

## **Facilitation and Pedagogy in Training Workshop of Early Childhood Education Professionals in Open and Distance Learning**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to investigate perceptions of participants about early childhood care and education professional development workshop. The sample consisted of 28 participants including 10 males and 18 females who were participating in a postgraduate diploma in early childhood education. The questionnaire was used for data collection consisting of 31 closed ended items. It had three dimensions; workshop content, workshop facilitation arrangements and pedagogy of the resource persons. Independent *t*-test was applied to investigate the satisfaction level of participants about workshop content, workshop facilitation arrangement and pedagogy of the resource persons. The results revealed that there was no significant gender wise difference between participants' satisfaction level and workshop facilitation arrangements. But significant gender wise difference was found between participants' satisfaction level and the workshop content and pedagogy of the resource persons. It was found that females and males were fully satisfied with the pedagogy of the resource persons. On the other hand, females were more satisfied than males in case of workshop content and males were highly satisfied with workshop facilitation arrangements as compared to females. Findings of this research suggested the need to review and improve the content of the courses of the workshop by using different AV Aids during the workshops. Furthermore, the schedule of the workshop should be changed by increasing the number of days and decreasing the hours of the workshop for the ease of the participants. In ODL, participants belong to different backgrounds, so diversity may be incorporated in content and pedagogy.

**Keywords:** *Professional development; early childhood professionals, training in open and distance learning*

### **Introduction**

The early childhood years are very significant as this period becomes the fundamental component of a child's personality and lays the foundation of life-long learning. Affable and pleasant environment is the right of every child for better growth. Psychology suggests that for the psycho-social, emotional, cognitive and educational development of the children, the early years of a child's life are very vital and crucial. During the early years, the major components of emotional intelligence (EI) are cultivated, comprising self-confidence, inquisitiveness, self-will, attachment and communication skills and cooperation (Government of Pakistan, 2008). Yet these early years have received least attention from the education world.

Enough research has been carried out to show the value of quality for early childhood education and care (ECEC) for better development of a healthy and competent child. As ECE contributes to many important things including the general health of a child, his future educational development, his psychological, social, emotional and behavioural development. In developing countries, early childhood education is facing multidimensional challenges and there are debates and dialogues on the situation of ECE. Now it the stage of ECE is getting the attention of the policymakers and all concerned stakeholders including government institutions and civil society organizations. One of the issues is related to training of ECE professionals who

intend to join early childhood education as their career choice, particularly teaching at the early childhood education level. Very few institutions are providing training to ECE professional and those are private institutions which do not fully meet requirements of the market. A large number of young graduates desirous of joining ECE field are deprived of the opportunity because of non-affordability in the private institutions. Allama Iqbal Open University has started providing training in ECE field by offering postgraduate diploma in early childhood education which is comparatively affordable. This professional development ECE program is offered throughout Pakistan through open and distance learning mode. In the study, the effort has been to examine what were perceptions of prospective ECE professionals about facilitation and pedagogy used during a professional development workshop.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This article focuses on the professional development of the ECE teachers and improvement of the ECE workshops. It highlights the shortcomings and strengths of the ECE workshops carried out in ODL system. Furthermore, it also states the perception of participants about the workshop facilitation arrangements, workshop content and pedagogy of the resource persons of ECE workshops.

### **Research Questions**

1. How pedagogy is perceived by ECE professionals in training workshop?
2. What are the perceptions of the participants about facilitation of training workshop?

3. How do they perceive content of training workshop for professional development?

### **Brief Overview of Early Childhood Education**

*“Early Childhood Education (ECE), termed katchi or pre-primary, is defined as both formal and informal as well as public or private education services for children aged 3-5 years. IT covers children above 3 years but below 5 years of age.”(UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2006)*

Early Childhood Education or ECE is related to early learning of younger children and contains activities, practices and experiences that deliberately influence developmental amendments and modifications in children previous to their entrance into a proper class, grade or primary school. If Early Childhood Education is of good quality, it gives imperative and significant continuing gains for children. For the attainment of conceptions, skillfulness, mind-set and manners, the early years are significant that lay the foundation for life-long learning. Learning is initiated from birth. Researchers show that 80% of the mind is developed in the early years i.e. from nativity (birth) to the age of 8 years. Inadequate or inappropriate learning opportunities during these years can hinder full and complete development of mental abilities of the children.(Irvine, 1999) (Awopegba, Oduolowu & Nsamenang, 2013) (Neuman, Josephson, & Chua, 2015)

Children develop in dissimilar manners. The mainly observable manner in which a child builds up is physical or bodily. However, there are various other manners in which children grow up. Children start growing when they learn to speak when they develop a distinct personality, and also when they learn to get along with others. (Irvine, 1999) (Awopegba, Oduolowu & Nsamenang, 2013) (Neuman, Josephson, & Chua, 2015)

