

# Qualitative factors of Early Childhood Education in Government and Private Schools of Ranga Reddy District- Hyderabad

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Research Paper was to investigate the quality status of Preschool center in Ranga Reddy. To address the intention of this research, mixed research design was used. Data was collected via questionnaire, interview, FGD, document review and Observation. The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using percentage and thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that overall quality of early childhood education was below the standard. Physical environment and teaching materials were below the expected level and they were not found to be developmentally appropriate. Literacy and numeracy were given more focus in their learning-teaching process than including contents that address child holistic development. All schools under study did not have standard and uniform curriculum (they had utilized their own individualized curriculum). Teaching method was not child center and developmentally appropriate. Teacher initiated plan, task engagement prescriptions and regulation were commonly utilized in their classes. Large number of children in one class and limited untrained preschool teachers were affected the quality of ECCE program. Chair of the class, playground of the preschools and instructions teachers applied were not developmentally appropriate as well as materials were not culturally appropriate. Teachers were not trained in ECCE as well as they couldn't get even training on the areas of early childhood education in the form of short term training. It was further mentioned that ECCE input (indoor and outdoor games) and process of ECCE implementation were negatively affected the quality of preschool education. Government has given emphasis to this program but not able to allocate budget for it. Besides, parents were not involved in ECCEE program though they were interested and value the role of early childhood education for their children latter learning. MoE, Regional Education bureaus, universities shall develop and standardize the ECCE curriculum, access ECCE materials and give continuous training on the developmentally appropriate teaching practice and constructive learning approach (on how to actively engage children in their learning areas). School directors and teachers shall workout on how to involve parents in their children education.

**Key words:** Early Childhood Education, Quality of ECCE, Challenges of Pre-schools.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Early childhood is deemed as bedrock for their later children development. Social-emotional development is at the foundation of healthy growth and learning in early childhood. Children develop competencies in these areas through observation, interactions with peers and adults, and learning experiences that promote children to practice new skills for continued growth. At early childhood period, children social-emotional domain includes abilities and skills in social and emotional competency are fostered. It enabled children to interact positively with others and attend to academic tasks that help prepare them for future academic success (Ashiabi, 2007). Children with supportive and stimulating environments in early their lives are more likely to complete school, have better health outcomes, and are less likely to develop 'anti-social' behavior later in life (UNESCO, 2013). Therefore, it is very useful to offer quality care and education for individual and societal development (REIP, 2010).

As the study vividly identified, quality of ECCE program is affected by the large number of students enrolled in preschool centers. UN Committee (2005 cited in Wood head et al. 2009) indicated while coverage rates are increasing worldwide and in turn, early childhood services of good quality remain inaccessible to the majority of the world's children. This is especially true for children in the poorest countries and for the most disadvantaged among them. The upshot is a perverse outcome for equity: those with the most to gain from ECCE are least likely to participate. Recent evidence suggested that while access to pre-primary education has been growing globally, the quality of pre-primary education remains poor in most of the pre-primary schools with low income and developing countries affected the most (UNESCO.2012). A study further indicated that ECCE quality is expressed terms of the quality inputs: the physical environment and infrastructure sufficient toys, books and materials, the quality of the staff, curriculum, small numbers of children per class and per caregiver, the quality of the relationship between the ECCE programme and its immediate environment of parents and community (Myers, 2004).

