

An Evaluation Of The Status Of Early Childhood Education In Sindh

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Abstract

Gone are the days when the belief that children cannot learn before the age of five used to dominate the world. It has now been substituted by the belief that a child can learn just after he is born. This notion gave birth to the concept of early childhood education. The concept of ECE is still far from being matured in Pakistan, especially Sindh. The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the status of ECE in Sindh. The data were collected from a sample of 1400 teachers and 540 headteachers from the delimited number of eleven districts of Sindh through survey method by using questionnaire instrument. The findings revealed that the status of ECE in Sindh is far behind being satisfactory. It was revealed that the quality of the physical environment, teachers and mechanism of health and hygiene facilities significantly impacted this childhood education. It was unfolded that the condition of physical the environment including ECE school-building, compound wall, lavatory block, electricity supply, drinking water, playground, plantation, fans and water supply was very miserable. Similarly, there was a shortage of furniture including chairs, tables, desks and almirah. Also, 40% posts of teachers were vacant over there, while 60of % of teachers working over there were not fully equipped with relevant skills and experience due to the lack of training. Moreover, Health and hygiene facilities were not available in most of the ECE schools. Research has been rounded off with suggestions at the end.

Keywords: Status of ECE, Quality of physical environment, quality of teachers, health and hygiene facilities.

Introduction

Stretched over the period from birth through five years, a child's age is regarded as the period of Early Childhood (MacEwan, 2013). The period of early childhood is crucial for laying down the foundation for the holistic development of the child which includes cognitive development, emotional development, physical development, social development, spiritual development and aesthetic development (Love, Chazan-Cohen, Raikes, & Brooks-Gunn, 2013).

The home serves to be the first nursery and the mother plays to be the foremost teacher of a child during the first 36 months, whereby the child learns intuitively in an informal pattern. But as the child reaches the age of 3, the school comes forward to jointly work with the parents to facilitate the innately wired pattern of development within the child by a semi-structured process of teaching whereby the child is geared to learn through a graded system footed

into a gradual shift from informal to semi-formal and later from semi-formal to formal.

The responsibility of fostering the child that once used to be placed completely on the shoulders of parents alone is now shared by other stakeholders of the society that are known as school. There are various public and private institutions with a range of titles like Preschools, ECE Centers, Kindergartens, Nursery schools and Daycares that came forward to share the responsibility of nurturing the child (Sindh Education Sector Plan, 2018).

Although the concept of ECE is not far too old in the world as reflected through its traces the history, its widespread recognition went beyond all the geographical boundaries due mainly to its phenomenal outcomes across the globe.

The lifelong and productive impact of early childhood education on the all-rounded development of a child has been internationally acknowledged now. Substantiated by the empirical findings, it has come to be surfaced as a fact that preprimary education determines the direction, pace and quality of the development of a child. Its impact is noted so far as to even influence the academic achievements of the child in higher studies. In this regard, Melhuish (2014) found that the wide-ranging impact of ECE on the upcoming personal life of the child and the academic performance of students has been markedly evident. The studies show that although the process of brain development continues throughout life, this process runs at its fastest pace during the initial years of the child completing 90% of its development by the age of 8. The period of early childhood is also known as the sensitive period because during these years the brain of a child has the greatest absorbing capacity and it readily gets stimulated at the exposure to the opportunities (Burger, 2014). Among all the factors brain development is the most critical factor due to which the early years of a child are valued so extraordinarily.

Considering the need for and importance of ECE, Sindh Government is also taking substantial measures to boost the status of ECE in the province. The government in collaboration with Aga Khan Education Service is taking several initiatives for expanding the outreach of ECE and for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning there.

Objectives

1. To analyze the current status of ECE in Sindh.
2. To assess the quality physical environment, quality of teachers and mechanism of health and hygiene facilities of ECE sections and their impact on the status of ECE in Sindh.
3. To identify the problems in the way of ECE and suggest the ways and means overcome those problems.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant improvement in the status of early childhood education.
2. There is no significant quality of the physical environment at the early childhood education level.
3. There is no significant impact of the physical environment on the status of early childhood education.
4. There is no significant quality of teachers at the early childhood education level.
5. There is no significant impact of the quality of teachers on the status of early childhood education.
6. There is no significant mechanism of health and hygienic facilities at the early childhood education level.
7. There is no significant impact of health and hygienic facilities on the status of early childhood education.

