

## **Effectiveness of Teaching Practices for Student's Competencies Development at Early Childhood Education (ECE) Level in Pakistan**

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The study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practices for student's competencies development at early childhood education (ECE) level in Pakistan. For this purpose a sample of 900 teachers teaching to early childhood classes from nine districts of the Punjab province were selected. Data was collected by using five point rating scale questionnaire which was developed by the researchers and administered on the selected sample for this survey research. All the parameters of validation were taken under consideration while developing and finalizing the instrument. Data was analyzed using SPSS software. The descriptive statistics i.e. frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for analysis and interpretation of data. Results showed that majority of ECE teachers responded that play has an essential place in early childhood teaching/practices and they taught children considering their educational needs. Majority of ECE teachers were working about organization of learning material of each teaching lesson. Teachers also maintain discipline among children during classroom teaching learning process. Teachers also promote student's ability for verbalizing their feeling. It is recommended that ECE teachers training programs should be reshaped and improved according to recent needs. Resource rooms should be established for the provision of best opportunities of training to ECE teachers. Awareness campaign should be organized for awareness of the community about the importance of ECE in Pakistan.

**Key words:** *teaching practices, early childhood education, teaching learning process.*

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### **Introduction**

It is widely acknowledged that the effects of happenings during the pre-natal period and earliest months and years of a child's life stay till the last moment of his life. It is early childhood education which aims to provide for holistic development of a child which includes physical, social, emotional intelligence, namely confidence, curiosity, purposefulness, self-control, connectedness, the capacity to communicate and cooperativeness, cognitive and moral development. The early years are also critical and crucial for educational success. It is the ideal time for the acquisition of the concepts, skills and attitudes for various fields of practical life that provide the foundations for lifelong learning. These

include the acquisition of language, perception motor skills required for learning to read and write and basic innumeracy concepts and skills. Rudasill (2009) pointed to potential, significant predictors of quality of an important early relationship and provide a step toward understanding elements of young children's risk in the classroom.

Approximately at the age of five, children start attending formal schooling in Pakistan. Before attending formal schooling, younger children pass their time in their homes with their family members and in "child-care centres" with "caregivers" in particular conditions. Child-care centers were not an interesting place but were destined only to offer a safe atmosphere for the child. General

observations of such centres show that normally such centres didn't have sufficient fun stuff like toys, playing articles, drawing papers, colors and paint boxes, books, games and computers. In other scenario at homes there was nothing to play for children, especially for poor children. The children of rural and far-flung villages/disadvantaged areas use the traditional forms of amusement/play. In some cases, the children were being encouraged to amuse themselves and learn through play.

With the passage of time, the need and interest of society changed. Babies with respect to their gender as well as locality became eager to learn language and other skills. As a result of these realizations child-care centers became "care-and-education center", encouraging children to learn through play. People also started realizing that caregivers were really teachers who needed to be trained like teachers and paid like teachers so they can stay with the children. Everyone, especially children from poor families, started to live more happily even after. For example, If the infant is treated with love and kindness, he or she feels worthy of love, and becomes capable of feeling and expressing love and kindness towards others (WHO, 2004). A strong, reliable primary caregiver provides consistent and unconditional love, guidance, support, safe, predictable and stable environments (Jensen, E. 2009). Only the well trained teacher/caregivers exert a strong effect on the survival and healthy development of young children through early interactions and relationships with them. Caregiver and infant engage in rounds of smiling, looking at one another and alternating their communicative signals in a dialogue. In an attachment relationship, the child: wants to be with the attachment figure, especially when under stress; derives comfort from the attachment figure; and protests when the attachment figure is not available. The infant is amused by the caregiver's attempts to play and laughs, which stimulates the caregiver to

become more playful and to laugh more herself/himself (WHO, 2004).