In Indian Education and Training Policy (1994) document recognized on the role of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for the later children development. It was highlighted that "kinder Garten education will focus on all round development of the child in preparation for formal schooling." Social and economic developments that have been taking place globally and nationally further triggered the demand of ECCE. Besides, Indian ECCE policy was geared wards addressing the holistic child development. It provides a holistic and comprehensive approach to the development of children from pre-natal to seven years of age. The vision of the policy is to ensure the fulfillment of every child's right to a healthy start in life, to grow in a nurturing, safe, caring and stimulating environment, and to develop to their fullest potential. To ensure the quality of ECCE program and deliver holistic child development, the policy has stated in the four pillars. The first two pillars such as parental education and a comprehensive program of early child health and stimulation focus on children from the prenatal period to age three. It was dealing with the role of parents in early childhood education, the way to integrate children socialization in the ECCE curriculum, understand the role of cultural orientation on children learning and to utilize indigenous materials and how much early childhood stimulations are important for the children entire development. The third and fourth pillars are more targeted at children aged four to six. The third pillar includes non-formal school readiness consists primarily of the initiation of Child-to-Child initiatives and the last pillar is community kindergarten (MoE 2010).In this aspect, the government has been given emphasis to the expansion of early childhood education than thinking on how to maintain the quality of ECCE program. Via some of pillars stated here the Indian government had attempted to access early childhood education throughout India. This was more expressed by establishing zero class programs in primary schools of the country. Though access of ECCE centres are increasing from time to time, out of the estimated 7.52 million children of the appropriate age group (age 4-6) about 2.95 million children have been reported to have access to pre-primary education all over the country. Though the enrolment is small when compared to the appropriate age group, gross enrolment rate is higher than the previous year by about 15.92 percentage point (MoE 2014/15).

Study further illustrated shortage of trained teachers to teach as per the curriculum, lack of continuous training for teachers, and lack of localized child-related books were problems identified in the research. Teachers were unable to apply child centered teaching and had problems of contextualizing the curriculum. Other issues identified were: the presence of gap between the proposed ECCE curriculum and what was being suggested in the ECCE framework, strategy and guideline, the undue emphasis given to supportive courses than to ECCE courses, and the absence of clear difference between practicum and action research courses. Thus, the study recommended the need for training of teachers and revision of diploma curriculum in line with the national ECCE policy, strategy and guideline. All these challenges do have a direct impact on the quality of ECCE program in India.

Similarly, coverage and participation of early childhood education has galloped from time to time. The practice of early childhood education in terms of quality provision was found to be low despite increase in access. High class size was also another challenge identified in research (for example, the teacher to student ratio is on average 1:112 and the preschool to teacher ratio is 1:3 Due to lack of ECCE professionals, low parental values and belief to early childhood education, and authoritarian style of childrearing practices hamper young children's curiosity, imagination and creativity. Besides, the way to cultivate young children's creativity was not indicated and integrated in ESDP I, II and III. Even in ESDP IV and V, the emphasis was given to literacy and numeracy over young children's creativity. There was loose structure to integrate numeracy, literacy, young children's creativity and other domains in the document since there was no professional to make the learning-teaching practice developmentally appropriate for the children.

Further, the study conducted in Indian Education Roadmap Development Process, 2017-2030: pre-primary and primary (MoE, 2016), revealed that there is inadequacy of training for ECCE teachers, shortage of qualified student teachers, high turnover of teachers, narrow program content, curriculum focusing on literacy

and numeracy with little attention to social and emotional aspects, program duration mainly tailored for children of age six disregarding those under six, lack of developmentally appropriate facilities and services, lack of uniformity of pre-primary program (urban-rural, private and public, curriculum, teachers), inadequate prioritization for inclusive education, lack of supporting environment for children with special needs, lack of diversity management strategies (ethnicity, language, religion, family background), lack of meaningful parental and community participation and inadequate attention given by the government in budgeting, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ECCE program were identified.

The Indian Somali Regional State aggressively moved to expand access to ECCE. However, these rapid changes are having a serious effect on quality issues and far too little attention has been paid to enhance quality of ECCE. Thus, the emphasis of this study was to explore the status of quality of ECCE program and the factors that affect the preschool education program in RANGAREDDY City Administration.