Review of Literature

The paradigm shifts from the belief that the child begins after the age of five to the belief that he begins to learn right after he is born to have given birth to the concept of ECE. The acceptance of ECE around the world has inspired a range of educational endeavors. These endeavors are evident in different global commitments. It is also affirmed by the world declaration on Education for All (1990) that the process of learning starts off the day the child is born. This conception does not merely exist in minds and meetings rather it has grown up so far as to be visible in the form of various global reports and policies. The international stakeholders in the global educational context included the concept of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in their list of global priorities which eventually came to be matured as international commitments. In this regard, UNESCO (2000) has added the mission of expanding and improving Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in its list of international educational goals. The adding of this concept to the global movement showed a trickle-down effect that ran through the veins of the national initiatives of several countries.

As the tie went by and the concept of early childhood education gained continuous popularity around the world, the government of various countries began to revisit their policies and practices of ECE more seriously to make their strategic decisions evidence-driven. As this concept became internationalized, it granted an impetus to the national governments to allocate a reasonable amount of funds to the concept of early education which had been unseen before. This brought along a mammoth proportion of financial investments in the policy development and implementation of ECE (Kagan & Gomez, 2014).

In Europe, the growing popularity of ECE gave a sudden upsurge to the admission growth of children at the ECE level. The growing interest of parents in ECE eventually created a need for more and more ECE centers.

Approximately 50% of children of the age of four were reported to be enrolled in the ECE centers in Europe; with 90% of children in Belgium, France and Italy were being enrolled in the ECE setups. Besides, the value of ECE concerning its impact on life and the need for establishing ECE centers was also acknowledged by the UK government. It realized the importance of the role played by early year education in developing the human capital. This realization fueled the government to focus on the quality of early education programs in the United Kingdom in 1990. In pursuit of improving the quality of early childhood education, there was initiated a Pre-School Education (EPPE) project in the UK in 1997 which reinforced the efforts for promoting the ECE programs in the country (Sammons, Sylva, Melhuish & Siraj, 2014)

However, in Pakistan, especially in Sindh, the concept of ECE is still in its phase of infancy. Despite being the signatory of Education for All (EFA), Pakistan has shown no pledge to exercise any strategic plan of early childhood education in the country. Consequently, Pakistan falls into the category of those countries that fall way behind in achieving the goals of ECE. The developed countries, where the literacy rate of mothers is very high, are advantaged in a way that they can implement early childhood education by preparing and engaging mothers with young children which is one of the strategies applied by several countries of the world. But the contextual realities of Pakistan do not allow it to apply this strategy. It is because the majority of women in Pakistan happen to live in a rural context and they are not even educated far from being enough trained to nurture their children. Keeping in view that preparing uneducated mothers to perform as effective ECE partner is a gigantic task and requires a mammoth amount of funds, this strategy appears to be impractical in the context of Pakistan at least for the time being.

A number of state-driven and private initiatives have been launched in order to

strengthen and formalize the ECE practices. The initiatives taken in this regard have been supported by a mammoth amount of funds. But, the impact of these programs has not proved to be lasting and sustainable. The government schools of all the provinces, especially Sindh, committed to including ECE but only as a provisional class and merely for one year during their academic plans 2014.

As support to ECE in Sindh and Baluchistan, GPE pledged 100 million. This is part of a strategic plan to promote ECE and strengthen efforts for institutionalizing ECE in primary education institutions. Besides, there are several other ECE specific programs undertaken in the region sponsored by Dubai Cares directed to fortify the foundation of preprimary education. Although these programs have increased the network of ECE in government institutions in Sindh, there is still a need for more instant efforts in this regard.

