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Assessing the Learning Achievement and Learning Material for Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of the study was to analyze the early childhood education system and learning material provide by the government to the kid room. The main objectives of the study were (a) to analyze language and literacy skills of children (b) to assess the key learning areas of early childhood education (c) to recommended suitable strategies in the improvement early childhood education. The study was descriptive in nature while questionnaire was developed to collect data from the teachers and the children. 25 early childhood teachers were selected from ECE schools. Questionnaire was divided into six categories which indicated six factors that directly and indirectly associate with school learning environment (i) Personal and social development (ii) basic mathematical concepts (iii) health/hygiene and safety (iv) world around us (v) creative art (vi) language and literacy skills. The researcher personally collected data from selected sample of the research population in each tehsils of district Bahawalpur. The collected data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 by using Statistical formulas of simple mean, one way ANNOVA, t-test and percentage. On the basis of findings of data analysis, conclusion had been drown and suitable suggestions were posited. Furthermore, recommendations were proposed for the improvement in ECE class rooms, staff should be trained for teaching young children, the head teacher should be encourage both the teachers and children, parents must cooperate the teachers, special fund should be provided, food should be provided, duration should be of two years.

Introduction

ECE is the most important period for the development of mental and social development. This is the period when a child acquires languages and early literacy in this early period children are experienced very active learners and interpret the things in their own way (Bowkett, 2005). ECE should be considered as a first step of basic education and should be the integral part of the national education system. If ECE provided with a high quality it could lay a strong foundation for the life-long learning and also can motivate children for all sorts of development including Physical, social, cognitive and linguistics (Rogerson and Scott, 2010). At this stage children face lot of problems which affect the personality of the children. To avoid these circumstances in the primary school children it has always been recommended that teachers adopt such a way of teaching that could also address their sensitivity of thoughts and provide them free and independent atmosphere to express what they feel.

In the countries like Pakistan such situations are very common now and there is an utmost need to transform the situation by adopting the modern methods and understanding of children psychology at this level to control the issue at its beginning (Brunskill, 2006). The most important element at early childhood level is, teacher should remove fear among the children. As fear is unpleasant emotion or thinking which is the feelings we get when we are afraid and worried that something is going to bad and happen (Craft, 2002). All children mostly have fear in period of their childhood i.e. fear of the dark, fear of unknown, monster and animals (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). This fear is normally and time limited but treating and fear in school age risky for long term which students don't cover easily. This fear effects on their lives, family, school and also community. Primary school children have mostly the fear of parents, fear of teacher, fear of game, fear of rejection, fear of disappointing, fear of judgment, fear of homework, fear of peer, fear of playground and fear of exams (Banks, 2003). As the children are regarded as the power full nation so it is most important for the state to take some measures to decrease the fear among early grade students and give better attention to them it impossible to gain the better valuable dreams (Judy & Larson-Yvonne. Libby, 2002). School teachers can play an effective role of to decrease the state of fear among children. Taneja (2006) seems agreed with the point of view that teacher and students positive relationship can develop the better personality of the children. School teachers can deal all the violence which occurs in every individual. If the teacher encourage the children and prepare for dealing with stress improving confidence and also deal with fear of failure and fear of rejection. In family, children have fear of parents if child does not complete school work, parents and teachers both scrod and punish them. This thing effect on the emotion, feelings and thinking styles of children. Parents' separation is another cause which badly effect on child learning skills (Sharan, 2006).

The lots of research studies have been conducted to remove the fear among children. The most important thing to tackle the fear is that teacher should ensure such an environment that teacher are always open for communication and honest discussion. We must have to demonstrate that we are trustworthy and respectful of others. It has been revealed in the observation of the students that most of the students learns willingly and their loss of interest in studies and the same we can witness in the shape of low performance, absenteeism, slow in assignment submission, non-co-operative behaviour, a negative approach (Sahu, 2004).

According to Hammerman (2006) who argues that “the use of cultural referents in teaching bridges and explains the mainstream culture, while valuing and recognizing the students’ own cultures. This connection between culture and classroom instruction has been derived from the experience that cultural practices shape thinking processes, which serve as tools for learning within and outside school Thus, culturally responsive education recognizes, respects and uses students’ identities and backgrounds as meaningful sources”.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were (a) to analyze language and literacy skills of children (b) to assess the key learning areas of early childhood education (c) to recommended suitable strategies in the improvement early childhood education.