ECE is also termed as pre-primary education provided in schools. Its focus is limited to joyful learning of a child. ECCE is inclusive with health and nutrition provisions as well. ECD is used as alternative/substitute term of ECCE which concentrates on good health and education provision of a child from 0-8 year's age group with emphasis on child and mother/post natal care as well (Evans and Myers, 2000 and Penn, 2004). Early childhood education provides the bedrock and strong foundation not only for effective primary education but also for later life. This reality has been obvious on human being from centuries ago when the Holy Prophet (SAW) said to seek Knowledge from cradle to grave (Asghar, 1994). Experts recommend that young children should be gradually motivated towards learning through activities which are interactive and interesting for them. At ECE class children should be provided safe, nurturing and stimulating environment. Due to various gaps in the implementation of policy provision like provision of safe, nurturing and stimulating environment, opportunities for creativeness, lacking in the provision of resources and particularly lack of understanding about importance of Kachi classes, our traditional Kachi class does not qualify to be considered a good quality early childhood education (Govt. of Pakistan 2009). Early childhood experiences are salient for policy makers and practitioners who are responsible for preschool classrooms in public schools. Preschool programs in public schools are expanding rapidly, largely under the umbrella of state-supported preschool program (Powell, 2008).

Common teaching practices of successful teachers are teaching in small steps, practicing after each step, guiding students during initial practice, and providing all students with opportunities for success. The teacher should have experience in organizing various activities in the class room, which aim

to inspire the children to learn (Govt. of Punjab, 2007). Successful teachers use lesson strategies to provide students with both direct instruction and the opportunity for practice. Students may benefit greatly from practicing as well as in small groups, where they listen to each other, think a lot and help each other, understand the tasks (assignments) (Siddiqui, 2005).

Studies have also indicated that provision of ECE has positive impact on a teacher’s professional and personal development. Teachers feel rewarded by the student’s enthusiasm and improved self-perceptions, giving them added confidence and boosting performance (Mahmud and Mckay, 2006). Children who have availed good quality ECE are more likely to be law abiding citizens (Govt. of Punjab, 2010). A satisfying career offers money, status of prestige and self-fulfillment in varying aspects of life and every teacher needs to establish important relations with each one of society as well as with teacher’s community. High status comes from a perception that others value the occupation concerned. Status is not a real phenomenon, more a psychological one. High status can therefore depend not only on where the school stands in the eyes of the local community and parents, but also can vary within one particular school (Donnelly, 2002).

Pakistan is also a party as well as signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, affirming free and necessary education as a human right. It has also ratified the Convention on the elimination of all forms of inequity as well as discriminations against Women (Khan, 2004). Keeping in view the importance of early childhood education, the researchers decided to identify the various aspects of early childhood education in Punjab province of Pakistan.

**Methodology and Results**

There were 36 districts of the Punjab. These districts were arranged in sequence alphabetically and divided into three equal groups in same numbers at first step. Each group was consisted of twelve districts. In second step from each group three districts were selected randomly for the selection of representative sample through simple ballet sampling technique. In this way nine districts out of 36 districts were selected at third step. A list of ECE teachers was taken from the office of Executive District Officer (Education) of nine Districts included in the sample. 100 teachers (male=50 & female=50) of public schools teaching to nursery classes were selected through simple random technique from each district. Data collected through rating scale was analyzed and interpreted with statistical inferences. The detail is given below:

Table: 1

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about role of play in learning*

Sr.#	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
1	Play has an essential place in early childhood teaching/ practices	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	38(5)	682(95)	4.95	0.22
2	You analyze conversation of children during play	0(0)	8(1)	72(10)	193(27)	447(62)	4.50	0.72
3	You teach your students through play	0(0)	0(0)	175(24)	228(32)	317(44)	4.20	0.80

Table 1 highlights that majority of ECE teachers of public schools responded in favor of essential place of play in early childhood teaching/practices (100%), analysis of conversation of children during play (89%) and

teaching their students through play (76%). Mean value of each teaching practice is greater than 4 (Agree=4). It indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about role of play in learning.

