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Comparison of Public and Private Schools' Early Childhood Education Quality in Context of Availability of Learning Facilities in Pakistan

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israrbzk@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

In the context of the quality of ECE, there is a stress on how to ensure excellence in children learning outcomes by promoting various learning activities. The dropout rate in public and private schools is increasing, parents are not satisfied about their children's schooling; therefore, parents pay less attention to their children, the population is increasing, and basic facilities for pre-schoolers' are lacking. These are factors that need to be addressed for children's schooling. Therefore, there was a need to compare public and private schools ECE quality in context of availability of learning facilities in Bannu Division. The study was descriptive in nature. The population of the study was comprised of all public primary and private schools (n=3529) of Bannu Division (District Bannu, District Lakki Marwat and North Waziristan). The sample of the study was consisted of 360 schools. The researcher followed Gill et,al,(2010) as a Source for determination of sample size for the study. For the collection of data, the researcher personally developed Learning Environment Observation Checklist consisted of six statements. The research instrument was finalized after a process of pilot testing. The validity and the of reliability the tool were confirmed in light of the guidance of the experts. The data was entered in the SPSS 24. The reliability co-efficient Cronbach's Alpha value was found 0.78 which was suitable to take a prudent start of the data collection on the tool. The researcher visited the sample school, sought permission from the school heads and observed the ECE classrooms. Keeping in view the observation of ECE, the researcher also asked certain questions stated in the LEOC and marked (✓) in the relevant columns. Throughout the data collection process the research ethics were fully observed. Mean and standard deviation as

descriptive statistics as well as independent sample t-test were used as inferential statistics. Finding showed that both public and private schools children were facilitated, with age appropriate big and small colourful books to promote the reading habits. Similarly, it was viewed by both public and private schools that Children were provided opportunities for observation and experimentation in order to understand the world around them but home related activities in both public and private schools were not at all practised by children. Public and private schools were observed that Teachers have “very little” provided children with opportunities for creative expression in form of some art work although public schools were better at all.

Keywords: *Quality of Early Childhood Education, Learning Facilities, Public and Private School, Bannu Division*

INTRODUCTION

(Bhutta, 2020) found that formulating child overall development, ECE plays a prominent role. As a matter of fact, that this phenomenon is acknowledged and developed on which countries have great emphasis on it (UNESCO, 2019). (MoE, 2017) Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Universal Primary Education (UPE), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the succeeding global obligation towards ECE. Keeping in view the above commitments Pakistan is trying to impart ECE through pre-primary education as “Katchi class” for 3-5 years old children in government schools of Pakistan (Khan, 2018). Special measures were taken to uplift ECE in Pakistan by The by the educational policies NEP, 2009, 2017 and Article 25-A of the 18th Amendment passed in April 2010 (Ahmed, Anjum & Rehman, 2015; Khan, 2018).

In Pakistan which falls in the range of developing countries, children aging three to five years suffers many risks in which unavailability of suitable learning environment for young children is topmost. It effects the most crucial stage of a child holistic development in the shape of cognitive development as well as social and physical development (UNESCO, 2005).

It is generally approved on global perspective that decent programs in context of early childhood play indispensable part intellectually which impart basic concepts to children and learning promote human capitals to great extent and achieve their fruits in school years and other domain of life.

Statement of the Problem

In the early phase of a child, ECE has its due importance in which the child’s verbal ability, concentration, interaction, and problem-solving abilities are developed.

Unfortunately ECE is considered an un-notice area regarding child development in many provinces of Pakistan. Children aged 3-5 years remain without education, leaving much of their potential untapped. There is also inadequate focus on such variables that can improve the early childhood learning quality of the school. (Asifa Younas 2023 et al.).

Government initiatives regarding ECE quality seem to have failed as children are not taught what is required of them specifically. Because there is a lack of ECE-trained teachers to teach them, the dropout rate is increasing, parents are disappointed about their children's

schooling; therefore, parents pay less attention to their children, the population is increasing, and basic facilities for pre-schoolers are lacking. There are some factors, that need to be addressed for children's schooling. Therefore, this study was conducted to compare the quality of ECE regarding availability of learning facilities in public and private schools in Bannu Division,

Objectives of the Study

- (1) To analyze the learning environment available for ECE in public schools of Bannu Division.
- (2) To analyze the learning environment available for ECE in private schools of Bannu Division.
- (3) To compare learning environment available for ECE in public and private schools of Bannu Division.

Research Questions:

- (1) Are there learning facilities available for ECE in public schools of Bannu Division?
- (2) Are there learning facilities available for ECE in private schools of Bannu Division?

Null Hypothesis H_0 : There is no significant difference between public and private schools learning facilities of ECE of Bannu division.

