



Facilitators Of School Readiness At Early Childhood Education

Poornima Hegde ¹, Prof. Kalpana Venugopal ²

¹Research Scholar, R I E Mysuru (NCERT)

²Professor, Department of Education, Regional Institute of Education , Mysuru (NCERT)

ABSTRACT:

Education is the priority for all the progressive nations in the world. It is acknowledged globally that laying strong foundation for education is very important. Research in the field of neuroscience revealed that stimulating early learning environment leads to smooth transition of children from preschool environment to formal schooling. Early Childhood Education programs worldwide aim at School Readiness of children.

In the study, early childhood education programs are assessed in the perspective of school readiness. Researcher considered different domains of development and listed the indicators of school readiness. Using this list, school readiness assessment tool was constructed to assess the School Readiness of children. The study aimed to assess the readiness level of 1st standard children from the feeder schools. From 13 Government, 12 Aided and 16 Private schools of Bengaluru North District, total of 587 children were considered for the study. Study considered early childhood education programs where the children had 3 years of preschool education. The study assessed early childhood education programs in the light of syllabus, textbooks, worksheets, and lesson plans, activity plans, learning materials, infrastructure, time table, pedagogical practices and assessment. Questionnaire was used to know about the pedagogical practices of the teachers. Data was also collected through teacher interaction also. It was found that the Private school students have high school readiness compared to government and aided schools. Infrastructure and other facilities in the Private early childhood education programs are good compared to other types of schools. It is inferred that the Materials and Infrastructure Facilities, Pedagogical Practices of Teachers and Parent Participation are associated with the School Readiness of Children and are considered as facilitators of School Readiness.

KEYWORDS: Early Childhood Education, School Readiness, facilitators, domains of development, indicators of school readiness, readiness assessment

I. INTRODUCTION

For every individual, learning begins at birth. It is very important for any nation to focus upon early years of learning as it lays foundation for next higher levels of learning. Hence, early years of learning has drawn attention worldwide today. In India, each community offers its own form of early care and learning experiences to children. In recent times we find structural change in the family pattern and many children are receiving early education and care outside the home in child care centers, preschool programs, and other community-based early learning settings.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) involve care, health, nutrition, play and early learning within a protective and enabling environment. It is key foundation for lifelong development and learning, and has a powerful impact on early childhood development. Since there is rapid growth taking place among the children, safe and nurturing environment is needed for every child to develop optimally. It is the responsibility of the preschool, parents and community to join their hands together to see that child is provided with such stimulating environment. From birth to 3 years child is cared in terms of food and nutrition. From 3 to 5 years, children are helped to be independent by acquiring self help skills. After the age of 5, child enters formal schooling in which the previous learning and experiences help the child to be successful.

Early Childhood Education: The duration from birth to 6 years of a child's life is considered as the most critical years for lifelong development since the pace of development in these years is extremely rapid. Research in the field of neuroscience, has proved that brain development reaches the optimum level during this period. Quality of the education provided at this level stimulates the brain development of the children. This stage in life is also important as a foundation for the inculcation of social values and personal habits, which are known to last a lifetime. The strong foundation laid for the children will enable them to grow as productive individuals.

At the early stage, children learn through senses and stimulations. They try to know more about their surrounding, explore the environment in which they live. Play way method of learning helps them to develop the abilities like problem solving, manipulation and experimentation. Success in learning boosts their self confidence. Early experiences provided through education should help them to develop in totality. All the domains of development i.e. physical, motor, and cognitive, language, socio-personal, emotional and creative and aesthetic appreciation are interrelated and take place simultaneously.

School Readiness

School Readiness is considered as one of the important aim of Early Childhood Education. It is a holistic concept of developing skills and abilities with respect to physical, social, emotional and cognitive domains of the child's growth. Readiness is the ability with which they enter into formal schools. It should enable them successful transition from preschool to primary.

