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Perception of Early Childhood Education Teachers' about Quality Standards in Early Childhood Education Policy, 2017

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Abstract:

Early Childhood Education (ECE) provides core services and events that are vital to holistic growth, student achievement and children's future results. This research explored the obstacles that teachers are facing in primary schools to incorporate early childhood education. It used the descriptive survey research. The sample population was all district primary schools in the Punjab province, Pakistan. For data collection, a questionnaire was created. The results of the research found that most teachers were not sufficiently aware of the requirements for early learning. ECE-specific materials were not appropriate for the students. In addition, primary school teachers require more training and facilities in their schools for introducing ECE. The views of male, female, rural, and urban teachers were substantially different. Given the results, the researchers suggested that educators be made aware of early childhood expectations and pedagogical skills.

Key Words: *Early Childhood Education (ECE), Teachers in Primary Schools, Quality Standards*

Introduction

The ray of education is one of the first right steps in every child's life. If a child is welcoming towards the educational foresights then the new horizons of research and knowledge opens for the child. The journey of learning begins with the birth of a child and it continues to grow through the family and surroundings a child grew in. A child requires some kind of formal education between the ages of 3 to 4, this concept is called the early childhood education. In Pakistan, however, the term "Katchi" is used to refer to the early childhood for four-year-old students (Malik et al., 2014). Education is deemed to hold a great significance right from the beginning of a child's life. It allows a child to modify behaviour of a child through a deliberate process which involves a great deal of care and guidance. As it is a carefully planned, it is a systematic way of learning. The early years of children holds more significance in comparison to the other ages as these years create a base for child for the rest of his life. Children are the future of any nation and it is absolutely vital for nations to invest in early childhood education as it is for the to invest in other social and economic developments because children are the future assets of a country and a well-nurtured child can live healthy and provide benefits for the society (Boaten, 2015). One of the most significant pieces of comprehensive ECE mediation are Early Childhood Education (ECE)
which canter around early learning gains as the key result.

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The Early Childhood Education mention all around the world to the sustain, advancement and training of children between three to five years old or, on the other hand, the year's comparing to the primary school cycle. (ECE) addresses the kids' fundamental needs in wellbeing, nourishment and intellectual turn of events. As its title specifies, the essential focal point of the "Punjab ECE Policy 2017" is Early Childhood Education. It incorporates intercessions that give greater chances to kids to communicate with responsive educators, effectively learn with peers, and plan for their entrance in the primary school (Government of the Punjab, 2017).

There are few requirements allocated by the Government of Punjab to maintain quality standards in order to operate the ECE classrooms in the schools. Ministry of Education's early learning quality standards determine that teaching and learning standards are the two main domains of ECE (Government of Punjab, 2017). The major necessities of a holistic child development include; social, personal and emotional development, cognitive development, moral and spiritual development, language development, health, hygiene, safety and creative arts. ELDS aids in providing the commencing point for other kind of standards with all standards referring to the wishes, expectations and aspirations for the development of children (Early Learning Development Standards, n.d.).The learning standards areas follow:

i. Physical environment.
ii. Teacher qualifications and professional support.
iii. Educational program and practice.
iv. Parental and community engagement.
v. Health and nutrition.
vi. Transition to primary school.

The above standards are applicable to all the public and private schools that provide early childhood education to children from age three to five and are expected to comply with them (Government of Punjab, 2017).

Background Of The Study

Pakistan is deemed to be a third world country, and people do not have enough resources for a prime level of education but with positive and effective behaviour the teachers can change this mindset and provide with much better education for the children. Furthermore, the government is interventions to take different measures with new initiatives to maintain good quality education for all the students of country in public and private schools. Primary teachers are not equipped with essential training and are not very qualified for early childhood education. There is an extreme need for the teachers to be trained and they must have desired and significant knowledge and understanding about how to teach and treat the young minds of the country. They must be aware of the services required from them and they must also have knowledge of the student's family backgrounds. The government of Punjab foresighted these factors and developed the ECE policy in 2017 which adheres the need of quality standards for ECE. Similarly, Students' competences are also vital for a students' learning. Do students learn what they supposed to be learned? Do they acquire competencies which they are expected to? In view of these, there was need to conduct a study to evaluate that what is happening currently in Pakistan with regard to ECE teaching practices and students' competences.

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Research Questions

Following were the research questions of the study:

i. What are the existing quality standards (Physical Environment, Teacher qualification and professional support, Educational program and practice, Parental and community engagement, Health and nutrition, Transition to primary school) for early childhood education in schools of Punjab?
ii. What are the quality standards for early childhood education that teachers applying primary school of Punjab regarding gender and local?