Unquestionably, early childhood education is quite demanding and intricate a process that is affected by various factors such as basic school physical environment, quality of curriculum, availability and quality of teachers, attitude and interest of students towards learning, quality of school management, financial conditions, family life, community cooperation etc. Each of these factors plays an important role in facilitating the process of multidimensional development of the child. Similarly, Mishra (2005) states that the parents, teachers, administrators and caregivers of them play a pivotal role in the development of children and

they must understand the need of children which changes at each stage of the child's life. In order for improving the quality and status of ECE programs and maximize their outcomes, it is inevitable to take all these factors into consideration. Merely erecting an ECE facility, putting together an ECE curriculum or providing teachers with ECE training is not sufficient to serve the purpose.

Methodology

This research study is quantitative in nature. The data were collected through a survey method using a questionnaire from Sindh delimited to 11 districts out of 29 districts. Primary schools having katchi/nursery classes were selected through a random sampling technique. The questionnaire was administered with 540 headteachers being 10% of the total population (5400) and 1400 teachers being 10% of the total population (14000). Furthermore, the data were also collected from the record of schools to ensure the current position of the schools in different districts. The data collected were analyzed through SPSS software version-22. Additionally, the hypotheses were tested through Chi-Square. However, item analysis was done using percentages and Chi-Square tests. The status of the physical environment, health and hygiene facilities and quality of teachers was analyzed in percentages.

Results

Analysis of school record

Table: 1. Document Analysis

Area	N=540	Status of Physical Environment			
		Satisfactory	Need Repair	Under construction	No building
Building	Frequency	262	204	37	37
	(%)	48.50	37.77	6.85	6.85
Compound wall		Available	Unavailable		Repairable
	Frequency	232	169		139

	(%)	35.74	43.52	20.74
Lavatory Block		Available	Unavailable	Repairable
	Frequency	193	235	112
	(%)	35.74	43.52	20.74
Electricity		Available	Unavailable	Disconnected
	Frequency	312	159	69
	(%)	57.78	29.44	12.78
Drinking water		Available	Unavailable	Coldwater available
	Frequency	315	156	69
	(%)	58.33	28.89	12.78
Playground		Available	Unavailable	Need attention
	Frequency	219	311	10
	(%)	40.55	57.60	1.85
Plantation		Available	Unavailable	Need attention
	Frequency	326	213	1
	(%)	60.37	39.44	0.19
Chairs		Available	Required	
	Frequency	10829	9998	
	(%)	52	48.00	
Tables		Available	Required	
	Frequency	4039	4044	
	(%)	49.97	50.03	
Desks		Available	Required	
	Frequency	35006	32124	
	(%)	52.14	47.86	
Almirah		Available	Required	
	Frequency	2967	2571	
	(%)	53.58	46.42	
Fans		Available	Required	
	Frequency	9840	5767	
	(%)	63.04	36.96	
Water pump		Available	Required	
	Frequency	428	462	
	(%)	48	52	
Status of ECE Teachers				
Vacant positions		Working posts	Vacant post	Sanctioned posts
	Frequency	8400	5600	14000
	(%)	60	40	100
Status of Health & Hygiene Facilities				
Health & Hygiene		Available	Unavailable	
	Frequency	40	500	
	(%)	7.40	92.60	

Analysis: Table 1 includes the data collected from 540 school Headteachers revealing the status of the physical environment including ECE school building, compound wall, lavatory block, electricity, drinking water, playground, plantation, fans and water pump was not

satisfactory. Similarly, there was a shortage of furniture including chairs, tables, desks and almirah. Also, 40% of the posts of teachers were vacant over there. Moreover, Health and hygiene facilities were not available in most of the ECE schools.