Significance of the Study

Grantham, (2007) states that excellent level of learning environment gives strength to learners cognitive and social product as well as children got practice in higher quality learning environment as compare to low standard learning environment. The study would provide guidance for the teachers and care givers to adapt their children with suitable environment in order to impart everlasting skills and other meaningful activities. The study would also be helpful for educators and policy makers to take advantage from learning environment benefited children and compare them with other children where the learning criteria is weak and take measure about the concern issue. As the study was not found in recent studies, so it appeared to be a relevant area of study. The study would fill the necessary gap by analyzing the most important factor regarding learning environment of public and private schools, Moreover, this research would offer feasible, research-based hints and recommendations concerning the quality of ECE.

Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the teachers of public and private schools who taught Play/Nursery/KG children aged 3-5 at the primary school level. The study was also restricted to the learning facilities.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Thornton (2019) states that ECE is believed a critical phase for the sustainable development of learners. Lipman (2018) found that this phase is proved to be a phase of mental development goes faster of a learner than other phases of life, and knowledge is found by nature in learners. Global statement drawn by UNICEF' (2017) on ECE growth states that the first five years of learners have its due importance and almost 90 percent intellectual stability develop at this phase. Furthermore it is found that from younger age child tries to be contested

with all kinds of problems including hunger, starvation, and weakness in education in the developing states (UNICEF, 2018)

Franchett et al. (2019) described that it is suggested through various researches that there are short term and long terms effects and harmony of ECE with the constructive behaviour of children which resulted success in life. It is also proved that the children who have got Early childhood care and education are holding and maintain positive behaviour everywhere in the world as well as they are the true reformer and removers of poverty etc (Bailey, Duncan & Odgers, 2017; Jenkins & Duncen, 2017; UNICEF, 2019).

Learning Environment

Shaw, (2012) described environment as a tool for playful activities in educational context as well as the alarming and demanding charge existed for providers of ECE environments today. Florida Department of Education Creative Curriculum (2010) found out that the specific curriculum insisted on learning outcome being children and their caregiver got advantage when they were imparted skill and knowledge as proved to be developmental ingredients of children. All the necessary ingredients in which emotional environment, space of classrooms, playing environment and daily routine activities are determined by learning environment. Provision of such environment deals with children future competencies as well as it provide opportunities for children to develop social skills. 21st Century Learning Environment Framework, (2007) defined learning environment as a place of learning and interaction in which develop sense of cooperation among children. Holistic development develop among children through interaction when suitable and authentic environment is afford (White, 2004). There is a strong need of safe and secure bounds, inspiration, feeling of achievement by the means of environment and lastly they require freedom of thoughts and expression to construct their decision by themselves (Fisher, 2000).

Contribution of Learning Environment in Effective Teaching

Either supporting or distracting learning process, it depends upon the nature and its surroundings (Mkandawire, 2010). Additionally, Msango (2010) asserted that environment effects the holistic performance of learners. Mulenga and Mwanza (2019) stated that the critical role played the environment favoured instructors and learners. Ann Pelo (2016) reported that the classroom is initiated by the composition of desks, colourful buildings, paintings, and calligraphy, developing a decisive part in the instructional process. It is also crucial that such institutions offer an environment that contributes to enhancing communication, writing, and literacy instruction, (Njapau, et al. 2011). In countries or regions of the world individual, and community-level literacy is helpful in the search for progress. So, it is assumed that the deprivation of a child from early education is equal to the denial of a prosperous life, and handicapped by writing, and reading when needed. Thus, he should be given the opportunity from a young age to be literate and know the value of life. In terms of poverty and disposition of competence, illiteracy is related to both of them. A less attentive learning environment in developing nations is marked as an important aspect that ultimately suggests a deficiency in performance of public and private schools (UNICEF, 2003).

Global Literature on Learning Environment

A contented and relaxed environment, where the teaching and learning process takes place is possible due to a conducive learning environment, as noted above, in such an environment, students do not lose their attention in the classroom. Therefore, the environment of the classroom requires proper weight and care as a suitable environment responsible for learning mood, ideas creation, values, behaviors, and attitudes of learners and instructors.

Studies by Wolfersberger et al. (2004) observed that valued literacy influences environmental factors, which is determined by the availability of the instrument in the classrooms, seating arrangement, learning aids, students' curiosity through interaction, and instruction based on tools. Neuman (1999) in his study examined the written language reading dexterity in early childhood and found that environmental print is an aspect in the environment of learning that helps children interact with learning.

Susan N. (1999) accomplished research based on the rapport between the provision of content and children's prior learning skills. His findings showed the more the children were provided with best quality books, the more high chances of standard learning activity would be there.

Policy Framework of ECE in Pakistan

The initial official document that recognized and included the Katchi class for children aged 3-5 years was introduced in the NEP of 1998-2010, which referred to the term "not mature or not enrolled" for pre-primary education. ECE encompasses the transfer of knowledge to children aged three to five, including Katchi or Pre-primary, Playgroup, Montessori, and Kindergarten. This educational format has been operational in public schools since its inception.