Table: 2

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about role of play in development of children skills*

Sr #	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
4	You use “play” to develop children’s skills of seeking educational success	169(23)	70(10)	39(5)	44(6)	398(55)	3.60	1.72
5	You use “play” to develop children’s motor skills (running, jumping, stretching, digging, and Climbing)	169(23)	70(10)	39(5)	44(6)	398(55)	3.60	1.72
6	You enable pupils to learn about mathematical concepts (depth, width, height, volume, area, measurement) through block building	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	23(3)	697(97)	4.97	0.18

Table 2 highlights that majority of ECE teachers of public schools responded in favor of use of play to develop children’s skills of seeking educational success (61%), use of play to develop children’s motor skills (running, jumping, stretching, digging and Climbing) (61%) and enabling pupils to learn about mathematical concepts (depth, width, height,

volume, area, measurement) through block building (100%). Mean value of first two teaching practice is less than 4 (agree=4) which indicates that some of ECE teachers were practicing best about their teaching practices. It indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about role of play in development of children skills.

Table: 3

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about teaching approaches*

Sr.#	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
7	You teach children considering their educational needs	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	18(2)	702(98)	4.98	0.16
8	You teach children by using teacher centered approach	0(0)	91(12)	12(2)	126(18)	491(68)	4.41	1.02
9	You teach children by using the available things from environment	0(0)	0(0)	53(7)	244(34)	423(59)	4.51	0.63
10	You teach children by using text book centered approach	1(0)	75(10)	7(1)	340(47)	297(41)	4.19	0.90

Table 3 highlights that majority of ECE teachers of public schools responded in favor of

teaching children considering their educational needs (100%), by using teacher centered

approach (86%), by using the available things from environment (93%), by using text book centered approach (88%). Mean value of each teaching practice is greater than 4 (Agree=4). It

indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about teaching approaches.

Table: 4

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about use of teaching methods*

Sr.#	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
11	Demonstration method is the best method to direct the children attention at nursery education	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	19(3)	701(97)	4.97	0.16
12	You use answering question technique to produce inspiration in your student for learning	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	27(4)	693(96)	4.96	0.19
13	You use demonstration method to attract & get children's attention in work	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	19(3)	701(97)	4.97	0.16
14	You inspire children to learn from instructing with their environment	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	21(3)	699(97)	4.97	0.17
15	You guide children to learn from instructing with other children	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	21(3)	699(97)	4.97	0.17
16	You use direct teaching method to teach basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)	1(0)	75(10)	7(1)	367(51)	270(38)	4.15	0.89
17	You use demonstration method to teach basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)	1(0)	145(20)	7(1)	347(48)	220(31)	3.89	1.06

Table 4 highlights that all of ECE teachers of public schools responded (100%) about demonstration method is the best method to direct the children attention at nursery education, use of answering question technique to produce inspiration in their student for learning, use of demonstration method to attract & get children's attention in work, inspiring children to learn from instructing with their environment, guiding children to learn from instructing with other children and

majority of ECE teachers (89%) responded about using direct teaching method to teach basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and (79%) about the use of demonstration method to teach basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Mean values indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about these teaching practices as appears in table 4. Mean values indicates that an inappropriate number of ECE

teachers of public schools were practicing their best about this teaching method.

Table: 5

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about promotion of school readiness social skills*

Sr.#	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
18	You promote school readiness focusing on social skills (school discipline, respect, obedience and safety of other's right)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	19(3)	701(97)	4.97	0.16
19	You promote habit in your students to follow others	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	19(3)	701(97)	4.97	0.16
20	You enhance the ability of your students to work co-operatively	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	19(3)	701(97)	4.97	0.16
21	You enhance the ability of your students to express their feelings in an appropriate way	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	17(2)	703(98)	4.98	0.15
22	You promote the ability of your students to listen others with patience	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	16(2)	704(98)	4.98	0.15
23	You persuade your students to sit attentively in class room	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	17(2)	703(98)	4.98	0.15

Table 5 highlights that all of ECE teachers of public schools responded (100%) about promotion of school readiness focusing on social skills (school discipline, respect, obedience and safety of other's right), promotion of habit in their students to follow others, enhancing the ability of their students to work co-operatively, enhancing the ability of their students to express their feelings in an appropriate way,

promotion of ability of their students to listen others with patience and persuading their students to sit attentively in class room. Mean value of each teaching practice is greater than 4 (Agree=4). It indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about promotion of school readiness social skills.