### **1.2. Statements of the problem**

Early childhood programmes offer very good opportunities for the growth of a child both mentally and socially. Parents expected their children to master certain skills by the time they exit preschool. However, due to inadequate school facilities, large class sizes, weak institutional capacity, and insufficient teacher's training and low salaries in ECCE India they perform low academic and social skill achievement. The above factors also contributed make children absent from school and dropout from the school (Plan International Report, 2013). The study unlocked the number of children to attend in preschool program is galloping from time to time. The government had attempted to address the access without working on how to enhance the quality of the program. There are approximately 10.6 million children zero to three years of age and 7.5 million children four to six years of age. Therefore, investment in Early Child Development (ECD) is critical for the short and long-term prosperity of the country. Although net ECCE enrollment is low, there have been increases in gross enrollment ratios. Despite these opportunities for expansion of ECCE, as of 2014/15 only about 39 % out of the estimated 7.5 million children of the appropriate age group (ages four to six) had access to formal pre-primary education, the quality of ECCEs remain to be an issue (MoE 2015).

In this research the standard meaning of Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education covers programs that cater service for children aged 4-6 years enrolled in ECCE government centers. The Education and Training Policy (1994), and the National Policy Framework (2010) have indicated that ECCE program must be comprehensive in its nature addressing the holistic development of children in the domains of cognitive, social and emotional developments. According to the National Policy framework for early childhood Care and Education (2010) document, one of the major goals of the program is to enable children to acquire basic skills in the area of pre-reading, pre-writing, counting, arithmetic and social competency as a strategy to make them ready for formal schooling. Nowadays quality is a cross cutting issue at all levels of the educational system in India. Reports and few empirical studies indicated that the state of early child hood care and education in the Indian context remained sub- standard compared to many African states. According to UNESCO Cluster office Delhi (2006) reported, none of the preschools visited by the office met structural standards set by the Ministry of Education. However, there is a noticeable lack of empirical data about quality early childhood care and education at national and regional levels. Though problems were identified in research in this program, it is relevant to chart out the statutes and factors that affect the program.

Furthermore, studies further showed that different challenges were identified in preschool centers such as lack of teacher training and development, lack of a standard curriculum, lack of culturally relevant storybooks, low teacher salaries and thus high turnover, the use of English as a medium of instruction, and, most importantly, a lack of awareness of the importance of preschool education (Yigzaw, 2016). Thus, this research had tried to examine the status of early childhood education (input, process and others), challenges that affect the quality of early childhood education and the strategies required to enhance the quality of early childhood education in the preschools. This study aimed to address the following research questions.

1. What is the current Quality status of Preschool centers in Ranga Reddy District?
2. What are the challenges in relation to quality of Preschool centers in Ranga Reddy District?

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Study Area**

The study was conducted in Hyderabad City. Ranga Reddy is a census town and the district headquarters of Ranga Reddy district in the state of Telangana. It is located in Ranga Reddy revenue division.<sup>1</sup> It is situated on the banks of Peddavagu River. It is about 309 kilometres (192 mi) north of the state capital Hyderabad, 86 kilometres (53 mi) from Ramagundam, 118 kilometres (73 mi) from Adilabad and 148 kilometres (92 mi) from Karimnagar.

## **2.2. Design of the Study**

Mixed research design was used in the study. It was tried to address the weakness of qualitative design by using quantitative data.

## **2.3. Sources of Data**

For this study, the researcher was used both primary and secondary sources of data as follows: In order to accomplish the objectives of the study ,two types of data sources were used; primary and secondary sources of data as follows

**Primary source of data:** In this study, Primary data were gathered from school teachers, directors, Parents, Education department and UNICEF ECCE Specialist.Primary source of data, which includes actual information, opinion, views and attitudes on the problem under study. **Secondary sources of data:** Secondary data were also gathered from documents, reports, regional education bureau abstracts and relevant reference book review from various sources.

## **2.4. Participant**

The total populations of this study were Seven Government ECCE center in Ranga Reddy city administration. When selecting seven governments ECCE Center, convenience sampling method was used. Criteria for selecting the subjects were due to location, time and manageability of the samples. Answers to basic questions such as the researcher's adequate knowledge about population, leading to methodological options and issues of access to study population has been analyzed to decide which sampling technique to go for. Although the current study is based on a small sample of participants, and due to the small number of the government ECCE centre, participants were recruited from all 7 government ECCE center. A total of 7 directors and 14 teachers of the government ECCE centre and 14 selected parents from the community were selected for this

Similarly, the 3 city administration education office experts and 2 supervisors were be picked purposefully in reference to their responsibilities to educational activities due to their jurisdiction. That had been direct relationship with the issues and they provided insight and shared their experiences. The validity of such sample hinges on the soundness of the judgment of whoever selects sample (Kothari, 2004). In many cases purposive sampling is used in order to access 'knowledgeable people', those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or experience (Ball, 1990).