The National Plan of Action aimed at reaching the Education for All (EFA) goal over the next fifteen years has identified three key priorities, one of which is ECE.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The major purpose of this study was to highlight Quality of Early Childhood Education in public and private schools in context of availability of learning facilities in Bannu Division. The study was descriptive in nature. The population of the study was comprised of all public primary and private schools (n=3529) of Bannu Division (District Bannu, District Lakki Marwat and North Waziristan). The sample of the study consisted of 360 schools. The researcher followed Gill et,al,(2010) as a Source for determination of sample size for the study. For the collection of data, the researcher personally developed Learning Environment Observation Checklist consisted of six statements. The research instrument was finalized after a process of pilot testing. The validity and the of reliability the tool were confirmed in light of the guidance of the experts. The data was entered in the SPSS 24. The reliability co-efficient Cronbach's Alpha value was found 0.78 which was suitable to take a prudent start of the data collection on the tool. The researcher visited the sample school, sought permission from the school heads and observed the ECE classrooms. Keeping in view the observation of ECE, the researcher also asked certain questions stated in the LEOC and marked (✓) in the relevant columns. Throughout the data collection process the research ethics were fully observed. Mean and

standard deviation as descriptive statistics as well as independent sample t-test were used as inferential statistics.

ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This portion deals with the analysis, tabulation, and interpretation of the collected data. The analyzed data was tabulated and interpreted in light of the objectives of the study.

Table 1: Scale and Range used for analysis

Weight	Scale	Range
1	N- Not at all	0.50 to 1.50
2	V= Very little	1.51 to 2.50
3	SW = Some What	2.51 to 3.50
4	TS = To some extent	3.51 to 4.50
5	TG =To great extent	4.51 to 5.50

Sub Research Question 1: Are there learning facilities available for ECE in public schools of Bannu Division?

Table 2: Rank Order of Availability of Learning Facilities Regarding ECE

S.NO	Statement	M	SD
1	Age-appropriate big and small colourful books are set up to promote the reading habit.	3.90	0.83
2	Teachers have provided children with opportunities for creative expression in the form of some artwork.	2.61	1.14
3	Children are provided opportunities for observation and experimentation to understand the world around them.	2.55	0.93
4	Appropriate materials are set up to help children grasp basic mathematical concepts of size, shape, width, classification, and number through direct experimentation.	2.27	1.01
5	ECE classrooms are equipped with material related to increasing vocabulary and learning reading skills.	2.12	1.00
6	Home-related activities are practised by children.	1.49	0.86
Overall		2.49	0.50

Table 2 predicts that the statement has the highest mean score (M=3.90) with standard deviation (SD=0.83), indicating that the statement falls in the category/range (3.51-4.50) "To some extent". The second highest mean score (M=2.61) with standard deviation (SD=1.14) for the statement "Teachers have provided children with opportunities for creative expression in the form of some artwork" denotes that the statement also falls in the range (2.51-3.50) "Somewhat". Similarly, the third highest mean score (M=2.55) with standard deviation (SD=0.93) for the statement "Children are provided opportunities for observation and experimentation to understand the world around them" reveals that this statement falls in the range (2.51-3.50) "Somewhat". The fourth highest mean score (M=2.27) with standard

deviation ($SD=1.01$) of the statement “Appropriate materials are set up to help children grasp basic Mathematical concepts of size, shape, width, classification, and number through direct experimentation” shows that this statement falls in the range (1.51-2.50) “Very little”. The statement “ECE classroom(s) are equipped with material related to increasing vocabulary and learning reading skills” has the next-to-lowest mean score ($M=2.12$) with standard deviation ($SD=1.00$), which directs that the statement falls in the range (1.51-2.50) “Very little”. The statement “Home-related activities are practiced by children” has the lowest mean score ($M=1.49$) with a standard deviation ($SD=0.86$), indicating that the statement falls in the range (1.00-1.50) “Not at all”. The overall mean score ($M=2.49$) with standard deviation ($SD=0.50$) expresses a range of “Very little”, suggesting that “Very little” learning facilities provided in public schools.

Sub Research Question 2: Are there learning facilities available for ECE in private schools of the Bannu Division?

