

Early Childhood Care and Education: Parental Perception

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Abstract

The present study entitled "Early Childhood Care and Education: Parental perception" falls mainly within the preview of survey of pre-schools. Interview method has been employed in this study. The study involved 50 nursery schools/ECCE centers in 6 districts of Punjab. Information was collected from the 60 parents of the children who were 3 yrs to 6yrs old and were studying in these schools. Findings of the present study indicate significant differences in the opinion of parents regarding early childhood education. Majority of parent's considered caring and well qualified staff as an important indicator for an ideal pre-school. Majority of parents thought that children get multiple benefits from early childhood education if more teaching learning aids are added whereas according to 35% parents, pre-schools should have proper indoor /outdoor playing area as one of the major infrastructure facility. Most of the parents felt that caring and loving staff is required in the pre-schools of their child whereas few parents (40%) feels that they want teachers with good academic qualification to be added in the pre-school of their child. Findings also elucidate that parents believed that activity based curriculum or play way approach as a best method for teaching basics. 60% parents visit the school of their child once a month to know the progress of their child.

Keywords: *Preschool Education, Preschool Centers, Parental Perception*

Introduction

The first six years of life are critical years of human life since the rate of development in these years is more rapid than at any other stage of development. Global brain research also informs us about the significance of early years for brain development. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) makes a positive contribution to children's long term development and learning by facilitating an enabling and stimulating environment in these foundation stages of lifelong learning.

Parents as caregivers are critical in providing a stimulating learning environment to the child and the first two and a half to three years need not be in a formal learning environment. The National Curriculum Framework acknowledges the significance of involvement of parents, family and community. (MWCD,2012).

Preschool education plays significant role as it helps children in successful completion of primary education. It provides the foundation for all around development and enables the child to understand various issues (Shabnam 2003). Children at this stage need to be encouraged to develop positive attitude through child to nature and the child to child interaction education is to be designed carefully to provide wholesome growth and development of children. (Harkness and Super 1991).Parents play an important role in the early childhood care and education(Lau and Lueng 1992).Parent involvement is linked to children's total learning. The greater parent involvement in children's learning positively affect the school performance including higher academic achievement (Yan and Lin 2002).

Parents believe that three to six is the right age for the child to receive preschool education as the child is able to understand things well (Comer 1991). Research studies have shown that preschool education enhance early literacy skills, child's ability to learn, to communicate ideas and feelings and to get along well with others. Children who receive quality preschool education are more likely to succeed in school and in life (Sander 2003). Children with richer literacy environment demonstrate higher level of reading knowledge and skills at preschool entry (Nord and Lennon 2002). Good preschool education increases cognitive abilities, school achievement, improves classroom behavior, decrease grade repetition among children (Barnett 2004). Parents consider that preschools, kindergarten, Balwadis or Anganwadis play a vital role to enhance the overall development of the child (www.ECDgroup.com). Parents perceive that play way approach in preschool centers is the best method for teaching as it helps in total learning and facilitate developmental out comes in children (Dauber et al. 1993). Preschool education is therefore an integral part of child-rearing experience provided by any agency for all children. One of the providers of early childhood care and education in India is Integrated Child Development Services Scheme. Preschool education is one the component of ICDS Scheme. But this remains one of the weakest components of ICDS. Many parents feel the quality of preschool education in anganwadi centers is poor and workers are less favorably inclined towards children (Shabnam 2003).

Methodology

Sample

The present study entitled "Early Childhood Care and Education: Parental perception" falls mainly within the preview of survey of pre-schools. Interview method has been employed in this study. The study involved 50 nursery schools/ECCE centers in 6 districts of Punjab. Information was collected from the 60 parents of the children who were 3 yrs to 6yrs old and were studying in these schools. Samples were selected using purposive sampling techniques.

Research instrument

The tools used for data gathering in the present study were a self-devised interview schedule. Open ended question related to various aspects of preschool education were included.

Data Analysis: The data was analyzed through content analysis. Tabulation and calculation of percentages were also carried out is a combination of concepts.

Interview Schedule for Parents

Question1. What qualities an ideal pre-school should have, according to you?

Question2. What according to you should be done to improve the infrastructure provided by the school of your child ?

Question 3. Describe critically the care and education provided to your child by the teacher/staff of the pre-school?

Question 4. According to you what should be done to improve the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education in India?

Question 5. How often do you visit pre-school to know the progress of your child?

RESULTS

Quality Indicators for an Ideal pre-School

Table 1 shows views of parents for the quality indicator for better functioning of ECCE

TABLE 1
Quality Indicators

S. No.	Quality Indicators	Number	%age of parents
1.	Caring and well qualified staff	18	30
2.	Less burden more activities	14	24
3.	Less student/teacher ratio	9	16
4.	Personal care	8	12
5.	Better infrastructure	6	10
6.	Location nearby	4	06
7.	Better transport facility	1	02
	Total	60	

30% parents consider caring and well qualified staff as the most important indicators for improving the quality of ECCE, 24% parents emphasize less burden and more activities whereas 16% parents think that less student teacher ratio required for an ideal pre-school. 12% parents consider personal care as an important feature. 10% parents perceive that better infrastructure should be there in an ideal pre-school. Only 6% parents feel that nearby location of the school and 2% consider better transport facility should be available for an ideal pre-school.

Infrastructure Facilities Required To Improve The Pre-School Of Your Child

Table 2 shows the type of infrastructure facilities required in the schools of their child.