Table: 2 Item analyses

Items	Respondents	Responses (% and X ²)						
		SD	D	UN	A	SA	X ²	Sig
Status of school								
1. The status of ECE is satisfactory in Sindh.	Teachers	71.11	19.9	0.9	4.8	3.5	2434.95	0.0
	Headteachers	70.6	26.3	0.2	2.4	0.6	992.44	0.0
2. The status of ECE is improving gradually in Sindh.	Teachers	56.6	27.7	1.3	11.4	3	1481.29	0.0
	Headteachers	61.1	35.9	0.2	2.2	0.6	818.24	0.0
3. There is the proper mechanism of the ECE program in Sindh.	Teachers	61.9	21.1	2	11.2	3.7	1698.00	0.0
	Headteachers	68	27.8	1.1	2	1.1	917.24	0.0
4. The problems in the way of implementing the ECE program are being addressed seriously in Sindh.	Teachers	53.5	30.7	1.4	9.9	00	1398.09	0.0
	Headteachers	57	39.8	0.4	0.4	2.4	768.01	0.0
Quality of Physical Environment								
5. There are separate schools for ECE in Sindh.	Teachers	56.5	27.6	1.6	10.2	4.1	1455.82	0.0
	Headteachers	60.9	37.4	0.6	0.7	0.4	840.31	0.0
6. The resources of the ECE program are being properly utilized in Sindh.	Teachers	52.9	31.1	1.6	11.5	2.9	1339.93	0.0
	Headteachers	56.3	40.6	0.6	2.4	0.2	761.44	0.0
7. The quality of the physical environment is satisfactory at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	53.6	30.9	1.3	9.8	4.4	1362.72	0.0
	Head teachers	57.2	40	0.2	0.2	2.4	777.66	0.0
8. The quality of the physical environment is essential for enhancing the status of ECE.	Teachers	15.3	1.3	1.3	17.6	64.5	1895.93	0.0
	Headteachers	6.5	1.7	0.2	10.4	81.3	1285.59	0.0
9. The quality of the physical environment enhances the status of ECE in Sindh.	Teachers	53.9	30.2	1.6	9.8	4.5	1357.77	0.0
	Headteachers	57.6	39.4	0.6	0.2	2.2	777.07	0.0
10. The condition of the ECE school building is satisfactory.	Teachers	56.9	28.4	1.6	10.1	3	1513.36	0.0
	Headteachers	61.5	36.9	0.6	0.6	0.6	847.51	0.0
11. The condition of classrooms is satisfactory at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	53.1	31	1.3	9.9	4.7	1330.02	0.0
	Headteachers	56.5	40.2	0.2	0.4	2.8	759.48	0.0
12. The condition of furniture is satisfactory at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	56.1	27.1	4.3	9.8	2.7	1401.56	0.0
	Head teachers	60.4	35.2	4.1	0.2	0.2	782.79	0.0
13. There is a proper arrangement of electricity at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	55.5	27.7	2.3	10.1	4.4	1382.22	0.0
	Head teachers	59.6	35.9	1.5	0.6	2.4	770.75	0.0
14. The condition of drinking water is satisfactory at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	55.1	28.6	1.6	9.9	4.9	1381.67	0.0
	Headteachers	59.1	37	0.6	0.4	3	775.09	0.0
15. The condition of the lavatory block is satisfactory at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	52.8	31.6	1.3	11.6	2.7	1349.36	0.0
	Headteachers	56.1	40.9	0.2	2.6	0.2	764.14	0.0