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about elements of effective early years teaching for creation of learning environment*

Sr.#	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
24	You organize learning material of each teaching lesson	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	25(3)	695(97)	4.97	0.18
25	You provide relevant, interesting & novel experiences	0(0)	0(0)	2(0)	29(4)	689(96)	4.95	0.22
26	You provide opportunities for questioning	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	26(4)	694(96)	4.96	0.19
27	You answer the question of children	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	26(4)	694(96)	4.96	0.19

Table 6 highlights that all of ECE teachers of public schools responded (100%) in

favor of organization of learning material of each teaching lesson, provision of relevant,

interesting & novel experiences, provision of opportunities for questioning and answering the question of children. It indicates that ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best regard to above mentioned classroom teaching practices.

Mean value of each teaching practice is greater than 4 (Agree=4). It indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about elements of effective early years teaching for creation of learning environment.

Table: 7

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about task related behavior*

Sr.#	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
28	You maintain discipline between children during classroom	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	6(1)	714(99)	4.99	0.09
29	You use a reward system (use of praising words, giving things, providing stars) to manage pupil behavior	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	8(1)	712(99)	4.99	0.10
30	You correct immediately after seeing the wrong behavior of students	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	8(1)	712(99)	4.99	0.10
31	You guide the children to find the materials necessary to complete the task	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	22(3)	698(97)	4.97	0.17
32	You enable your pupils to be on task during whole class work	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	25(3)	695(97)	4.97	0.18
33	you use problem solving strategies to complete a task	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	18(2)	702(98)	4.98	0.16

Table 7 highlights that all of ECE teachers of public schools responded (100%) in favor of maintaining discipline between children during classroom, use of a reward system (use of praising words, giving things, providing stars) to manage pupil behavior, correction immediately after seeing the wrong behavior of students, guiding the children to

find the materials necessary to complete the task, enabling their pupils to be on task during whole class work and using problem solving strategies to complete a task Mean value of each teaching practice is greater than 4 (Agree=4). It indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about task related behavior.

Table: 8

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about communication skills*

Sr.#	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
34	You promote your student's ability for verbalizing their feelings	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	250(35)	470(65)	4.65	0.48
35	You promote your student's ability for answering question	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	31(4)	689(96)	4.96	0.20
36	You use "drama & role play" (dressing up, cooking, having a little shop) to develop children's language skills	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	122(17)	598(83)	4.83	0.38

37	Dramatic plays help ECE pupils to concentrate to be attentive and to use self control	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	181(25)	539(75)	4.75	0.43
38	Small group and short duration classroom discussion helps children to respect each other opinion	0(0)	0(0)	80(11)	185(26)	455(63)	4.52	0.69
39	Small group and short duration classroom discussion helps children to develop their listening skills	0(0)	0(0)	50(7)	181(25)	489(68)	4.61	0.61
40	You teach the students through puzzles to fit the pieces of block at right place	0(0)	6(1)	4(1)	31(4)	679(94)	4.92	0.37
41	You increase the ability of students about classification of objects through making groups of different things	0(0)	8(1)	4(1)	31(4)	679(94)	4.92	0.39
42	Categorizing objects (toys, other materials in the classroom) according to criteria (color, shape, size) help children to develop their mathematical ability	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	20(3)	700(97)	4.97	0.16
43	Paired or group work method develop the children's co-operative learning skills	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	20(3)	700(97)	4.97	0.16

Table 8 highlights that majority of ECE teachers of public schools responded in favor of promotion of their student's ability for verbalizing their feelings (100%), promotion of student's ability for answering question (100%), using "drama & role play" (dressing up, cooking, having a little shop) to develop children's language skills (100%), dramatic plays help ECE pupils to concentrate to be attentive and to use self-control (100%), small group and short duration classroom discussion helps children to respect each other opinion (89%), small group and short duration classroom discussion helps children to develop their listening skills (93%), teaching the

students through puzzles to fit the pieces of block at right place (98%), increasing the ability of students about classification of objects through making groups of different things (98%), categorizing objects (toys, other materials in the classroom) according to criteria (color, shape, size) help children to develop their mathematical ability (100%) and paired or group work method develop the children's co-operative learning skills (100%). Mean value of each teaching practice is greater than 4 (Agree=4). It indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about communication skills.