Research Methodology

The researcher was used quantitative approach to evaluate the quality standards in early childhood education policy2017. The target population of the study was all the 52310 public schools of Punjab Province (Census PMIU, 2017). ECE classrooms have been established in 15156 schools in 36 districts of Punjab (QAED Punjab).So all the ECE teachers of these schools was the accessible population of this study. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select sample for this study. At the first stage, stratified random sampling technique was adopted for this study. The population was whole Punjab and for sampling the province was divided into three strata on the basis of the divisions. There are 9 divisions in Punjab province. Therefore, each strata was consisted of three divisions. The divisions were as following:

i. **Northern Punjab:** (Bahawalpur, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan)
ii. **Central Punjab:** (Lahore, Gujranwala, Sahiwal)
iii. **Southern Punjab:**(Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Sargodha)

At the 2nd stage, 15 districts was chosen 40 % proportionately from three strata (3 from the Northern Punjab, 8 from the central Punjab, 4 from the Southern Punjab (see appendix 1) by using proportionate sampling technique. At the third stage, 20 schools from each district (10 from rural: 5 male; 5 female and 10 from urban: 5 male; 5 female) was selected using cluster sampling technique. One ECE teacher was selected from each sampled school. So, 300 ECE teachers and 1200 ECE students were the sample of this study.

Instrumentation of the study

Following instrument was used for data collection. Questionnaire based on quality standards for teachers. The researcher was developed a questionnaire for teachers to explore their perceptions on the practices of quality standards. The questionnaire was based on six factors: i.e. 1) physical environment, 2) teacher qualification and professional support, 3) educational program and practice, 4) parental community engagement, 5) health and nutrition, 6) transition to primary school. To verify the content validity, plausibility of items, and the appropriateness of questions; assistance was sought from the experts at University of the Punjab, Lahore. Questionnaire was revised based on the recommendations of the experts. For pilot study, test was administered by the researcher to 20 ECE teachers. Pilot testing of the tool was conducted with a random sample of 20 ECE teachers from Lahore, other than the sample population. Reliability of the instrument was checked by applying Cronbach's Alpha.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to early childhood education policy, 2017 and the public sector schools of Punjab only and the study was pertain to the schools where the ECE classrooms have been established.

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Data Analysis

The data was entered into SPSS for the analysis of questionnaire to check the practicing quality standards for early childhood education by calculating Mean, SD Frequencies, Percentage, independent sample t-test.

Results and Discussion

Comparison of ECE Teachers' opinion about Quality Standards in Early Childhood Education Policy, 2017

Region wise opinion of ECE teachers about the quality standards in ECE classroom

The following table revealed that the computed F-value is 4.395 which is greater than the table value (3.02) and the computed sig value is .032 which is less than the p-value=0.05. Therefore, region wise significant difference was found in the opinion of ECE teachers about the quality standards in ECE classroom. It is concluded that region wise ECE teacher had different opinion about the quality standards in ECE classroom.

To determine further as which regions' ECE teacher had different opinion about quality standards, Post Hoc test was applied. Therefore Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test has applied in.

Table 1. *ANOVA for analysis to find out the differences in the opinion of ECE teachers about quality standards in ECE regarding their group of regions, Northern=128, Central=134, Southern=122*

	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	283	2	.142	4.395	.032
Within Groups	50.342	381	.395		
Total	50.625	383			

Region wise opinion of ECE teachers about the quality standards in ECE classroom

The following table shows that ECE teachers of central region had different opinion about quality standards in ECE as compared to other region of the Punjab.

Table 2. *Post Hoc analysis to find out which region had high level quality standards in ECE classroom*

(I) Region	(J) Region	D (I-J)	Std. E	Sig.
Central	Northern	343	.561	.004
	Southern	.179	.593	.026

** The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.*

Region wise opinion of the ECE teachers about the level Quality Standard in ECE Classroom

It is indicated in the following table that the computed Pearson Chi-Square value for df (4) is 15.83(a) which is greater than the chi-square table value (9.488) and the computed sig value is .021 which is less than the critical (P=0.05) value. Therefore, region wise significant difference was found in the opinion of ECE teachers about the level of quality standards. It is concluded

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that region wise ECE teacher had different opinion about the level of quality standards in their ECE classroom.

The following table uncovered that 3.1% of ECE teachers who belongs to southern region of the Punjab had low level of ECE quality standards, 15.1% medium and 13.5% high level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classroom. It is concluded that the ECE teachers who belongs to southern region of the Punjab had medium level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classrooms.

