Early Childhood Education Programme in Punjab: Voices of Teachers & Head Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the facilities and hurdles as experienced by early childhood teachers and head teachers about early childhood education (ECE) programme implemented in the province of Punjab. The researchers carried out the research study by taking enrollment rate, retention rate, implementation problems and shortcomings of the early childhood education programme. The mixed methods approach was used by the researchers to achieve the study objectives. The population of the study was 324 (head teachers and Kachi class teachers) of 162 schools where the ECE program was being implemented in Hafizabad. A sample of 100 (50 head teachers and 50 teachers) was selected through purposive sampling technique. To collect data from the sampled participants, three tools were developed by the researchers i.e. student enrollment and retention sheet, an observation sheet and semi-structured interview protocol. Coding technique and descriptive statistics for example frequencies and percentages were applied to analyze data. It was found that there was an increase of enrollment in ECE classroom students. All basic facilities were found present in schools that included safe drinking water, furniture, ECE kit, a separate classroom for ECE purpose; problems found during implementation of ECE programme were of financial as well as administrative nature. Recommendations of the study were to provide finances to resolve financial problems and to give continuous trainings to class teachers as well as head teachers regarding ECE classroom activities.

Key Words: *Early Childhood Education (ECE), Enrollment, Retention, Punjab*

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Introduction

Early Childhood Education encompasses the education of a child from birth to eight years of age and it affects the long-term development of a child in his/her later age period. It provides combined effort of child's educative environment which embraces various activities or exercises and experiences that assume imperious part in the development of a youngster. For youngsters, early childhood education plays important role in overall improvement of children because there are various exercises, strategies and methodologies which are responsible for overall development of children. Additionally, Early Childhood Education ensures to build up social and fervent highlights of a specific age period of a child. Hence, ECE serves as a base for all-encompassing improvement of a child and contributes to the long-lasting learning of a child. It is the early childhood education which involves training of youngsters interfaced in various settings with the point of inspiring a child`s strong development, advancement and learning (Ministry of Social Affairs & Health, 2004).

ECE involves educating children from the age ranging 02 years to 08 years. This is the time of life for a child when he/she is in the phase of learning more quickly and efficiently. At this stage, brain of a young child is more receptive and absorption of knowledge is at the highest pace. In conventional schooling, scholars have defined early childhood as the time of child in school consisting of pre-school, Kindergarten, nursery, Montessori, and primary education. This usually ranges from 02 years age till 08 years age of the child. Curenton (2008) has defined this time of life of a child as "first sense of self" and has considered this time as the most important time of a child's life as he or she is developing the most and experiencing the most in one's life (Yaqoob, Bibi, & Mansoor, 2018).

High quality learning experiences during early childhood period affect mind, body and emotions of a child. Implications of early positive learning experiences include better academic performance, a positive attitude towards school, hence, suggesting low risk of drop out from school in later years and better social interaction with peers (Bakken, Brown & Downing, 2017). Early Childhood Education (ECE) also contributes to reduced risk for placing children in special education settings, more chances for retention in school in later years and more chances for gradation from school (McCoy et al., 2017).

The facts confirm that Early Childhood Education introduces educational projects and strategies for child's optimum development from birth to eight years. This is the time period that is generally viewed as a sensitive phase of a person`s life. A child adapts together with adults and other kids in a domain intentionally and consciously planned to encourage development and learning. Quality of Early Childhood Education smoothens out contrasts due to children`s home environments and along these lines allows all youngsters to create as per their own abilities. A child-centered classroom provides

experiences about creativity and pronunciation, dynamic learning and group work. It advances self-capacity, allows individuals to form network and supports flexibility of thought and correspondence (Northampton Community College, n.d).

The research of the most recent couple of decades has demonstrated that during first five years of age, a kid grew mentally, emotionally, physically and socially at an extraordinary pace. Though, learning process proceeds for the whole life duration, the early adolescence (from birth to age 8) is the most productive and vital learning period. The nature of child assumes a crucial part in its learning during early adolescence. For positive and complete nature of a kid's improvement, nature of classroom in early childhood ought to be appealing, comfortable, active, and stirring. An appealing and motivational condition always empowers the child in discovery and accepting the world and building the coordination with the information (Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2012).