Children enter into class I with diverse background due to different Early Childhood Programs in our country. Some may do not have this preschool exposure and experience. As a result, each child possesses varied level of School Readiness. Study assessed the School Readiness of children in Early Childhood Education programs and analyzed the facilitating factors of school readiness in the Early Childhood Education programs.

Operational definitions

- **Early Childhood Education** – Educational experiences provided for the children between 3 to 6 years of age.
- **Early Childhood Education Program-** Early Childhood Program (of 3 years duration) is a feeder attached to the Primary School.
- **School Readiness-** School Readiness is the ability of the child to perform skills and competencies in physical and motor, personal, language and numeracy, cognitive and creative domains of the development

III. RESEARCH GAP

All the Early Childhood Education programs aim at optimum outcomes in different domains of development which is nothing but preparing children for school. Since the level of readiness in children reflects the quality of Early Childhood program, researcher felt the need to evaluate these programs in the perspective of School Readiness. From the literature review it is understood that there are various factors influencing the School Readiness of the child. Curriculum and physical environment in the preschool, practice of teachers, support from parents and community are the factors which determine School Readiness.

In India, very few studies are done on Early Childhood Education and no study is done to assess the early childhood education programs in the perspective of school readiness. Hence, this line of thought prompted the researcher to take up the same for research.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The process of education in India is undergoing tremendous change in recent years. Education is imparted in formal and non-formal way. Formal education has its own significance in early years for a child. The children entering into formal schools at the age of 6 years, are expected to attain basic skills and abilities with respect to developmental domains. Not all children entering grade 1 will have the exposure of ECCE. Those who get the exposure, also vary in their experiences because of the variety of institutional settings. Hence, there is diversified group of children with differential abilities at grade 1.

The children who complete their preschool education, either in ICDS or in private setting, do not possess the required abilities and competencies. This has the negative impact on school readiness of the children. The concept of School Readiness is considered as a major aim of early years of education because of its significance in future success of the children. There are various factors facilitating school readiness like

curriculum, suitable learning experiences, infrastructure facilities of Early Childhood Education Programs, pedagogical processes of teachers and parental involvement.

Through this study, the researcher aimed to evaluate Early Childhood Education programs in the perspective of School Readiness. For this, it was proposed to analyze various international and national documents on Early Childhood Education in order to identify Indicators for School Readiness and developed a readiness assessment tool. Observation cum checklist was used to assess the Early Childhood Education Programs. A questionnaire was prepared to seek information from teachers regarding the activities of the preschool. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify facilitators of School Readiness in Early Childhood Education programs.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

1. To study the attainment of School Readiness based on the Indicators of School Readiness of children of Early Childhood Education feeder schools.
2. To identify facilitators and impeters in the attainment of School Readiness of Early Childhood Education programs.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was used in the present study. Survey was conducted in primary as well as feeder preschools. Study considered School Readiness among 1st standard students and also the functioning of feeder preschools in which these students completed their 3 years of preschool education. The design of the current study involved three different stages-In the first stage, study aimed to assess the readiness level of 1st standard children from the feeder schools. Different dimensions of development were taken into consideration for assessing the readiness of the children. Since the extent of school readiness is associated with the experiences provided in the preschool, it was felt necessary to observe the infrastructure and other facilities available for the children in their preschool. Hence in the second stage, infrastructure and academic facilities of the preschools were assessed.

The population of the study consisted of all Early Childhood Education programs which are attached to primary schools. The study used simple random convenient sampling method. A survey was conducted and 587 children from 13 government, 12 aided and 16 unaided schools in Bengaluru north district.

Sample: Details of number of Schools visited for data collection

District	Government School	Aided School	Unaided School	Total
Bengaluru North	186 children from 13 schools	173 children from 12 schools	228 children from 16 schools	587 children from 41 schools

VII. DATA COLLECTION AND TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS**Tools used for the study****1. School Readiness Indicators Checklist**

In the preschools, curriculum should provide an integrated set of experiences to foster holistic growth and development in all domains, such as health and well-being, cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development through an interlinked approach (Position Paper, 2006. P.36)

The list of indicators was prepared by the researcher based on the study of various Documents and tools of Early Childhood Education. The indicators are listed for different domains of development of children. Using the list of indicators, a checklist was designed for each domain. This checklist was used to evaluate Early Childhood Education programs that included the syllabus, textbooks, worksheets, and lesson plans, activity plans, learning materials, time table, pedagogical practices and assessment.