TABLE 2
Infrastructure Facilities Required To Improve The Pre-School Of Your Child

S. No.	Infrastructure facilities required in pre-school	Number	% of parents
1.	More teaching learning aids	24	40
2.	Indoor/Outdoor playing area	17	35
3.	Hygienic Room/Toilets	08	15
4.	Comfortable Furniture	05	10
	Total	60	

According to table 2, 40% parents more teaching learning aids were required, 35% parents say that more indoor and outdoor playing area was required in the present schools of their child. 15% parents want hygienic rooms and toilets and only 10% said that they want comfortable furniture for their wards.

Critical Description of Care and Education Required In the Pre- School

Table 3 shows the critical views of parents regarding the care and education of the school of their child.

TABLE 3

Care and Education Required In the Pre- School

S. No.	Critical description of care and education	Number	%
1.	Caring and loving staff	36	60
2.	Teachers with good academic qualification	24	40
	Total	60	

Table 3 shows the critical views of parents regarding the care and education of the school of their child .60% parent's say that more caring and loving staff was required and 40% parents wanted teachers with good academic qualification.

Analysis of Indicators Required To Improve The Quality Of ECCE In India

Table 4 shows the quality indicators mentioned by the parents to improve the quality of ECCE in India.

TABLE 4

Indicators Required To Improve The Quality Of ECCE In India

S. No.	Quality indicators for better ECCE in India	Number	%
1.	Activity based curriculum	24	48
2.	Individual attention	11	22
3.	Technology based education	6	12
4.	Parental education	3	6
5.	Conceptual education	3	6
6.	Better infrastructure facilities	3	6
		50	100

According to table 4, 48% parents consider activity based curriculum as the best indicator to improve the quality of ECCE in India as presently there is a lot of academic pressure on the preschoolers, 23% consider individual attention, 12% as technology based education whereas parental education, Conceptual education, better infrastructure facilities got 6% preference each from parents as the quality indicator to improve the overall situation of ECCE in India.

School Visits By Parents To Know The Progress

Table 5 shows how often parents visit the school to know the progress of their child.

TABLE 5

School Visits By Parents To Know The Progress

S. No.	Parent's visit in school	Number	%age of parents
1.	Once a month on PTM's	36	60
2.	Twice a month	18	30
3.	Once in 2 months	06	10
	Total	60	100

It is clear from the table 5 that 60% parents visit school of their child only once a month on PTM's whereas 30% parents visit twice a month and only 10% visit once

in two months. Hence it was proved that mostly parents visit only once a month.

Discussion

1. Parents of 30% students studying in these schools wanted caring and well qualified staff, whereas 24% parents said they want activity based curriculum.
2. According to 40% parents more teaching aids are required and according to 35% parents spacious indoor and outdoor areas were required to improve the infrastructure facility in the pre-school of their child.
3. About 60% parents wanted that staff and teachers of the pre-school of their child to be more loving and caring and 40% parents wanted teachers with good academic qualification.
4. 47% parents consider activity based curriculum as the best indicator to improve ECCE in India, 23% consider individual attention, 12% parents preferred technology based education whereas parental education, Conceptual education, Better infrastructure facilities got 6% preference each from parents as the quality indicator.
5. Majority of the parents about 60% told that they visit the pre-school of their child only once a month to know the progress of the child whereas 30% parents visit twice a month and about 10% parents visit once in two months time to know the progress of their child .

Conclusion

Early childhood education has a significant role to play in perpetuating the desirable changes in society. Preschool is the Child's first step towards organized care and learning in the larger society. It provides a major influence on the development of Child's intellectual capacities, interpersonal skills, social behavior and personality of children. Early childhood education in its wider sense implies not only on acquisition of knowledge but also the development of abilities, skills and qualities of character (Shabnam 2003). Findings of the present study indicate significant differences in the opinion of parents regarding early childhood education. Majority of parents considered caring and well qualified staff as an important indicator for an ideal pre-school. 24% parents consider less burden and more activities as an important indicator, they felt that when children receive education at an early age with interactive activity based curriculum they are better equipped to handle schools in later years. Majority of parents thought that children get multiple benefits from early childhood education if more teaching learning aids are added whereas according to 35% parents, pre-schools should have proper indoor / outdoor playing area as one of the major infrastructure facility. Most of the parents felt that caring and loving staff is required in the pre-schools of their child whereas few parents (40%) feel that they want teachers with good academic qualification to be added in the pre-school of their child. Findings also elucidate that parents believed that activity based curriculum or play way approach as a best method for teaching basics. They perceive that preschool education becomes more effective and enriched when it is based on play way approach. It helps the children to learn and absorb things quickly and get more enjoyment out of it. On the other hand 22% parents gave weightage to individual attention as a quality indicator required to improve ECCE in India. 60% parents visit the school of their child once a month to know the progress of their child.

Suggestions and Recommendation

Parents should be sensitized to the importance of preschool education and its vital role in children's lives. Parents should also be made aware about the importance of play way approach in early childhood education. The planners and school personnel should focus on child centered curriculum for the wholesome growth and development. There should be participation and involvement of parents in early education to improve the performance and the best outcome of child. There should be proper comprehensive supervision of pre-school teachers anganwadi workers so they dedicate more time to preschool educational activities. Emphasis should not be laid only on nutrition and immunization but children should also get adequate educational inputs. The preschool education component should be strengthened by providing training and orientation to staff and teachers. Necessary educational equipment and toys should also take available to each centre. There should be greater community participation so that every single person comes to know about pre-school education and its widening coverage.

Community based models: Active involvement from parents and communities is key to ensuring that early childhood services remain relevant to the needs of the children.

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