According to a statement of The World Conference on Education for All (1990), learning is the process that starts since the birth of a child. It is Dakar Framework for Action (2000) that included progress and improvement of ECE as the most important part of six global goals. Various countries have thrown a variety of energies to cope with their global promise to the development of care and educational services for their kids. Pakistan is one of the participants of the movement of Education for All.

Pakistan is considerably working for the progress of early childhood education at global level. The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973 centered the arrangement of education as the obligation of the state as ensured in Article 37 (B). The constitutional arrangement is also in accordance with Article 26 (1) of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE), 2006). As indicated by National Education Policy (2009), the state is responsible for providing quality education to our youngsters. Now, the inquiry is that where we are in education among the comity of countries(Shami, Ahmad, & Khyzer, 2015). Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by United Nations General Assembly in Septmeber 2015 led the agenda of global development for 2015-2030 period. Besides other areas of growth and development, its 4.2 goal calls for access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education for every girl and boy by 2030 (Haslip & Gullo, 2017).

Advancement of Early Childhood Education is the primary objective of EFA. After Dakar system of activity for EFA in 2000, Pakistan arranged, sanctioned and propelled National Plan of Action for EFA (2001-2015). This plan imagined to set-up 42,500 new ECE centers and to appoint 51000 new educators, only for ECE or "*Kachi*" or Nursery classes. So, after a long period of time, various initiatives are taken by government into existing school training framework for ECE (Ministry of Education, 2007).

In some countries, a strategy to educate kids through their mothers is used to promote the education of kids. This strategy is problematic to implement in Pakistan because it is far

more extensive effort to make illiterate mothers literate and knowledgeable about the growth and developmental education of kids (Faize & Dahar, 2011).

In educational system of Pakistan, there are different challenges and needs that must be coped up especially at primary level of public schools. These challenges and needs are there from the start and still present in our system. To cope with these problems and needs, the government of Pakistan developed different policies and programmes. These policies and programmes were launched but still there are some gaps and hurdles which play a major role in hindering the progress of education in Pakistan. One of initiatives was to develop and launch of early childhood education (ECE) programme in public sector. The main aim of ECE programme was to provide attractive and healthy environment to children.

Lot of organizational changes have been made like e-libraries, development of IT labs, recruitment of qualified staff (subject specialist teachers), staff development through in-service and induction training, and monitoring cells etc. On the other hand, the ECE programme was initiated by the Government of the Pakistan with the collaboration of UNICEF and Aga Khan Foundation in order to improve pre-primary education through child's participation in a healthy and learning atmosphere (Memon, 2007).

The National Curriculum on early childhood education was firstly developed in 2003. It was the DSD (Directorate of Staff Development) who took the initiative of developing an up-scaling strategy on early childhood education in 2009 but there is no institutionalization of ECE at that time in public sector. Also, there was no language policy available in public sector to enhance the proficiency of teachers in English and Urdu languages.

With the passage of time, DSD and other educational networks like Punjab University, University of Education had initiated in-service and pre-service training programmes for teachers. But again, those guidelines and curriculum were unable to be implemented in public sector. So, an objective was set by the stakeholders to establish an ECE programme in all primary schools of the Punjab.

So, the key strategies on ECE programme were to institutionalize pre-primary ECE, to create awareness and to train teachers, head teachers on ECE, and to prepare and expand the plan of ECE programme to 5000 primary schools of Punjab. Targets were set in this programme and these were to:

- Develop a school language policy which helps in improving cognition and proficiency of graduates in Urdu and English languages
- Maximize student enrollment and student retention in public schools
- Minimize drop out of students
- Improve returns on education for all graduating children
  Cost factor calculated for ECE programme for a single school was as below:
  Teacher salary = 15652 per month

Aya = 10000 per month

Material = 100000 for a year

Total cost per school for a year = Rs. 407824

It was a plan for five years that is from 2013 to 2018 (Education Department, Government of Pakistan, 2013-2018). If we consider Pakistani context then the present trend of early childhood education is as that there was fundamental demand for ECE in education setup for increasing enrollment. Around the world, number of children got admission in pre-primary education (normally 3-6 years old) increased up-to 157 million and in primary era increased up-to 700 million in 2009. The Global Gross Enrolment (GER) is responsible to estimate the enrollments of pre-primary and other ECE programs (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2012). Despite this situation, immense variations were prevailing at regional level, sub regions and at national levels due to cultural variations.