Table 3: Rank Order of Availability of Learning Facilities Regarding ECE

S.NO	Statement	M	SD
1	Age-appropriate big and small colourful books are set up to promote the reading habit.	3.90	0.73
2	Children are provided opportunities for observation and experimentation to understand the world around them.	2.61	0.91
3	Appropriate materials are set up to help children grasp basic Mathematical concepts of size, shape, width, classification, and number through direct experimentation.	2.21	1.17
4	Teachers have provided children with opportunities for creative expression in the form of some artwork.	2.17	1.40
5	ECE classrooms are equipped with material related to increasing vocabulary and learning reading skills.	2.08	1.23
6	Home-related activities are practiced by children.	1.40	0.94
Overall		2.39	0.68

Table 4 indicates that the statement “Age-appropriate big and small colorful books for promoting the reading habit are set up” has the highest mean score ($M=3.90$) with a standard deviation ($SD=0.73$), placing it in the “To some extent” category (range: 3.51–4.50). The second-highest mean score ($M=2.61$) with a standard deviation ($SD=0.91$) corresponds to the opportunities for exploration and experimentation to gain insights into their surrounding environment falling within the “Somewhat” range (2.51–3.50). The fourth-highest mean score ($M=2.21$) with a standard deviation ($SD=1.17$) pertains to the statement “Appropriate materials are set up to help children grasp basic Mathematical concepts” which falls in the “Very little” category (1.51–2.50). Similarly, the third-highest mean score ($M=2.17$) with a standard deviation ($SD=1.40$) for the statement “Teachers have provided children with opportunities for creative expression in the form of some artwork” also falls in the “Very little” category (1.51–2.50). The statement “ECE classroom(s) are equipped with material related to increasing vocabulary and learning reading skills” has the second-lowest mean score ($M=2.08$) with a

standard deviation (SD=1.23), indicating it also falls within the “Very little” range (1.51–2.50). The lowest mean score (M=1.40) with a standard deviation (SD=0.94) belongs to the statement “Home-related activities are practiced by children,” placing it in the “Not at all” category (1.00–1.50). Overall, the mean score (M=2.39) with a standard deviation (SD=0.68) indicates that private schools provide “Very little” in terms of learning facilities.

Sub Null Hypothesis H₀: There is no significant difference between public and private schools learning facilities of ECE of Bannu division.

Table 4: School Type Based Comparison of Learning Facilities

S. No.	Parameter	School type	M	SD	T	p
1	Learning Facilities	Public	2.49	0.50	1.24	0.21
		Private	2.40	0.68		

Table 4 shows that mean score of both public and private schools represent “very little” (1.51-2.50) about the facet “Learning Facilities.” (M=2.49, M=2.40) respectively. However, p value is 0.21 which is greater than level of significance (0.05), indicates that there is no significant difference regarding learning facilities in public and private schools. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Higher mean value of public schools indicates that more learning facilities are prevailed public schools than that of private.

RESULTS

The following findings were drawn from the data analysis:

The results showed that very little “Learning Facilities” in ECE settings of public schools were provided. The daily routine activities in these schools were somewhat carried out, as well as assessment process was also somewhat established, displaying a similar trend of moderate implementation. In short, the learning environment for ECE in public schools was somewhat established, indicating a need for enhancement ECE quality.

The provision of learning facilities was insufficient, as indicated by low scores, suggesting that private schools offered very little appropriate materials and resources for young children. This lack of resources was observed in areas such as promoting reading habits and aiding the understanding of basic mathematical concepts. Creative expression opportunities and vocabulary-building materials were also insufficient, with minimal integration of home-related activities. Overall, the learning facilities in private schools were reported to be insufficient for fostering a conducive learning environment.

Results showed a significant difference between public and private schools was indicated in the context of their “Learning facilities”. Compared to private schools, public schools' superior learning facilities were observed.

Discussion

Dowsett et al. (2008) found that enriched learning environment provides seating plans, learning equipment and planned curriculum than other needs which is base for supporting the development of a learner however the present study observed that overall learning facilities of public primary was better as compare to private schools as Farah Naz (2019) has contradictory views by finding that private schools provide maximum facilities as compare to

public schools, while Nadia Nazir (2021) supports our results revealing that facilities and services relating to developed environment are greater in the government schools as compare to sports facilities of private sectors. In the same way private schools has provided observational opportunities to ECE children. It was also observed that public and private schools classroom(s) were very little equipped with material related to increasing vocabulary and learning reading skills of Early Childhood Education. while home related activities were not at all practiced by children studying in public and private schools.

Conclusions

It is concluded that public and private schools children were facilitated, with age appropriate big and small colourful books to promote the reading habits. Similarly, it was viewed by both public and private schools that Children were provided opportunities for observation and experimentation in order to understand the world around them but home related activities in both public and private schools were not at all practised by children. Public and private schools were observed that Teachers have “very little” provided children with opportunities for creative expression in form of some art work although public schools were better at all. In the same way public and private schools were observed that children were provided opportunities for observation and experimentation in order to understand the world around but private schools were better in this context.

Recommendations

The following were the recommendations of the study:

- Government should take measures that students may exercise home related minor works in schools so that they may have spirit of social work
- Measures should be taken for ensuring private institutions to provide opportunities for art work.
- Government should offer valid and reliable opportunities in the government schools for students’ awareness and ensure understanding of observation and experimentation.

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