2. School Readiness Assessment Tool

This readiness assessment tool measured the abilities of different domains of development among the children at the beginning of 1st standard (Age group 6+). Domains considered are: Physical and motor development, Personal development, Social and emotional development, Language development, Numeracy development, Cognitive development, Creative development.

School Readiness Assessment tool developed by the researcher was based on different methods. The tool consisted of three parts:

Part A – consisted of items that the child performed independently

Part B – consisted of the items that required the assistance from the Teacher / Researcher for the child to perform

Part C- consisted of items for which teachers gave the information about the child based on their daily observations.

3. ECE Materials and Infrastructure Checklist

Through the study of various Documents, it was understood that there are certain requirements for fulfilling the curriculum and practice of ECE. The requirements are materials and infrastructure which affect the School Readiness among the children. For example, according to the teacher when there is enough outdoor space for the children, physical and motor development is maximum. It was required by the investigator to develop a checklist to check whether all these ECE programs had the required materials and infrastructure.

4. ECE Teacher and Parent related information Questionnaire

After reviewing various literatures, it was found that even with the infrastructure and materials good enough, the teacher and certain parent factors influence school readiness among children. The information about teachers as well as parents was gathered from teachers through a questionnaire developed by the investigator.

Data Collection-

The researcher used a self-constructed Readiness Assessment tool to assess the extent of readiness among the children with respect to different domains of development. The tool consisted of three parts. Children answered the items in Part A on their own. Researcher interacted with each child to seek response for the items in Part B. Based on day today observation of children, the class teacher marked responses for Part C. The data was also collected from the preschools where these children studied. Using observation cum checklist, information was obtained regarding the classroom processes, facilities available and parental involvement in the school activities. The collected data was quantitatively analyzed to know the status of readiness among Government, Aided and Unaided schools. Data collected was analyzed qualitatively also in terms of infrastructure, various activities conducted and parental participation.

VIII. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The intention of this study is to measure the School Readiness of children in Early Childhood Education programs of feeder schools. For this, the researcher found out the total scores of the Students in School readiness assessment scale, based on the Percentile. Researcher has classified the extent of readiness into Poor readiness, Moderate readiness, Excellent and Very Excellent readiness. Below table shows the results:

Table 1. School Readiness and infrastructure facilities available in the ECE programs

	N	School Readiness		Infrastructure		
		Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Govt	186	99.24	8.064	3	36.3333	2.08167
Aided	173	99.35	7.671	12	29.9167	1.88092
Private	228	105.78	4.061	16	40.8125	3.35099
Total	587	101.81	7.363	31	36.1613	5.86002

Interpretation-Above table shows that the obtained mean score of Government schools is 99.24 for School Readiness and Standard deviation is 8.06. In case of infrastructure the average score is 36.33 and standard deviation is 2.08.

In the Aided schools, the readiness average is 99.35 and Standard deviation is 7.67 while in the case of infrastructure of the feeder preschool, the average score is 29.91 and 1.88 Standard deviation.

But in the case Private schools the readiness score is 105.78 and Standard deviation is 4.06 while Infrastructure it is 40.81 and 3.35 for Mean and standard deviation.

So it was concluded that Private school children have High Mean score for readiness compared to Aided and Government Schools. Private Early Childhood education programs had high mean score for infrastructure. So it is inferred that, the infrastructure and other facilities of the Early Childhood Education programs are associated with the School Readiness of Children.