16. The condition of the compound wall is satisfactory at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	55.1	29.6	1.1	11.4	2.9	1432.05	0.0
	Head teachers	55.7	41.7	00	2.2	0.4	507.21	0.0
17. The condition of the water pump is satisfactory at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	53.8	30.9	1.3	11.4	2.7	1388.15	0.0
	Headteachers	57.4	40	0.2	2.2	0.2	783.16	0.0
18. The schools have playgrounds for games and different activities at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	52.5	30	3.3	11.5	2.7	1264.66	0.0
	Headteachers	55.7	38.8	2.8	2.4	0.2	710.88	0.0
19. The fund allocated for the ECE program is satisfactory in Sindh.	Teachers	51.9	30.7	1.3	11.6	4.4	1257.73	0.0
	Headteachers	55	39.8	0.2	2.6	2.4	708.14	0.0
Quality of Teachers								
20. The quality of teachers teaching at the ECE level is satisfactory.	Teachers	53.2	30	2.3	11.8	2.7	1318.27	0.0
	Headteachers	56.7	38.9	1.5	2.8	0.2	738.01	0.0
21. The quality of teachers is essential for enhancing the status of ECE. (same)	Teachers	11.8	1.4	1.3	13.5	72	2456.19	0.0
	Headteachers	3.0	1.9	0.2	5	90	1657.05	0.0
22. The existing ECE teachers in govt. schools have the ability to improve the quality of ECE.	Teachers	57.8	26	1.6	11.6	3	1513.55	0.0
	Headteachers	62.6	33.7	0.6	2.6	0.6	826.50	0.0
23. The teachers are relevantly experienced at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	57.5	27.1	1.3	9.8	4.3	1511.13	0.0
	Headteachers	62.2	35.2	0.2	0.2	2.2	840.94	0.0
24. The teachers are relevantly trained at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	59.8	24.4	1.4	9.8	4.6	1602.85	0.0
	Headteachers	65.2	31.7	0.4	0.2	2.6	879.87	0.0
25. The teachers are relevantly skilled at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	58.1	26.6	1.3	9.8	4.3	1535.87	0.0
	Headteachers	63	34.4	0.2	0.2	2.2	852.05	0.0
26. The personality of teachers at the ECE level is satisfactory in Sindh.	Teachers	57.9	25.4	2.1	11.6	2.9	1505.45	0.0
	Headteachers	62.8	33	1.3	2.6	0.4	819.75	0.0
27. The teachers are regular and punctual at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	58.4	21.1	2.7	14.1	3.7	1450.22	0.0
	Headteachers	63.3	27.4	2	5.7	1.5	756.42	0.0
28. The teacher-student ratio is satisfactory at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	58.1	26.3	1.4	11.5	2.7	1543.42	0.0
	Headteachers	63	34.1	0.4	2.4	0.2	845.46	0.0
29. There is a shortage of teachers at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	57.4	26.6	1.7	11.6	2.7	1499.22	0.0
	Headteachers	62	34.4	0.7	2.6	0.2	821.42	0.0
Quality of health & hygiene facilities								
30. The mechanism of health and hygiene facilities at the ECE level is satisfactory in Sindh.	Teachers	59.8	24.9	1.3	11.2	2.9	1629.45	0.0
	Headteachers	65.2	32.2	0.2	2	0.4	888.75	0.0
31. The mechanism of health and hygiene facilities is essential for enhancing the status of ECE.	Teachers	13.4	1.3	1.2	31.6	52.5	1357.34	0.0
	Headteachers	5	1.7	0.2	28.5	64.6	814.88	0.0
32. The mechanism of health and hygiene facilities contribute to the status of ECE in Sindh	Teachers	60.2	24.3	1.3	11.4	2.9	1648.05	0.0
	Headteachers	65.7	31.5	0.2	2.2	0.4	895.87	0.0
	Teachers	58.2	25.1	1.1	11.2	4.3	1516.55	0.0

33. There is a separate staff to tackle the health emergency of ECE students in case of occurring.	Headteachers	64.6	32.6	00	2	0.7	592.69	0.0
34. The health of students is checked regularly at the ECE level in Sindh.	Teachers	59.1	24.6	1.4	10.5	4.4	1557.56	0.0
	Headteachers	64.3	31.9	0.4	1.1	2.4	850.75	0.0

Analysis: Considering the significant value of Chi-Square for all the items (1 to 34) from the perspective of teachers and headteachers, it is concluded that the status of early childhood education was not satisfactory, nor was there noted any improvement taking place in Sindh. There was no proper mechanism for early childhood education programs in Sindh. Moreover, the problems in the way of early childhood education programs were not seriously addressed. Rather than establishing separate early childhood education schools, the classes of early childhood education were held in primary/elementary schools. Furthermore, there were limited resources of early childhood education and those available were not channelized purposefully. Consequently, it had affected the physical environment, quality of teachers and mechanism of health and hygiene facilities, the fundamental elements to raise the status of early childhood education.

Although the quality of the physical environment often affects the status of early childhood education, the physical environment found did not contribute to it due to being in a poor state. In Sindh, the condition of school furniture, school building, classrooms,

compound wall, lavatory block, cold drinking water, playground, water pump and allocated funds was not satisfactory.

The quality of ECE teachers is essential for improving the status of early childhood education but the quality of teachers was not admirable in Sindh. Most of the teachers were not given any in-service teacher training. Consequently, they had a lack of relevant experience and skills. In addition, the shortage of teachers and unreasonable teacher-students ratio in most of the early childhood education classes made the situation from bad to worse. Although most of the teachers were regular and punctual, their performance was not up to the mark due to various problems and issues existing over there.