2.1% of ECE teacher who belongs to central region of the Punjab had low level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classroom, 15.4% medium and 17.4% high level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classroom. It is concluded that the ECE teachers who belongs to central region of the Punjab had high level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classroom.

3.1 %of ECE teacher who belongs to northern region of the Punjab is low level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classroom, 16.4% medium and 13.8% high level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classroom. It is concluded that the ECE teachers who belongs to northern region of the Punjab had medium level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classroom.

It is concluded that 17.4% of the ECE teacher belongs to central region of the Punjab had high level of ECE quality standards in their ECE classroom.

District wise opinion of ECE teachers about the quality standards in ECE classroom

The following table depicted that the computed F-value is 1.176 which is less than the table value (1.72) and the computed sig value is.295 which is greater than p-value=0.05. Therefore, districts wise no significant difference was found in the opinion of ECE teachers about quality standards in ECE classroom. It is concluded that district wise all the ECE teachers had same opinion about quality standards in ECE classroom.

Table 3. *ANOVA for analysis to find out the differences in the existence of ECE quality standards in ECE classroom regarding their group of districts*

	SS	**f**	**MS**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	5.978	13	.460	1.176	.295
Within Groups	144.647	370	.391		
Total	150.625	383			

Academic qualification wise opinion of ECE teachers about the quality standards in ECE classroom

The following table uncovered that the computed F-value is 3.007 which is greater than the table value (2.39) and the computed sig value is .018 which is less than p-value=0.05. Therefore, qualification wise significant difference was found in the opinion of ECE teachers about quality standards in ECE classroom. It is concluded that ECE teachers who possess different degree of their academic qualification had different quality standards in their ECE classroom while teaching.

To determine further as in which group of academic qualification, ECE teacher had different opinion about quality standards, Post Hoc test was applied. Therefore Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test has applied in.

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Table 4a. *ANOVA for analysis to find out the differences in the opinion of ECE teachers about quality standards in ECE regarding their group of academic qualification; Matric=51,F.A/F.Sc=53,B.A/B.Sc.=42, M.A/M.Sc.=153,M.Phil.=85*

	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.634	4	1.158	3.007	.018
Within Groups	145.991	379	.385		
Total	150.625	383			

Academic qualification wise opinion of ECE teachers about the quality standards in ECE classroom

The following table (4.10b) shows that the ECE teachers who possessed M.A/M. Sc qualification had different opinion about quality standards in their ECE classroom more than the other ECE teachers' qualification.

Table 4b. *Post Hoc analysis to find out which academic qualification wise ECE teachers had different opinion about quality standards than the other teachers*

(I) Academic Qualification	(J)Academic Qualification	M D (I-J)	Std. E	Sig.
M.A/M.Sc.	Matric	.372(*)	122	.002
	F.A/F. Sc	.209(*)	099	.035

** The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.*

Experience wise opinion of ECE teachers about the quality standards in ECE classroom

The following table depicted that the computed F-value is 5.181 which is greater than the table value (2.63) and the computed sig value is .002 which is less than p-value=0.05. Therefore, experience wise significant difference was found in the opinion of ECE teachers about quality standards in ECE classroom. It is concluded that ECE teachers who had less than 10 years' experience enjoying more quality standards in their ECE classroom than other ECE teachers.

To determine further as which group of experience exist quality standards differently, Post Hoc test was applied. Therefore Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test has applied in.

Table 5. *ANOVA for analysis to find out the differences in the existence of ECE quality standards in ECE classroom regarding their experience; less than 5 years=89, 5 to 10 years=156, 11 to 15 years=95, above 15 years=44,*

	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.919	3	1.973	5.181	.002
Within Groups	144.706	380	.381		
Total	150.625	383			

Experience wise opinion of ECE teachers about the quality standards in ECE classroom

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The following table shows that the different ECE teachers who had up to 10 years teaching experience enjoying high level quality standards in their ECE classroom more than the other ECE teachers' qualification.

Table 6. *Post Hoc analysis to find out which qualification existence of quality standards more than the other qualification wise ECE teachers*

(I) Academic Qualification	(J) Academic Qualification	M D (I-J)	Std. E	Sig.
Less than 10 year	11 to 15 years	.313(*)	122	.002
	Above 15 years	.280(*)	099	.035

** The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.*

Gender wise Similarity or differences in the opinion of ECE Teachers about Quality Standards in ECE classroom

The following table uncovered that the computed t-value is .088 which is less than the table value 1.966 at df (382) and the computed sig value is .930 which is greater than p-value=0.05. Therefore, no significant deference was found between the opinion of male and female ECE teachers about quality standards in their ECE classroom. It is concluded that male and female ECEs teachers had the same opinion about quality standards in their ECE classroom.