According to GER's survey report in 2008, approximately 80% students as an average in North America and in Western Europe were enrolled in this scheme. But just seventeen and nineteen percent enrollment was achieved in sub-Saharan Africa and in Arab countries respectively as according to survey report, every 7th child is admitted under ECE scheme. In South and West Asia, remarkable performance had been achieved because enrolment rate had doubled itself from 21% to 42% during 1999-2008 (UNESCO–BREDA, 2010; UNESCO, 2008).

In the recent years, enrolment is increased almost everywhere due to ECE program but in some areas target is not still achieved. According to net enrolment ratio (NER), some countries achieved 10% to 90% enrolment during last decade. Within countries different age groups enrollment rate is different. For example, in 2007, 90%-100% kids were admitted into schools in ECE, who were 5 years old, in Thailand and Viet Nam.

On the other hand, just 22% students of 3 years old and 63% of 3 to 4 years old students were studying in same category (UNESCO, 2008). Usually, the enrolment ratio of 3 years old students was normally less than 4-6 years old student in ECE program. The reason for this low enrolment is just that in some regions, it is the part of cultural values that below 4 years age, care and education of children is taken as family responsibility. Overall ECE program is considered as yardstick for accomplishing the goal of universal primary education (UNESCO, 2008; UNESCO and UNICEF, 2012).

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- Examine ECE Programme by analyzing student enrollment and retention rate
- Investigate the resources (financial and physical) provided at schools for ECE programme
- Identify hurdles in implementation of ECE Programme as experienced by ECE teachers and head teachers.

- Find out deficiencies for ECE Programme.

Research Questions
Followings were the research questions of study:
- What is increase in enrollment and retention rate of students in ECE programme?
- What are financial resources provided to schools for implementing and dealing with ECE programme?
- What are physical resources provided to schools for implementing and dealing with ECE programme?
- What are hurdles faced by ECE teachers and head teachers to implement ECE programme?
- What are shortcomings of ECE programme?

Research Methodology
The research was descriptive and mixed methods research design was used as the data was obtained through both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Logic of using mixed methods research was to develop understanding of the issue in different styles (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). Through these techniques, findings from analysis of different data sets were compared, discussed and analyzed. Mixed methods research was applied to confirm the validity of quantitative and qualitative data. A purpose behind using mixed methods research was to examine effectiveness of the ECE program. In this type of study, data is collected through interviews (semi-structured), observations, and documentations (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). In this method researchers require extensive nature of data, but intensive time period is required for the analysis of textual and numerical data. Logic of using mixed methods research design was to develop understanding of the issue in different styles (Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

So, it was decided that analysis of both data sets (textual and numeric) would give complete details on what had passed in ECE program. A purpose behind using mixed methods research design was to identify effectiveness of the ECE program. In this regard implementation of quantitative measure was necessary to view outcomes but to answer the five W's (What, Where, When, Who and Why) and one H (How), it was obligatory to mix qualitative and quantitative techniques in the study. Furthermore, idea for using quantitative and qualitative techniques at the same time was to disclose consequences of ECE program along with problems raised during the implementation of the program. Qualitative research explored different nature of questions and vice-versa (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). If surprising results achieved by using quantitative technique then it would be explained in qualitative way, that's why mixed methods research design was

preferred. A fundamental reason to use mixed methods research design was to enhance creditability of findings because it was obtained through mixture of both techniques.

There were three instruments developed by researchers and these were, observation sheet that was used to collect data of classroom observation of facilities provided by stakeholders, students enrollment data collecting sheet that was used to collect data of enrollment of 5 years of ECE students to find out retention rate of students and semi-structured interview sheet which comprised of statements of different problems faced by school administration while implementing the ECE programme.

Population of this study was 162 schools of District Hafizabad where ECE program had been launched. 162 head teachers were considered as population of the study. 162 class teachers that dealt with ECE program were part of the population. Sample of the study consisted of 50 head teachers (i.e. 31% of the population) and 50 teachers (i.e. 31% of the population). The sample was selected by using purposive sampling technique on the basis of ECE program started in schools. During selection of the sample, girls and boys were given equal proportion in the sample of the study. Similarly, urban and rural schools were also given equal proportion in the sample.