### **Training for ECE**

Training Wing, Federal Directorate of Education revealed the major goals and objectives of the ECE teachers training include: To draw attention to the significance and benefits of Early Childhood Education (ECE), to highlight the demand and underlying principle of Early Childhood Education (ECE), to carve up the Early Childhood Education policy, plans, projects and intercessions with teachers in Pakistan in general, to distribute Early Childhood Education position in terms of populace, enrolment, conveniences and capacities in light of ECE promises and to divide up prominent elements of Early Childhood Education program/curriculum and instruct/prepare ECE teachers for its successful accomplishment. (Irvine, 1999) (Awopegba, Oduolowu & Nsamenang, 2013) (Neuman, Josephson, & Chua, 2015). Professional Development of teachers is one of the key factors in providing quality ECE. Washington State Department of Early Learning Training (DEL, 2016) has described that trainer preparation focuses on four main areas: professionalism, facilitation, instructional design, and assessment. Professionalism for trainers includes the creation of a safe and warm environment, demonstrating

respect for individual needs, and cultural sensitivity. According to Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) facilitation of training is the formation of a suitable and comfy room arrangement, valuable communication skills, the formation of group agreements, and facilitation of group activities, focusing training, and managing unexpected situations. Instructional design is the inclusion of other supporting documents, methods of interactions and learning styles, use of hooks and goals, instructions and demonstrations, appropriate use of support materials and technology and an effective training summary and closing. (Training and Trainer Manual, 2016). Assessment of adult learning includes the use of appropriate prior learning, formative, and summative assessments that align with stated training outcomes. Trainers should be able to assess where their participant knowledge is at the beginning of training, check for understanding during and assure that learning objectives were met at the end of training through summary, questions, and activities. Materials shared should be relevant and grounded in current research. (Training and Trainer Manual, 2016)

### **Ensuring Effective Teaching in Early Childhood Education**

Professional development is the basic key to effective teaching in ECE. It includes formal educational experiences at different levels (i.e., high school or graduate school) as well as formal and informal training and mentoring experiences. A statewide Professional Development System (PDS) should be developed for such purposes consisting of a complete and elaborate set of requirements for qualified ECE teachers

as well as different methods to prepare qualified ECE teachers. A mechanism should be developed to define and ensure applicability of optimal conditions for encouraging and rewarding environment for children due to which they should be ready to go to school. Complete set of guidelines should be developed so that teachers should know about the do's and don'ts for creating best learning opportunities for children. (Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin & Knoche, 2009). Professional Development System consists of core components, including:

1. Different higher education programs to prepare teachers.
2. Workshops and courses provided by state and local resources.
3. A proper certification system for teachers who are qualified to teach.

ECE trainers educate children with a wide range of ethnicities, cultures, languages, abilities, and socioeconomic statuses. Hence he should be properly trained about handling of young children, how to take care of them, effective learning approaches, providing good and friendly learning environment, using planned activities in classrooms. (Williford, Carter, Maier, Hamre, Cash, Pianta & Downer, 2017). Comprehensive and well integrated professional development is found to be most effective when it is aligned with goals and objectives, content-specific and continuous over time (Williford, Carter, Maier, Hamre, Cash, Pianta & Downer, 2017).

### **Trainers' Core Competencies in ECE**

Washington State Department of Early Learning Training (DEL, 2016) has described that trainer preparation focuses

on four main areas: professionalism, facilitation, instructional design, and assessment (Training and Trainer Manual, 2016). Professionalism for trainers includes the creation of a safe and warm environment, demonstrating respect for individual needs, and cultural sensitivity. Washington State Trainers, as representatives of Department of Early Learning (DEL) and an extension of the Department's Quality Practice and Professional Growth Division are required to sustain confidentiality, persuade participant contributions to learning, accommodate for participant needs, respect differences and generally represent the field favorably by conducting themselves in a professional and reverent way (Training and Trainer Manual, 2016). According to Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) facilitation of training is the formation of a suitable and comfy room arrangement, valuable communication skills, formation of group agreements, and facilitation of group activities, focusing training, and managing unexpected situations. Trainers should create a comfortable environment for adults to increase access to learning without disruption; this includes enthusiastic, focused, interactive, and engaging presentation and respect for participants from the trainer and fellow participants as well as the comfort of the physical environment (Training and Trainer Manual, 2016). Instructional design is the inclusion of other supporting documents, methods of interactions and learning styles, use of hooks and goals, instructions and demonstrations, appropriate use of support materials and technology and an effective training summary and closing (Training and Trainer Manual, 2016). Assessment of

adult learning includes the use of appropriate prior learning, formative, and summative assessments that align with stated training outcomes. Trainers should be able to assess where their participant knowledge is at the beginning of training, check for understanding during and assure that learning objectives were met at the end of training through summary, questions, and activities. Materials shared should be relevant and grounded in current research (Training and Trainer Manual, 2016).