Table 7. *Independent sample t-test for analysis to find out the differences or similarity in the opinion of ECE teachers about quality standards regarding their group of locality; Male=159, female=225*

Gender	o.	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
Male	59	95.62	.700	.088	382	930
Female	25	25.43	.634			

*** Level of sig <.05*

Locality wise Similarity or differences in the opinion of ECE Teachers about Quality Standards in ECE classroom

It is indicated in the following table that the computed t-value= .936 which is less than the table value 1.966 at df (382), and the computed sig value=.350 which is greater than P-value=0.05. Therefore, no significant deference was found between the opinion of rural and urban ECE teachers about quality standards in ECE classroom. It is concluded that ECEs teachers of the rural and urban area had the same opinion about quality standards in their ECE classroom.

Table 8. *Independent sample t-test for analysis to find out the similarity or differences in the opinion of ECE teachers about quality standards regarding their group of gender (rural =184, urban=200)*

Locality	o.	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
Rural	84	.38	.649	.936	382	.350

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Urban	00	.32	.606

** Level of sig <.05

Gender wise Similarity or differences in the opinion of ECE Teachers about Physical Environment Quality Standard in ECE classroom

It is indicated in the following table that the computed t-value= -.295 which is less than the table value 1.966 at df (382), and the computed sig value=.597 which is greater than P-value=0.05. Therefore, no significant deference was found in the opinion of male and female respondents about Physical environment quality standard in ECE classroom. It is concluded that male and female ECEs teachers had the same opinion about quality standards in their ECE classroom.

Table 9. *Independent sample t-test for analysis to find out the differences or similarity in the opinion of ECE teachers about physical environment quality standard in ECE classroom regarding their group of gender Male=184, Female=200*

Locality	**o.**	**ean**	**SD**	**t**	**df**	**Sig**
Male	84	4.32	5.531	-.295	382	.597
Female	00	4.61	5.198			

*** Level of sig <.05*

Academic qualification wise opinion of teachers about the level of Physical Environment quality standard in ECE classroom

The following table uncovered that the computed F-value is 3.81 which is greater than the table value (2.39) and the computed sig value is .025 which is less than p-value=0.05.Therefore, qualification wise significant difference was found in the opinion of ECE teachers about the level of physical environment quality standard in the ECE classroom. It is concluded that qualification wise ECE teacher had different opinion about the level of physical environment quality standard in their ECE classroom.

To determine further as in which group of academic qualification, ECE teacher had different opinion about physical environment quality standard, Post Hoc test was applied. Therefore Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test has applied in.

Table 10. *ANOVA for analysis to find out the differences in the Academic qualification wise opinion of the teachers about the level of Physical Environment quality standard in ECE classroom; Matric=51, F.A/F.Sc=53, B.A/B.Sc.=42, M.A/M/Sc.=153,M.Phil.=85*

	SS	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	316.39	4	79.100	3.81	.025
Within Groups	10665.16	379	28.140		
Total	10981.56	383			

Academic qualification wise opinion of the ECE teachers about the level of Physical Environment quality standard in ECE classroom

The following table shows that the ECE teachers who possess M.A/M. Sc degree in their qualification had different opinion about physical environment quality standard in their ECE classroom more than other ECE teachers' qualification.

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Table 11. *Post Hoc analysis to find out which group of qualification had different opinion about the level of Physical environment quality standard in their ECE classroom*

(I) Academic Qualification	(J) Academic Qualification	M D (I-J)	Std. E	Sig.
M.A/M. Sc	Matric	3.147(*)	1.105	.005
	F.A/F. Sc	2.540(*)	1.041	.015

** The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.*

Conclusion

Considering the outcome of the analysis, it has been concluded that insufficient ECE school facilities existed. There were a few schools have enough materials for studying. Early childhood literacy expectations were not sufficiently aware of most teachers. In ECE execution, woman teachers play a better role than men. In the execution of ECE in public schools, public schools have progressed in this direction. The number of students in the class indicated that these tools are sufficient to overcome these problems.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made on the basis of the results:

• In the proper implementation of the ECE plans, facilities play a critical role and are helpful to confront the difficulties, so researchers suggest that more facilities be available at the schools where the ECE is developed.

• Funding for quality early childhood education learning resources. Learning content in rural and local primary schools should be available.

• If educators are sufficiently aware of requirements for early stage learning, those in ECE schools, then they can perform better. Teachers must be mindful of the development requirements for early stage learning

• Instruction and seminars on early childhood requirements can be held periodically for teachers' capacities.

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