Results

Data collection was also very essential because final discussion was based on the results of analysis which came through data. In this study at first stage data were collected through interviews from head teachers who were performing duties for ECE program in District Hafizabad. Interviews' data were analyzed by using percentages. At second stage data of school enrollments and retention data were collected from records of fifty schools and were matched with monthly data that was already collected by District Education Office, Hafizabad. The quantitative data were collected in form of schools' enrollments however qualitative data were collected by conducting interviews of teachers and head teachers.

Demographic Information

The demographic information related to respondents is listed as gender, location of the schools, qualifications of head teachers and teaching experience. The sample of the study consisted of 50 head teachers of public schools of Hafizabad where ECE program was implemented.

Table 1

Demographic Details

Gender		Location of school		Qualification of teacher			Teaching experience	
Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Undergraduate	Graduate	Masters	10 years or less	More than 10 year
29	21	30	20	00	00	50	20	30
58%	42%	60%	40%	00%	00%	100%	40%	60%

The demographic factors were shown in graph;
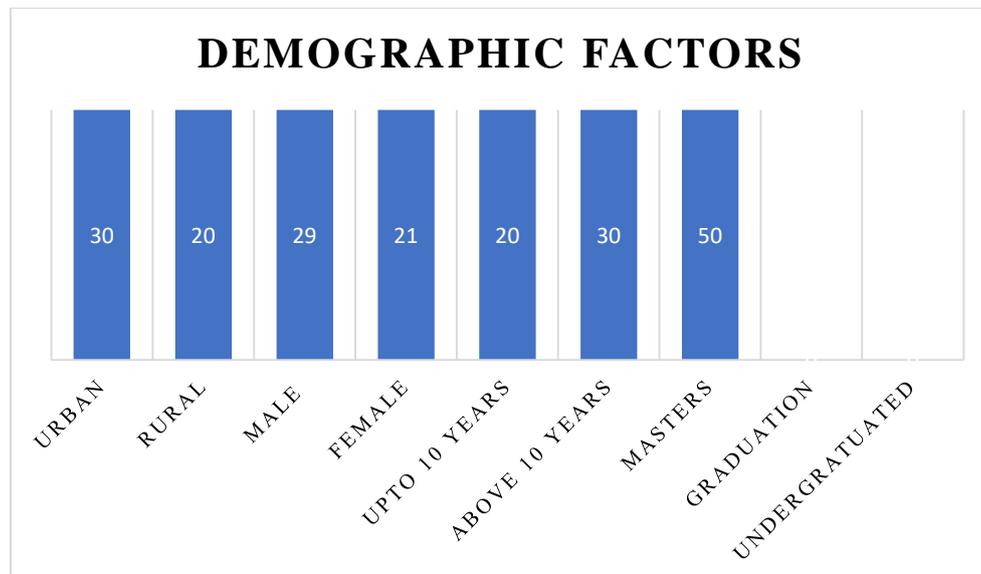

Graph 1s: Demographic factors of the study

So, according to these demographic factors, 30 schools were from urban area and 20 schools were from rural area. 29 schools were selected from male side while 21 schools were selected from female side. 20 head teachers had experience of 1 to 10 years while 30 head teachers had experience of more than 10 years. All 50 selected schools' heads were found having master degrees.

Quantitative Analysis

After collecting both kinds of data, descriptive statistical techniques were used for analyzing the quantitative data but for qualitative data, frequency percentage analysis methods were adopted. Analysis of data in both qualitative and quantitative measure

aimed to facilitate, organize and interpret information for making the evaluation of ECE program.

The graphical representation of the quantitative data was described as below:

Enrollment and Retention
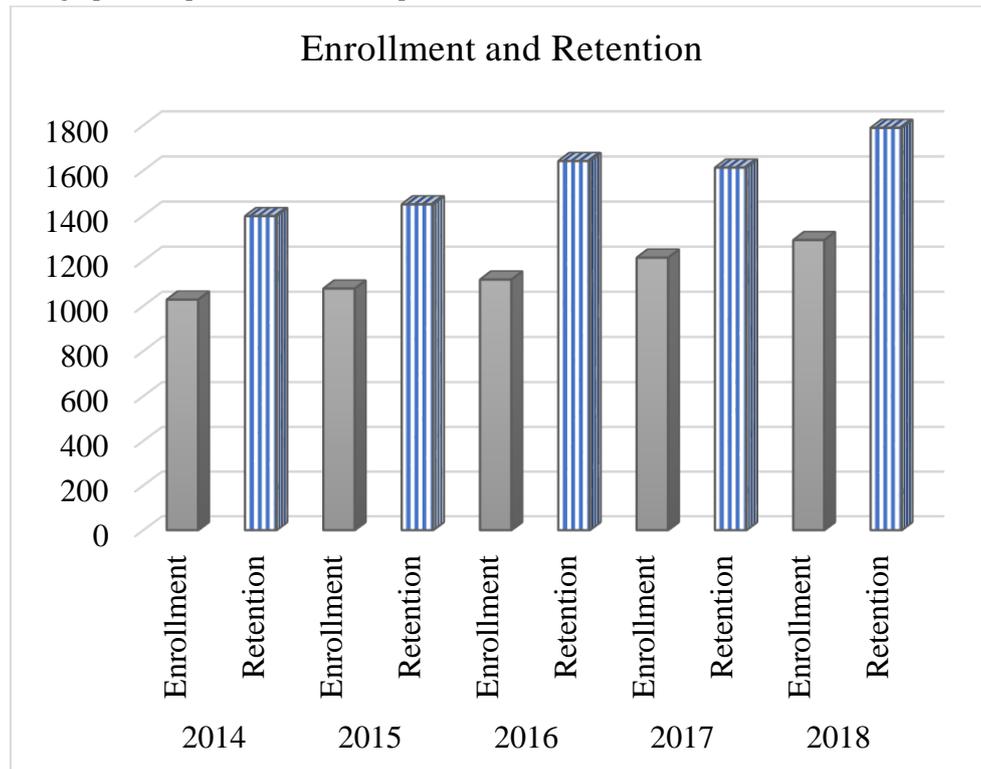
Graph 2: Enrollments and Retention of the students at Kachi in 2014-2018

As shown in the figure 4.5 there was an increasing trend in enrollment in all five years. In 2014, almost 1028 students get enrolled for Kachi class in the beginning of the academic year, but the positive thing was that not only all the students were retained till the end of the academic year, but the strength was also increased when the number of enrolled students was checked at the end of the year. At the end of the academic year numbers of students in Kachi class were 1398 in all schools of Hafizabad having ECE program. Therefore, by launching ECE program not only number of students increased in schools at pre-primary level but also retained throughout the year and sharp decline had been seen in dropout of Kachi class and for class-one. Similarly, at the start of the academic 2015 data was collected for Kachi class. According to statistics, Kachi classes of schools having ECE program contained almost 1077 students which were more than the previous year. Therefore, it was observed that ECE program get popular in public and attract more students than the previous sessions. Likewise, in the academic session

of 2016, almost 1117 students were admitted in ECE schools of Hafizabad. At the end of session, they became 1642 which also indicated the increase in retention of students and decrease in dropouts of students. In the case of year 2017, the students enrolled were 1214 and at the end of that academic session, they became 1613. And in the year 2018, total number of students enrolled in Kachi class were 1292 and they increased in number and the figures became 1789 that means a positive way of increase in number of students in schools due to ECE program and these figures showed that dropout ratio for Kachi classes had been removed.

Investigation of Resources

The initiative of ECE provided resources to schools which were helpful in regard of implementation in its true sense. For investigation of these resources, researchers personally visited to all of the 50 selected schools and visited the ECE room in true sense. Researchers developed an observation sheet with two possible options against each item i.e., 0 and 1. 0 means there was not availability of that resource and 1 means there was availability of that resource. The researcher developed a table of percentages of responses of respondents which indicated the percentages against the statements.

Classroom Observations

This could be seen in the Graph
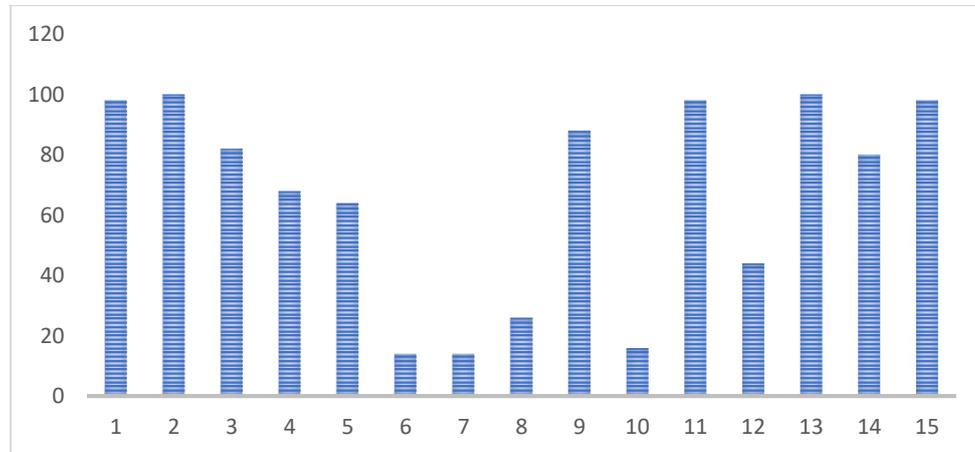
Graph 3: Percentages of Classroom Observations

