rooms help the children in effective learning process”, “ECE rooms clear basic concepts clear with pictures”, “ECE rooms environment maximize the teacher – student interaction”, “ECE educational kit provides a practical learning”, “Diversity of ECE room catches the attention of the children”, “Caregiver allows children to use the gadgets freely”, “ECE rooms provides opportunity to children for their physical development”, “Caregiver deals the little kids motherly”, “Group activities in the ECE rooms provide caring and supportive relationship”, “ECE rooms are useful in making child’s studies attractive”, “Caregiver creates friendly environment in the in the ECE room”, “ECE rooms increase the interest of students in studies”, “ECE rooms attract the students to stay in”, “ECE rooms are used daily on regular basis” and “Teacher is friendly in activity base learning”. Therefore, overall high mean score can be seen for the practices.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be concluded from the results of the study that there was a lack of availability of number of necessary ECE resources in ECE classroom.

There was scarcity of multimedia or projector, first aid box, washrooms, energy sources, necessary stationery, drinking water and new charts to restore the interest in learning of the kids in ECE classrooms. There was dearth among teachers and caregivers to use different pedagogies to inculcate the basic concepts among youngest of the nation, and to make the ECE classrooms helpful in teaching the mother language in a better way.

On the basis of the conclusions of the study, it can be safely recommended that more facilities regarding ECE rooms in context of multimedia or projectors, first aid boxes, washrooms, energy sources, stationery, drinking water is the need of time. For the purpose, big amount may be reserved in educational budget by the Govt. of the Punjab. Later on, a follow up monitoring and evaluation should be occurred on the basis of provided facilities and students outcomes. Availability of funds for maintaining and up-gradation of the facilities can make the efforts more fruitful.

ECE Teachers and caregivers need to be properly trained. Therefore, they may be able to adopt modern methods of child care. Moreover, teachers training in new classroom management strategies in early year education is also required.

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