Table: 9

*Frequency and percentage of responses of ECE teachers about homework assignments*

Sr.#	Statements	SDA f(%)	DA f(%)	UN f(%)	A f(%)	SA f(%)	M	SD
44	You assign homework to your students regularly	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	6(1)	714(99)	4.99	0.09
45	You check homework regularly	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	6(1)	714(99)	4.99	0.09
46	You guide your student to do homework properly	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	6(1)	714(99)	4.99	0.09
47	You guide to the children during classroom work	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	6(1)	714(99)	4.99	0.09

Table 9 highlights that all of ECE teachers of public schools responded (100%) in favor of assigning homework to their students regularly, checking homework regularly, guiding their student to do homework properly and guiding to the children during classroom work. Mean value of each teaching practice is greater than 4 (Agree=4). It indicates that majority of ECE teachers of public schools were practicing best about homework assignments.

### **Discussions**

One of the key concerns of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practices for student's competencies development at early childhood education (ECE) level in Pakistan. To achieve this purpose, a questionnaire was developed on the basis of literature reviewed. In this instrument, there were 09 aspects of teaching practices for student's competencies development at ECE level in Pakistan. These aspects are detailed below; (a) role of play in learning, (b) role of play in development of children skills, (c) teaching approaches, (d) use of teaching methods, (e) promotion of school readiness social skills, (f) elements of effective early years teaching creating learning environment, (g) task related behavior, (h) communication skills, and (i) homework assignments.

Through key questions regarding teaching practices to develop student's competencies at early childhood level in public Schools of Pakistan. It was found that majority of ECE teachers taught to the children by adopting different strategies (table 1, 2, 3) i.e. role of play, using things from the environment, considering educational needs of children, (child centered) (Dever & Falconer, 2008) teaching approaches and methods (Muijs & Reynolds, 2006). As per concerned with the use of teaching strategies by ECE teachers during teaching at early childhood level in public schools. It was found that urban ECE

teachers were seemed well in using these (table 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). The results show that best use of teaching strategies had positive impact on student's performance (Shami & Hussain 2005, Muijs & Reynolds, 2006).

Communication is the spinal cord of any system. It connects the different members of a system particularly of education system and develops sound coordination between all characters of this system (students and teachers, personnel's of the departments table. 8) (Borman and Kimball, 2005). Inappropriate language and ineffective communication affects the quality of teaching and learning at primary level particularly at ECE level (Zafar, 2003).

Homework has great importance in the educational life of children because it is a trustable intersection between home and school. It is real source which serves the parents at their doorstep about their children's education. In response to the questions concerned with homework, majority of ECE teacher assigned homework to their students. It means that they were aware about the importance of homework to increase mastery of basic skills, such as reading, writing, spelling and mathematics (Goldstein, S. & Zentall, S. 1999).

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of data analysis and findings of the study the following conclusion was drawn:

Majority of ECE teachers of public schools seem to have their effectiveness of teaching practices for student's competencies development at early childhood education (ECE) level in Pakistan regarding role of play in learning and development of children skills, teaching approaches, the use of teaching methods, promotion of school readiness social skills, elements of effective early years teaching creation of learning environment, task related behaviour, communication skills and homework assignments.

## Recommendations

On the basis of data analysis and conclusion the following recommendations are drawn/ incorporated for betterment and development of early childhood education in Pakistan.

- ECE teachers training programs should be reshaped and improved according to recent needs.
- Resource rooms should be established for the provision of best opportunities of training to ECE teachers.
- Awareness campaign should be organized for awareness of the community about the importance of ECE in Pakistan.

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