Research Methodology

The study was based on descriptive in nature and quantitative research approach was used to gather information from the early childhood educators. 25 early childhood teachers and 120 children were selected from ECE schools. Questionnaire and test were developed which indicated six factors that directly and indirectly associate with school learning environment (i) Personal and social development (ii) basic mathematical concepts (iii) health/hygiene and safety (iv) world around us (v) creative art (vi) language and literacy skills. The questioner provided to the teachers and before that a brief explanation about the topic and the purpose behind that questioner were given by the researcher while test was distributed among the children to assess, what they have learnt from the ECE material provided by the government for the kids rooms. It was necessary to clear their mind about the purpose behind this research.

Data analysis and Results

After the validation of questionnaire, researchers visited different primary schools of district Bahawalpur where nursery classes and kids rooms exists. Researchers personally visited all the sampled schools of district Bahawalpur. After data collection, it was fed in two separate spread sheets on SPSS-16 and run the statistical formulas e.g. T.Test and ANNOVA. On the base of analysis and results of the study following results were drawn:

Table 1 Gender wise opinion early childhood learning material

Sr. No.	Factor Name	Mean Male	Mean Female	M.D	f	t	Sig
1	Personal and Social Development	2.597	2.846	.24893	.180	.2.204	.674
2	Basic Mathematical Concepts	2.3833	2.815	.432	.341	.2.757	.562
3	Health/Hygiene and Safety	3.020	3.275	.254	.366	.1.619	.4548
4	World around us	2.670	3.083	.413	.380	.4.021	.541
5	Creative art	2.510	2.865	.354	1.723	.2.862	.196
6	Language and literacy skills	2.489	2.750	.260	.276	.2.287	.602

Table 1 depicts the factor wise analysis of male and female opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of male is 2.597 while the mean score of female is 2.846 and mean deference is .2489 which indicates that female children were performing slightly better than males. The F value of .180 of the factor personal and social development while the t. value is .2.204. Its (P) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. The second factor wise analysis of male and female opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of the mala is 2.838 while the mean score of female is 2.815 and mean deference is .4320 which indicates that female children were performing slightly better than males. The F value of .341 of the factor basic mathematical concepts while the t. value is 2.757. It's (p) value insignificant and is greater than 0.05. The third factor wise analysis of male and female opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of male is 3.020 while the mean score of female is 3.275 and mean deference is .2548 which indicates that female children were performing slightly better than males. The F value is .366 of the factor Health/Hygiene and Safety while t. value is 1.619. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. The fourth factor wise analysis of male and female opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of male is 2.670 while female the mean score of female is 3.083 and mean deference is .4131 which that female child were performing slightly better than males. The F value is .380 of the factor world around us while the t. value is 4.021. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. The fifth factor wise analysis of male and female opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of the male is 2.510 while the female mean score is 2.865 and mean deference is .3549 which indicate that female children performing slightly better than males. The F value is 1.723 of the factor creative art while the t. value is 2.862. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. The sixth factor wise analysis of male and female opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of male is 2.489 while the mean score of female is 2.750 and mean deference is .2604 which indicate that female children performing slightly better than males. The F value is .276 of the factor Language and Literacy skills while the t. value 2.287. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05.

Table 2 Area wise opinion early childhood learning material

Sr. No.	Factor Name	Mean Urban	Mean Rural	M.D	f	t.	Sig
1	Personal and Social Development	2.789	2.688	.101	2.115	.773	.152
2	Basic Mathematical Concepts	2.673	2.567	.105	2.288	.613	.137
3	Health/Hygiene and Safety	3.096	3.188	.091	.066	.553	.798
4	World around us	2.868	2.895	.247	.176	.219	.676
5	Creative art	2.684	2.701	.017	2.919	.126	.094
6	Language and literacy skills	2.609	2.634	.024	1.549	.201	.219

Table 2 identifies the factor wise analysis of urban and rural areas opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of urban area is 2.789 while the mean score of rural area