## **2.5. Data Collection Instruments**

**Questionnaire:** It was widely used in education research to obtain information about certain conditions and practices, and inquire in to opinions and attitudes of individuals or group (Best, 2004).The design of the questionnaires was used extensively in educational research to collect information that was not directly observable. This data collection method typically inquires about the feelings, motivation, attitudes, accomplishments and experience of individual.(Borge1996). Therefore questionnaire was used to assess the challenges of improving quality early childhood education in Ranga Reddy City Administration. In collecting valuable data for this study the researcher was develop two questionnaires for Parents and Teachers. Both were developed to answer the research questions as appropriate.

**Questionnaire for teachers:** The contents of the teachers' questionnaire included: background data about themselves and the preschools they are associated to, training experiences particularly as preschool teacher and reflections, Curriculum design, Teaching learning Process, Human resource development, Physical Environment, problems encountered and solutions. Close ended with responses "YES" and "NO"(8 Item) questions were used and "Agree", "Disagree" and "Undecided" (29 Item).Open ended were also used. In total there were 43 item questions. **Questionnaire for Parents:** The contents of this questionnaire consisted of background data (about themselves, their children, and spouses), school expenses, attitudes to preschool education and preschools, and relationships they have with the children, teachers, and the preschools.

The data collection tools have been validated by distributing questionnaires in one ECCE center and feedback were received on the organization of the questionnaire, content of the questionnaire and clarity of the questions. Face and content validation has been checked. In addition the tools were also reviewed by Researcher in this field for similar content and face validity. Data was collected from study subjects using a pilot tested and improved questionnaire were completed while the data collectors waits nearby and available to provide clarification to respondents. Adequate time was given for the participants to complete the questionnaire and return it to the data collectors. The questionnaires were filled after obtaining consent of the respondents. The collected information from the teachers was reported to the supervisors on a daily basis, to enable immediate action in case of any data inconsistencies or problems. The supervisors were provided all items necessary for data collection on each data collection day, checked questionnaires for completeness, and solved any problems that arise during data collection.

**Focused Group Discussion:** A focus group discussion method is one of the more practical ways to obtain certain types of information or circumstances would make it difficult to collect information using other methods (Hancock, 2002). According to Patton. (1994) focus group discussion as an interview with a small group of people on specific topic (Patton, 2002). FGD guide checklist was prepared according to the procedure in order to gather relevant and adequate information needed for this research. Introduction and Ground rule, Child Education in general, Curriculum, Teacher Training, Teaching & Learning, Physical Environment, Human resource and Challenges on Quality ECCE. One FGD was conducted in the Ranga Reddy administration Education office, involving 3 education bureau expert, and 2 Supervisors. The FGD took 1:35hrs. For this study, the FGD was used and discussed major issues of quality in ECCE, regarding curriculum, teaching learning process, physical environment, teacher qualification and parent Involvement, government involvement in terms of capacity building, budget and supervision.

**Interview:** it is one of the commonly used instruments for collecting data. Kothari (2006) explained it as a method of collecting data through oral communication (verbally). Interview was one of the major tools employed in this study. For the qualitative study, a semi-structured interview was using an interview guide were conducted with the key informants from the Principals by purposive sampling technique. To collect valuable information the researcher was develop 10 open ended questions for 7 Principals.. The interview was tried to find responses in quality of ECCE and commitment towards improving quality of ECCE. Notes were taken and in addition an audiotape recorder was used to prevent loss of information. The tape record was transcribed into a text document which was then translated into the English language for data summarization and analysis. The data on the tape recorder was discarded following completion of analysis and write up of the paper.