It was observed that item statement no 6, 7, 8 and 10 were found below the mean of the observations. Item number 1 meant that ECE room in the particular school was only utilized for the ECE students. It is almost 98 % of the selected schools. In the case of second statement, it was observed that all the selected schools had ECE rooms and their walls are painted and decorated according to the set standards of the ECE initiative.

Their result was 100 %. The lowest result was observed in the case of statement 6 and 7. These statements were regarding the presence of care-giver and unfortunately in majority of schools had no care-giver which was the pre-requisite of ECE initiative. Similarly, in the case of statement number 10 that was the presence of a separate class teacher who had to deal with ECE students but again unfortunately majority of schools also lacked this facility. In the case of statement number 12, AV aids were found in schools, but majority of schools did not have AV aids in their ECE rooms. All other basic facilities were present in all the visited schools under the ECE initiative. These facilities included availability of furniture, drinking water, smart tab for students, ECE kit, teacher guides etc. So, all the basic facilities were available except of care-giver and separate teacher.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were collected by conducting interviews of the head/ teachers who were performing that task. Qualitative data were analyzed by using frequency percentage method, according to this method some broader areas of that program were taken and those areas were more subdivided for finding the root cause of the issue (Jennings, 2012). After conducting interviews, some broader areas were defined that had been discussed in the interviews and codes were given to the opinion of each person. The details of qualitative analysis were given as under:

Implementation Problems

Table 2

Implementation Problems

Initial Codes	Percentage
Administrative Problems	46.67%
Financial Problems	53.33%

According to the analysis of the observations, 46.67% of head teachers were in the favor that administrative problems were the basic hurdle in the implementation of ECE initiative in its true sense. A head teacher said, "The selected teacher for ECE programme was utilized in other classes to cope on the teachers' shortage in the school." Similarly, a head teacher said, "there was only one training session conducted for teachers to teach the students according to set criteria, but teacher was still not well-known to the activities to teach ECE students. So, more training would be required to train the teacher." One head teacher claimed that, "There was a lack of room for the ECE classroom. So, other classes were also managed in this room." One head teacher said, "Teachers are bound to follow the policies like every primary teacher is being evaluated and awarded ranking by the assistant education officer on monthly basis. But in this evaluation ECE classes are not included. So, teachers' pay more attention towards the classes other than ECE program." A head teacher said, "There is a gap

between teachers and stake holders of the ECE initiative. And this will lead towards non-implementation of ECE initiative in true sense. Teacher is unaware of the standards and activities to teach. There must be training sessions from the stake holders so that the implementation of ECE initiative comes true on ground basis."

According to the analysis of the observations, 53.33% of head teachers said that financial problems were the main hurdle behind the implementation of ECE initiative in its true sense. A head teacher indicated that, "There is no financial assistance from the stake holders of ECE. Once they paid amount for paint-work of ECE room and salaries of care-giver. After that tenure, there is not a single fund to retain the care-giver. So, the students of ECE program are not facilitated in true sense." A head teacher said, "There is absence of AV aids due to unavailability of funds." A head teacher said, "activity-based teaching cannot be accomplished due to unavailability of resources." A head teacher said, "Department has provided material once at the start of the project. Now all the available material has been consumed and there is no further purchase of new material. Department should provide financial assistance to meet the needs." A head teacher said, "No doubt, it is a good step of implementing ECE initiative in public schools, but due to lack of resources like funds, it is not going in true direction. ECE rooms are painted but teachers have no ability to teach students of ECE. Funds are not there so that care-givers cannot be managed. The work-load of teacher increases. The stake holders must keep in views that by proper funding ECE initiative will be implemented in true sense."