Unquestionably, the mechanism of health and hygiene facilities is essential for enhancing the status of early childhood education but the mechanism of health and hygiene facilities is not satisfactory in the province. There was no separate staff to tackle the health emergency of ECE students. Moreover, the health of students had not been checked regularly and punctually in ECE institutions.

Table: 3 Result of hypotheses

Sample		Observed value							Expected Value
		Ho1	Ho2	Ho3	Ho4	Ho5	Ho6	Ho7	
Head teachers	Strongly Disagree	330	309	306	352	35	16	27	108
	Disagree	194	216	210	174	9	10	9	108
	Undecided	1	1	8	1	1	1	1	108
	Agree	12	1	15	11	56	27	154	108
	Strongly Agree	3	13	1	2	439	486	349	108

	Chi-Square	818.24	777.67	738.02	888.76	1285.59	1657.06	814.89	
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Teachers	Strongly Disagree	793	751	745	837	214	165	187	280
	Disagree	388	432	420	348	18	20	18	280
	Undecided	18	18	32	18	18	18	17	280
	Agree	159	137	165	157	247	189	443	280
	Strongly Agree	42	62	38	40	903	1008	735	280
	Chi-Square	1481.29	1362.72	1318.28	1629.45	1895.93	2456.19	1357.34	
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Analysis: The table3 reveals that the result of all the above-mentioned hypotheses from the perspective of teachers and headteachers is significant at $df= 4$ and $\alpha= 0.05$. Hence, it is concluded that the status of early childhood education, quality of the physical environment, quality of teachers and health and hygiene facilities are not satisfactory at the early childhood education level in Sindh, though the quality of the physical environment, teachers and mechanism of health and hygiene facilities is believed to be essential for enhancing the status of early childhood education.

Discussion

Status of Early Childhood Education

Historically, the concept of ECE is not very old but the rapid expansion of ECE networks all over the world shows its need and importance. The world is taking special measures and making massive investments to uplift the status of ECE but in Sindh, the situation is fearfully alarming. The findings reveal that the status of early childhood education in Sindh is very poor and future improvement in this area is not more than a daydream. The status of early childhood education appears to be badly neglected by the policymakers and is far behind being satisfactory (Bhatti, Hussain & Bano, 2017). Undoubtedly, the number of early childhood schools in the

name of Montessori and Kindergarten has increased across the province but the true spirit of the ECE philosophy is missed out in these schools. Moreover, these schools are working without the proper mechanism of early childhood education thereby aggravating various problems and the government has never addressed the problems seriously or tried to raise the status of ECE. The seriousness of government can be judged in light of the fact that the ECE classes are still held in primary schools without the basic facilities needed for the young learners. Furthermore, the funds and resources of ECE are limited and those available have never been utilized properly. As a result, the physical environment, quality of teachers and mechanism for health and hygiene facilities are badly affected despite being central for raising the status of early childhood education.

Quality of physical Environment

The children at the ECE level are quite young, sensitive and fragile; they need more attention, care and facilities to enhance their growth, development and learning. A better physical environment ensures such learning facilities that include a climate-proof, colorful, intriguing and appealing environment. Acar (2014) affirms that the physical environment helps foster the cognitive, emotional and social abilities of learners. Abbas, Othman and Rahman (2012)

add that the physical environment is of paramount value as it makes the learning experience more productive. Infrastructure directly affects the behavior of young learners and indirectly affects their academic performance. However, the finding reveals that the status of infrastructure is not praiseworthy in Sindh. The condition of school furniture, school building, classrooms, compound wall, lavatory block, cold drinking water, playground, water pump and allocated funds is not suitable for ECE learners. It is very difficult for young children with age 3 to 5 years to survive and learn in the classroom where the temperature is more than forty on hot days of summer and less than ten on cold days of winter. The absence of electricity and fans in summer and heater in winter is found in most of the schools of Sindh. Likewise, the lack of resources or improper use of funds is common over there. The damaged school building, compound wall and lack of furniture adds fuel to the fire. Furthermore, effective teaching in the schools running without cold drinking water and lavatory block is merely a daydream, which is commonplace in most the ECE school of Sindh.