**Document review:** All the relevant documents such as children academic records, supervision report, monitoring and evaluation reports, City education office supervision written feedbacks and other pertinent documents were reviewed meticulously.

**Observation:** The most striking observation to emerge from the datas was used to obtain supplementary data and to capture information/ data on the actual ECCE service provision and the availability of adequate teaching aids, indoor and outdoor playing facilities, teachers and student's interaction for the study. Interestingly, the Physical environment was observed and the aim was to draw pertinent data from classrooms and outdoors play areas that supplement the interview and could assist with triangulation of the data. For the purposes of observations, checklist was prepared and employed. The checklist has, "Yes" and "No" items to be checked against the equipment and materials available in the ECCE center. Hence using checklists, purposefully selected (7) government Preschools were observed by the researcher himself. In addition, organization of class rooms and activity centres, supply of materials, and equipment, and their arrangements were the main focus of observation in all class room of each kindergarten. In the outdoor, playground, supply and arrangements of play materials and equipment as well as safety aspects were observed in all sampled ECCE centre. Data Collection Procedures

## **2.6. Data Collection Procedures**

As Early Childhood Education Quality issues are better understood with quantitative and qualitative data analysis and hence, data collecting tools like, questionnaire, FGD and In-depth interview, observation and Document review were used to collect data.

Before moving to actual data collection the researcher developed questionnaires and drafted questionnaires was pilot tested at primary school teachers for their validities and reliabilities. Experts were requested to comment on the questionnaire prepare for data collection. One experts were provided important comments on the questionnaire; he added important aspects of quality that has to been included in the study. He also removed less important question and repetition. Moreover, the experts forwarded suggestions for improvement of the interview and focus group discussions, guides. An expert having language background was commented on the clarity and offer valuable comments and corrections to the entire instrument. The items cast in the questionnaire and interview were adequately represented the research problem being addressed. Evidence on validity was accumulated and it was found out that, the data collection procedure was a good and accurate representation of the content and what needed to be measured.

After modification has been made, the researcher was train enumerators on data collection instruments for one day. Data collectors for the quantitative study was two diploma level trained teachers who speaks both Somali and English languages. Adequate time were given for the participants to complete the questionnaire and return it to the data collectors. On the other hand, close monitoring of data collection was made by one trained degree level supervisor though out the phase of data collection. Finally data was checked and entered at the field level by the investigator and was cleaned before analysis. All of entered data was checked again before final analysis.

All 14 teachers filled the teacher's questionnaire. The contents of the teachers' questionnaire included: background data about themselves and the preschools they are associated to, training experiences particularly as preschool teacher and reflections, , teaching methods, Human resource development, Curriculum, Qualification,

Training, aids, and materials employed and their developmental and cultural appropriateness, medium of instruction, quality of preschool education, problems encountered and solutions. A total of 12 parents have filled in the parent's questionnaire. The contents of this questionnaire consisted of main themes like: background data (about themselves), school physical environment, and child care satisfaction, believe about the knowledge of the teachers as well as the preschool staffs and continuous feedback about their children progress. FGD guide was prepared to guide the discussion and the facilitator introduced the ground rules and the duration. FGD undertaken during data collection and one Focus Group Discussion had taken place in City Education Office. The composition of the participants were 3 city ECCE experts, and 2 city ECCE supervisor, Interview questions were prepared and conducted with the key informants from the School Principals. To collect valuable information the researcher was develop 10 open ended questions for 7 Principals. The interview was tried to find responses in issues such input, Process and Output in quality of ECCE and commitment towards improving quality of ECCE. Furthermore, observation checklist was developed to check against the standard set by government. The checklist has, "Yes" and "No" items to be checked against the equipment and materials available the ECCE center.

### **2.7. Data Analysis**

The study used both quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to gain insights of quality and to analyze the data obtained from the different sources different techniques were employed based on the nature the collected data and the research question. The quantitative data obtained through questionnaires were analyzed using frequency count and percentage. The data obtained from focus group discussion, document review and observation were qualitatively discussed and triangulated with the quantitative data. This method also helped to provide answer for research question number one, two and three. Based on the results of the analysis and the interpretation was made, major findings of the study were spotted out and possible recommendations were suggested.