Administrative Problems

Table 3

Administrative Problems

Initial codes	In Percentage
Teacher's utilization in other than ECE class	46.67%
Teaching aids are not sufficient	26.67%
Lack of training for teacher	13.33%
Not mentoring of ECE teachers from AEOs	7%
Lack of building	7%

According to observations, about 46% of the participants were in view that the utilization of ECE teacher in other than ECE class was a main problem by the administration. A head teacher said, "*Children of the ECE class require special attention of teacher so when a teacher is also busy in teaching other classes than of ECE class, he cannot give proper time and attention.*" Another head teacher said, "*Teaching at ECE class is mainly through activities (activity base teaching) so teacher requires plenty of time to plan, organize, implement different types of activities. Teacher should be free*

from other classes." Another teacher shared, "*There are only three teachers and six classes including the ECE class in my school, in this situation it is not possible to provide one separate teacher to ECE class for all the time so ECE class teacher must have to teach other classes which will divert the attention of teacher from ECE class.*"

About 26% of the respondents pointed out inadequate teaching material that provided by the department is a problem for the success of program. One teacher said, "*The teaching material provided did not cover all the areas of child development.*" Another participant viewed, "*Pakistan is our homeland, and we should crop up love for our country in our children at ECE class. But nothing is provided in teaching material.*" One teacher said, "*The latest information technology equipment is not supplied for ECE class. Today is the age of technology so children must aware of these technologies. Computer and multimedia should be provided to ECE class.*"

13% of the participants were in view that training given to teachers for ECE class was not enough. As it consisted of only three days; one participant said, "*Teachers were trained only once at starting of ECE program.*" One teacher said, "*ECE is a complex and broader field therefore training at regular interval is required.*" Another teacher pointed out, "*Whenever trainings are conducted, we learn more by sharing our experiences with each other, it will inspire teachers to increase efficiency in ECE class.*"

One participant shared its views that, *"There is not mentoring from authorities towards the teacher of ECE class. Even they come in school to visit, they just checked the things and that's all. They must mentor our teachers so that they work in true sense with their heart. Without proper mentoring it is not possible to implement ECE in true ways. So, it is a big hurdle to implement ECE."*

One teacher said, "*They have only two rooms in their school. How can they arrange a separate room for the ECE purpose? The department should arrange the resources for separate room for ECE purpose.*"

Financial Problems
Table 4
Financial Problems

Initial Codes	In Percentage
No Financial problem	13.33%
Non-availability of funds	60%
Self-support	26.67%

When teachers were inquired about financial problems affecting the ECE program13% of the teachers pointed out that there is no financial problem. One teacher said, *"Government has provided all necessary material for ECE program so no need of any kind of financial assistance, different kinds of activities related to ECE class can easily*

be done with the material provided." Another teacher said, *"Education department is giving pay to teachers, provided sufficient building for students, providing teaching material so there is no issue of finance."* Another participant pointed out that, *"Finance is no more hurdle in implementing ECE program because governments are providing sufficient funds and material for kids rooms."*

According to the analysis results based on views of selected audience, 60% of teachers were in view that non availability of funds is a big hurdle in implementation of ECE program. As many of teachers said, *"There are many activities conducted on daily basis in ECE class therefore funds must be provided for purchase of required materials."* One head teacher said, *"There is continuously non availability of funds for ECE classroom, so, we are unable to arrange care-giver who deals with students of ECE. Also due to non-availability of funds we are unable to arrange resources regarding activities of ECE classroom."* Another participant said, *"There is no funding on regular basis for the ECE class. ECE class mainly focuses on activity base teaching which requires continuously funding for especially consumable items used in different activities."* One teacher said, *"To keep ECE room alive funds are needed on daily basis for example sometime children are attracted to school by giving them chocolates. Sometime by arranging a birthday party, so there should be funding."* Another teacher described that, *"Students learned a lot through watching movies, cartoons and other entertaining segments. However, currently ECE not providing any type opportunity or funds to perform these kinds of activities in the schools."*