There are various factors affecting the School Readiness of the children other than the quality of Early Childhood Education program. Studies have shown that School Readiness is also associated with the factors such as-

- Materials and Infrastructure Facilities
- Pedagogical Practices of Teachers
- Parent Participation

Hence, the present study considered these three factors as facilitators of School Readiness. Impact of all these factors on the attainment of School Readiness in Government, Government Aided and Private ECE programs is discussed below:

Materials and Infrastructure Facilities- ECE materials and infrastructure checklist showed that, in 70% of the private programs (11 out of 16), make use of teaching learning materials, print materials, and play materials. Also, teachers make use of colorful pictures, pluck cards, charts, models and collected specimens of shapes, seeds, crops etc. Centers have a separate activity room for the children where all the materials are placed systematically in such a way that children can easily get the access. Classrooms involved attractive display of pictures, walls painted with themes and pinup boards were full of craft works of the children.

The checklist showed that in private programs, safety of the children was ensured. In 70% of the private programs (11 out of 16), there was a provision for outdoor play and indoor play for the children. Classrooms were well ventilated and cleanliness was maintained. Seating arrangement was made in such a way that children can involve in the group activity easily. Children have the drinking water and toilet facility.

Pedagogical Practices of Teachers- In 75% of the private programs (12 out of 16), teachers use multisensory, play and activity and innovative methods to engage the children. From the questionnaire it is clear that they conduct various activities for reading, writing, and number readiness.

Group activities involving sharing, turn taking, defeat or win, group games, team sports, art craft, dance help to develop social readiness

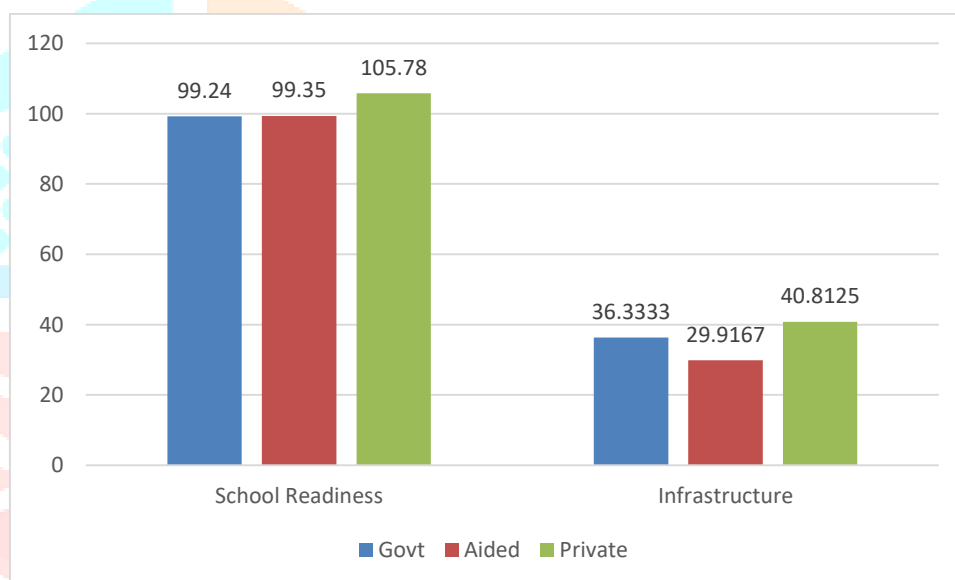
Parent Participation -In 81% of the Private programs (13 out of 16) parents visited the school during Parent Teacher Meetings to discuss the progress of their wards. They ask their children about what has happened in the school. During the cultural events and celebrations, parents get involved by helping their children to prepare for such events

Discussion:

Materials and infrastructure facility was found to be good in private compared to Aided and Government programs. In Private programs, teachers use variety of pedagogical practices. Parent participation also was more in Private compared to other two types of programs considered for the study.

Quantitative analysis in the present study revealed that School Readiness scores of children in Private schools were high compared to Government and Aided schools. Hence, it can be concluded that – Materials and Infrastructure Facilities, Pedagogical Practices of Teachers and Parent Participation act as facilitators of School Readiness.