is 2.688 and mean deference is .101 which indicate that urban children performing slightly better than rural children. The F value is 2.115 of the factor personal and social development while the t. value is .773. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. The second factor wise analysis of urban and rural area opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of urban area is 2.673 while the mean score is rural area is 2.567 and mean deference is .10594 which indicate that urban children performing slightly better than rural children. The F value is 2.288 of the factor Basic Mathematical Concepts while the t. value is .613. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. Third factor wise analysis of urban and rural areas opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of urban area is 3.096 while the mean score of rural area is 3.188 and mean deference is .091 which indicate that rural children performing slightly better than urban children. The F value is .066 of factor Health/Hygiene and Safety while the t value is .553. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. Fourth factor wise analysis of urban and rural areas opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of urban area is 2.868 while the mean score of rural area is 2.895 and mean deference is .2474 which indicate that rural area children performing is slightly better than urban area children. The F value is .176 of the factor World around us while the t. value is .219. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. Fifth factor wise analysis of urban and rural areas opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of urban area is 2.684 while the mean score of the rural area is 2.701 and mean deference is .0174 which indicate that rural area children performing slightly better than urban area children. The F value is 2.919 of the factor Creative art while the t. value .126. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05. The sixth factor wise analysis of urban and rural areas opinion of teachers. This comparative analysis shows the mean score of the urban area is 2.609 while the rural area is 2.634 and mean deference is .0247 which indicate that rural area children performing slightly better than urban area children. The F value is 1.549 of the factor Language and Literacy skills while the t. value is .201. Its (p) value is insignificant and is greater than 0.05.

Conclusion and Discussion

In light of the results of the study it is concluded that most of teachers were of the view that children listen to teachers attentively while they are unable to describe their own experiences and most of teachers opined that children are able to react to stories. The result fairly shows that majority of the children understand the teachers instructions and most of the teachers were of the view that almost every child can differentiate between different sounds and most of the children handle their books carefully. Majority of the children know that Urdu is read from right to left and English is read from left to right and most of teachers opined that majority of the children are able to recognize and understand the Urdu and English alphabets and can describes the pictures when shown to them. This study shows, that most of the children are able to writes Urdu and English alphabets while they are unable to write their own name in Urdu and English. The analysis of the study indicates that more than half of children are able to define color and shapes while more than half of the children are unable to differentiate between lengths and weights. Most of the teachers opined that children are able to count and writes numerals 1-9 and the researcher found out that most of the children have positive and cooperative relationship with peers and they respect others opinions and they are able to take care of others things and know their responsibilities.

Result of the study further reveals that most of the children are unable to wait for his turn while most of the teachers were of the view that majority of the children share things with others and feel responsible to make queue. Most of the teachers are of the view that majority of the children clean their classrooms happily and throw litter in the bin and know about health/hygiene and safety. The analysis of the study concludes that the teachers were of the view that most of the children have the knowledge of greeting words like thank you and salaam. According to the results of the studies it is concluded that majority of the children has Islamic knowledge and most of the teacher opined that most of the children can recite Bismillah, first Kalma and know about Namaaz, while the researcher found that more than half of the children are unable to define and recite Elm ki dua. The analysis of the study indicates that majority of the children have awareness of their nationality. The children knew the name of their country and could recognize its flag. The researcher also found out that the children had the basic knowledge of everyday life and they could able to describe the uses of water. The children also had the general knowledge about radio/T.V, animals /birds, fruits/vegetables and seasons, however they could not tell about the different professions properly.

Recommendations

The study indicated the following recommendations to improve the early childhood education.

- Trained and proper staff for teaching the young children is first and foremost pre-requisite for ECE. The staff should be complete with an adequate number of students. It was observed that schools where only two teachers served, could not take the burden, and hence the children were ignored and there were management problems as well. The staff should be trained for teaching young children. They should be caring, considerate and patient to handle the young children with affection.
- The head teacher should regularly check the teachers and their teaching styles regularly. He or she should keep a strict system of check and balances. He should check the children's performances and results regularly to improve and perfect the entire system. The head teacher should be encouraging towards both the teachers and students. The students as well as the teachers should be awarded regularly with prizes for their good performances.
- The parents should regularly attend the parent-teachers meetings and must always be aware of the child's progress. The parents' involvement in the child's education not only encourages the child but has a very positive effect on child's development. The parents should not only give pick and drop services to the child but also must make sure that the child attends the schools regularly. The parents must cooperate with the teachers in the child's education. They must not pressurize or humiliate him or her. They must have a positive and friendly relationship with each other.
- The policy makers should ensure that each school has a proper working space as well as a play area for ECE. Most schools do not provide proper space and a separate and interesting environment, which facilitate the learning experiences and different activities of the children. Food and proper lunch should be served to the children. Some children in the rural areas do not bring lunch with them due to their poor circumstances. To avoid such complexes among children, food should be provided to all the children.

- It is recommended that ECE class should be open in every school, because it was observed that ECE schools children much better than non ECE schools children.

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