Quality of teachers

Teaching is a complicated process that requires a principled approach along with contextually befitting strategies which cannot be applied by a novice and untrained person. Especially when it comes to teaching at the early childhood level, it requires an intellectually sound and professionally trained person to fulfil the constantly changing needs of the child. Since the beginning of formal teaching, the role of the teacher has always been deemed to be of paramount value. In this regard, Ntumi (2016) believes that teaching students of early years is a demanding job that needs an individual to be professionally trained and devoted to his work. It requires an individual who is objective in his approach and undertakes all his activities in line

with his objectives and always anticipates observable change as a result of his practices. Similarly, Phajane (2014) adds that the main role of ECE teachers is to construct a climate that is full of learning opportunities and encourages the active participation of students. As a guide, an ECE teacher is expected to work on the learning environment. He equips the environment with graphical and visual materials that are stimulating for learners and allow interactive and hands-on learning to take place.

However, in Sindh, the situation is totally different. The findings reveal that teachers in Sindh are neither relevantly experienced nor professionally trained to deal with the constantly changing needs of the ECE children. Teaching students at an early age is not an easy job. Only those teachers, who are professionally sound and devoted to work can raise the status of ECE but in Sindh, the unsatisfactory status of ECE reveals that teachers are neither professionally sound nor personally devoted to their job. Likewise, they are incapable of carrying out the teaching activities in line with curriculum objectives in order to ensure the cognitive, emotional, spiritual, physical and esthetical development of children.

Quality of health and hygienic facilities

Health and hygiene are an integral part of education, especially early childhood education. Without the proper mechanism of health and hygiene facilities appropriate growth and development of children cannot be achieved at an early stage (Beach & Bertrand, 2009). Hujala (2008) asserts that health and hygiene facilities, during the first five years, are essential for creating a sound mind in a sound body. Although the mechanism of health and hygiene facilities is crucial for enhancing the status of ECE in Sindh, the mechanism of health and hygiene is not praiseworthy as shown in the findings of the study. Most of the respondents are dissatisfied with health and hygiene facilities. In a total of 540 sampled schools, there is not found any

mechanism of health and hygiene facilities in 93% of the institutions. There are only 7% of schools with some sort of health facilities. Again the quality of health facilities of 7% of schools is questionable. There is neither any system to check the health of students regularly, nor there is a separate staff to deal with the health emergency of the ECE students.

Conclusion

The status of early childhood education is not satisfactory due to various reasons. The physical environment, teaching faculty and health and hygiene facilities are an integral part of the ECE system. But the condition of all these components is flawed in the context of Sindh. The physical environment is not compatible with ECE level learning, teachers are largely untrained and inexperienced with respect to the ECE philosophy and there is no system to track the healthy diet and physical growth of children at the ECE level in almost all the government schools of Sindh. The problems and issues of ECE are not looked into and addressed seriously.

Suggestion

1. The status of early childhood education is not satisfactory. Sindh Government should take serious notice of it and utilize the resources efficiently to fill the gaps in this regard.
2. The physical environment of the educational facility plays to be a cornerstone but its condition is alarmingly depressing in Sindh. It is sheer hardship for a child between the age of 3 and 5 to sit in the class and study with no arrangements for power failures in 40 plus temperature. During the hot days of summer, cold water is compulsory for students. Sindh Government should allocate proper funds in this regard and ensure the utilization of those funds on school furniture,

buildings, classrooms, compound walls, lavatory blocks, cold drinking water, playgrounds and water pumps to raise the status of the physical environment so that teaching-learning may take place in ECE schools more smoothly.

3. The quality of ECE teachers which is weighed very heavily among other factors of education is not way behind from being acceptable in Sindh. The Sindh government should appoint ECE teachers on merit who have relevant experience and expertise. Thereafter, a proper mechanism for in-service training should be developed which is geared to update the knowledge and skills of these teachers continually.
4. The mechanism of health and hygiene facilities is crucial at the ECE level is not admirable in Sindh. The children aged 3 to 5 needed more care and attention. Sindh government should appoint at least one doctor in every ECE institution in order to have a regular check-up of students so that the early growth and development of children may take place smoothly.

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