**Facilities and Services required for Training Workshops**

Training Manual for Capacity Development of ECCE Teachers, (2015) identified facilities and services required for the workshop. Facilities and services required for ECE training workshops include: Resource Center having seating arrangements of 30-40 learners/trainers, seating arrangement for 4-5 Groups for group work, place for activities/practical work, dice /rostrum, multimedia, laptop/computer, screen/TV set, sound system, flip charts/blackboard along with markers/chalks, video display

system along with all the required accessories and banner for front wall (Irvine, 1999) (Awopegba, Oduolowu & Nsamenang, 2013) (Neuman, Josephson, & Chua, 2015).

**Methodology**

The study followed a quantitative approach. To find out perceptions of participants about facilitation arrangement, the content of the workshop courses and pedagogy of the resource persons during the workshop. The sample consisted of 28 participants including 10 males and 18 females.

**Results**

The objective for using independent t-test was to find out the perception of participants about the ECE workshop regarding workshop content, workshop arrangements and resource person

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Characteristics of Participants.*

Demographic Characteristics of Participants	
Gender	
• Male	10
• Female	18
Locality	
• Punjab	13
• Sindh	7
• KPK	2
• AJK	3
• Islamabad	3

N=28

Table 1 shows the demographics of the participants. The workshop had both male and female participants who belonged to

province of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Islamabad.

**Table 2**

*Gender difference on content of training workshop in ODL*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p
Workshop Content	Male	10	3.80	0.463	26	-3.657	.005
	Female	18	4.35	0.334			
	Total	28	4.16	0.464			

Table 2 shows the results of independent sample t-test for workshop content, workshop Mean score for workshop content among male students is 3.80 whereas its 4.35 among female students.

Standard deviation for female students (SD=0.334) is lower as compared to male students (SD=0.463) which means that female students are highly satisfied as compared to male students.

**Table 3**

*Gender difference on facilitation in training workshop in ODL*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p
Workshop arrangement	Male	10	3.73	0.564	26	-1.657	.109
	Female	18	4.11	0.593			
	Total	28	3.98	0.602			

Table 3 shows the results of independent samples t-test for workshop arrangement. Mean score of workshop arrangement among male students is 3.73 where as its 4.11 among female students. Standard deviation is lower among male students

(SD=0.564,) as compared to female students (SD=0.593) which means male students are completely satisfied with the workshop arrangements as compared to females.

**Table 4**

*Gender difference on pedagogy in training workshop in ODL*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p
Resource Person	Male	10	4.20	0.474	26	-2.739	.01
	Female	18	4.63	0.348			
	Total	28	4.48	0.441			

Table 4 shows the results of independent samples t-test for workshop resource person Mean score of resource person among male students is 4.20 as compared to female students (4.63). The standard deviation shows that female students (SD=0.348) are more satisfied with the pedagogy of the resource persons as compared to males (SD=0.474). The data from the tables show that the total mean score for workshop content is 4.16, workshop facilitation is 3.98 and workshop pedagogy is 4.48. For workshop content the sig. value is .005 which is less than  $p$ -value (0.05) which supports alternative hypothesis that significant gender wise difference lies between participants' satisfaction level about workshop content. For workshop facilitation arrangement the sig. value is .109 which is greater than  $p$ -value (0.05) which supports null hypothesis that no significant gender wise difference lies between participants' satisfaction level about workshop content. For pedagogy of the resource persons the sig. value is .01 which is less than  $p$ -value (0.05) which supports alternate hypothesis that significant gender wise difference lies between participants' satisfaction level about workshop content.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The result of the study indicates satisfaction level of participants about workshop content/ facilitation arrangement and pedagogy of the resource persons. Females are highly satisfied with workshop content and facilitation arrangements as compared to males while males are more satisfied with pedagogy of the resource persons. All the three components of the workshop need attention to improve the quality so that both males and females should be fully

satisfied with the facilities available during workshops, the content being taught and pedagogy of the resource persons. The resource persons should be completely mastered in the area of ECE, being up to date with latest researches and methods, highly qualified, knowledgeable and should know about effective ways of training. For professional development of early childhood education professionals, these components have also been discussed by Byington & Tannock (2011) and findings on facilitation arrangements and workshop content support their study findings. Findings regarding gender differences during professional development workshop relate to the studies by (Irvine, 1999) (Awopegba, Oduolowu & Nsamenang, 2013) (Neuman, Josephson, & Chua, 2015). To improve the quality of workshops, facilities like resource centers having proper seating arrangements for 30-40 persons as well as groups for group work, audio visual aids (tv, multimedia, laptop etc.), dice or rostrum, charts and blackboards along with markers and chinks are required. Workshop content should be revised time to time to keep it up to date with the new standards, techniques and methods used to teach children in an effective way.

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