Graph1. School Readiness and infrastructure facilities available



IX. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION AND CONCLUSION

IX.1. Findings:

The findings of the study are:

- Data analysis proves that the activities in the Private programs matched high with the Indicators of all the domains of development
- Data analysis revealed that the mean score of Private school children was 105.78 which was greater than the mean score of Government 99.24 and Aided school children 99.35. So it was concluded that Private school children have high School Readiness.
- Private school children have High Mean score for readiness compared to Aided and Govt. schools. In the case of Infrastructure, the Mean score is high in the Private ECE programs. So it is inferred that, the infrastructure and other facilities in the ECE programs is associated with School readiness of Children

- Data analysis showed that Private schools had better Materials and Infrastructure Facilities, Pedagogical Practices of Teachers and Parent Participation. Quantitative data analysis showed that Private school children have High Mean score for readiness compared to Aided and Government Schools. Hence, it is inferred that the Materials and Infrastructure Facilities, Pedagogical Practices of Teachers and Parent Participation are associated with the School Readiness of Children and are considered as facilitators of School Readiness.

IX.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study involved convenient sample and the results obtained are delimited to the children of 1st standard in selected schools of Bengaluru North District.
- The study is confined to the children of age 6+ years
- The study considered only some of the factors contributing for School Readiness viz, infrastructure facilities, activities carried out in the school, pedagogical processes of teachers and parental involvement in the school activities

IX.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. A study can be conducted with a larger sample of representative children from different preschool settings. Children from independent preschools can also be taken into consideration for assessing school readiness.
2. A study can be conducted involving parents interaction to understand the home related factors contributing for School Readiness among children.
3. A study can be taken up to compare the readiness of the children having successful preschool exposure with the children having no preschool exposure at all.
4. A longitudinal study can be taken up to show school success of children in relation to the extent of readiness during school entry

X. Conclusion:

First 6 years of life of children is of ultimate importance. ECCE lays foundation for education. Children need to be provided with developmentally appropriate play-based education. Various needs of children need to be considered while planning the activities. It should focus on holistic development of young children. Preschool should provide child friendly environment so that children achieve their fullest. Readiness of the children is associated directly with the kind of experience children gain during their early learning. It is also understood that when the schools plan the activities according to the needs of the children, children will be able develop their abilities to the fullest. Hence it leads to smooth transition from preschool to formal school. Material and infrastructure facilities, pedagogical practices of teachers and parent participation also played a significant role in school readiness of the children.

XI. REFERENCES

- Ajim Premji Foundation (2012-13), Review of preschool education within the context of the ICDS program in Medak District, Andhra Pradesh
- Early Childhood Education Program Evaluation Package. The World Bank in India
- Kuamoo, Michelle (2008). An evaluation of quality in Early Education: The role of curriculum and teacher-child outcomes. Retrieved
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/a703a56e2e08e4b3e1ae9f6088a908f3/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>
- MWCD (2013), National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum, New Delhi
- MHRD (2020) National Education Policy, New Delhi
- NCERT (2016), Handbook on Smooth and Successful transition. Retrieved from
https://ncert.nic.in/dee/pdf/smooth_successful.pdf
- NCERT (2022), National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage, New Delhi
- National Curriculum Framework 2005 <http://www.ncert.nic.in/rightside/links/pdf/framework/english/nf2005.pdf>
- National Early Childhood Care and Education policy (2013)
<https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/National%20Early%20Childhood%20Care%20and%20Education-Resolution.pdf>
- National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum (2013) Ministry of Women and Child Development. Retrieved from [https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/national ecce curr framework final 03022014%20%282%29.pdf](https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/national%20ecce%20curr%20framework%20final%2003022014%20%282%29.pdf)
- National Preschool Curriculum (2018) http://www.ncert.nic.in/pdf_files/preschool_curriculum.pdf
- National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (2022)
https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/NCF_for_Foundational_Stage_20_October_2022.pdf
- Padma Yadav (2013), School Readiness and School Success, Global Books Organization, Delhi
- UNICEF (2012), School Readiness and Transitions
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/early-years-childcare/schoolreadinessandtransitionsunicef.pdf>