About 26.6 % of teachers said that they are bearing the expenses on their own. As they spend money from their pockets to meet daily requirements. One participant said, *"He is meeting different expenses on self-support basis as activities in different areas of learning require consumable material."* One teacher said, *"I used to give different types of toffees, chocolates to children on daily basis from my pocket. It is very much helpful in keeping children present in class."* One participant admitted, *"We have to bear all the expenses by ourselves. So, we cannot afford these expenses of ECE classroom and the salary of care-giver."* One participant pointed, *"Usually children studying in our school belong to poor families, and parents are not in a position to bear expenses of pencils, eraser, sharpener, notebooks. Teachers of my school had arranged a fund from their pockets to meet such type of expenses of needy student."*

Shortcomings of ECE

Table 5

Shortcomings faced by school for ECE programmes

Initial Codes	In Percentage
Lack of furniture	20%
Lack of IT equipment	48%

Improper rooms	02%
Shortage of staff (teachers)	30%

The shortcomings regarding ECE were observed through observation sheet developed by the researcher. The researcher itself visited all the selected 50 ECE schools. According to observations, 20% schools were there which were lacked in furniture regarding ECE classroom. 48% schools were lacked of LEDs which was main facility provided to schools by ECE initiative. So, the students of ECE classroom were facing difficulties in their learning. 2% schools had no proper ECE room for ECE students due to lack of building. There were 2 to 3 rooms in these schools which were not enough to manage six classes of school. 30% schools had the shortage of teachers to teach ECE students. Due to lack of teachers ECE initiative was suffering in its true sense of implementation.

Conclusions

The conclusion of the study was purely based on statistics that had been obtained after the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. ECE program was aimed to increase the enrollments and retention rate in public schools. This initiative provided a joyful learning environment to make children familiar with the school environment. In this study, an effort was made to evaluate this program by using both qualitative and quantitative measures. Followings were the concluding points were drawn after analysis:

1. According to the quantitative analysis, it was concluded that enrollment of Kachi class had shown an increasing trend for the year of 2014-18.
2. According to the qualitative measures, it was observed that there were administrative and financial problems that had been faced by the teachers to implement the ECE initiative.
3. According to the administrative problems, it was mentioned that utilization of teachers other than ECE class became a hurdle for implementing this scheme in the true sense. It was concluded from the qualitative analysis that aids for teachers were not sufficient for teachers of ECE classroom that became another hurdle in implementation of ECE initiative in true sense.
4. Another thing that had been noticed that there were no provisions of funds from the parliamentarians for the ECE program. However, it was also observed that some other hurdles like lack of building and not mentoring from stakeholders were also the cause of not implementation of ECE initiative in the true sense.
5. The consequences of interviews regarding financial problems were common, a majority had pointed out that there is no funding of ECE project from its stakeholders. The funds were arranged by teachers themselves.
6. Now-a-days the role of information technology is very vital. ECE centers are lacking with IT equipment. There was no feedback mechanism for the program.

All the barriers can be removed or improved only when through a strict follow-up of the program.

Recommendations

By considering the points discovered from this study, following recommendations were made.

1. It is recommended that enrollments and retention rates could be increased by providing proper joyful learning environments in schools. This study recommended that all activities of the ECE program should be assisted by funds in order to improve the financial conditions of this project. Administration of school would be given compulsory not to utilize ECE teachers other than ECE classes. Teachers would be trained at least once in a year and trained teachers should be appointed only at ECE centers.

2. The primary need of the ECE program is co-ordination between children's parents and the teaching staff of ECE centers. A proper planned to follow-up of the program will enable it most accurate and effective. So, there should be proper follow-up of the scheme. The fundamental recommendation of this study is to implement this program in all schools of the Punjab without any discrimination.

3. Appropriate furniture would be provided for the ECE program. The current age is an age of information technology; students would be familiar with the technology. For this purpose, relevant IT equipment would be provided at the ECE center. There would be a proper follow-up plan for the whole program because without follow up nothing can be achieved. Shortages of staff should be removed by hiring new staff for the ECE program.

4. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that proper planning, assessment, and evaluation practices of ECE were needed. Laterally, continuous monitoring and evaluation is also vital for the fruitful results of ECE program.

Recommendations for Further Studies

For future researches, the researcher made some recommendations as listed below:

1. The research study may be conducted on a larger population of Punjab province to explore the concerns and hurdles faced by ECE teachers and head teachers in diverse settings.

2. The research studies may be carried out using a qualitative research design to explore in-depth realities and problems in this area by involving multiple stakeholders of ECE.

3. The present study was based on demographic factors of both urban and rural areas. More detailed aspects of rural and urban ECE settings may be investigated in future studies.

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