### **2.8. Ethical Considerations**

As far as Ethical Considerations is concerned, there are ethical issues the researcher has to acknowledge and take into consideration. In order to ensure that all participation was voluntary and that all participants were well informed about the research under study I have taken the following steps (Sarantakos, 2005). I obtained letter of entry in to study sites from School of Graduate study and disbursed to the Seven selected government ECCE centres. After the entry to study site was secured I have got principals and teachers approval to participate in the research after introduction of the purpose of the study. In partnership with the centre teachers I also got the consent of the teachers and parents to participate in the research process. In addition, all the questionnaire, FGD, observation and document review administered during the data collection process held in a place where there is no disturbance to the teaching and learning process of the ECCE centres. The overall data generated from the questionnaire, FGD, observation and document review don't reveal the identity of the individual participants.

## **III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In this section, different parts are included. The first part deals with the characteristics and background of the sample population involved in the study in terms of sex, age, education level and years of experience. The second part presents the analysis concerning Status and Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in. selected government ECCE center in Ranga Reddy City Administration (tables for quantitative analysis were not included here so as to minimize the pages of the research).

### **3.1. Background Characteristics of Respondents**

There were 14 (100%) teachers who received the questionnaire to fill and 14 (100%) of them returned the questionnaire. 14 of them were received the questionnaire to fill and 12 (85.7%) of them returned after they had filled properly. Seven principals were also participated in the research. With regard to the age of the respondents, 1(7.1%) was in the age group of between 20 and 24 and 5(35.7%) were in the age group of between 25 and 29 years. About 6(42.9%) of the teachers belong to the age group 30 and 34 years. Similarly, about 2(14.3%) of teachers were belongs to the age group between 35 to 39 years respectively. 1(10%) principals and 3(4) of teachers belong to the age group of between 36 to 45 years. 10(13.33%) of teachers were belong to the above 45 years.

With respect to teacher's educational background, majority (71.5%) of teachers were first degree holder and the remaining 28.6% of teachers were diploma holder. This was found to be against to the MOE (2009) standard's which is aspiring teachers to have diploma in preschool education. In this position, it is possible to postulate that academic qualifications of ECCE teachers might affect their ability to deliver the proper quality of ECCE service in preschools. The study revealed that ECCE teachers had different

qualifications which had both a positive and a negative impact on the quality of ECCE programmed. They had degree and diploma with other non-professional disciplines such as English, Civics and Biology which is irrelevant to the expected qualification. As the study further confirmed, majority of the teachers who were teaching in preschools did not have ECCE qualifications. Here, it is possible to reflect that poor qualifications might adversely affect the effectiveness of ECCE teachers and had an effect on their understanding of their roles and functions teaching in preschools; and in turn, affected their professionalism and the quality of ECCE program. Besides, unqualified teachers would lack the knowledge and skill to conduct effective ECCE lesson and apply techniques useful to solve children related problems and would not understand how to address the holistic child development in the actual learning implementation. They would also face a challenge to develop indigenous indoor and outdoor games that would assist for young children learning.

When we look at the experience of teacher, 14.3% have worked between 2 and 4 years. This was followed by 42.9 % who have 5 and 10 years and 42.9 % had more than 10 years' experience. The more the teachers do have more experience in preschools would predict the better in teaching preschool education. With respect to parental educational background, 25% were illiterates while 16.7% were completed grade 1-4. Majority (41.7%) of them grade eight completed. Few of them (16.7%) were 9-12 Grades. From this it can be reflected that the more the parents are educated the better they would be involved in their children education.

In the study, teachers were asked whether they had attended in colleges/universities in the area of early childhood education and replied that 100% of them did not attend in this profession. It was further stated that 100% of teachers who were teaching in preschool centers did not get on-job training in early childhood education. This was not consistent with Heffman and Tood (1964 cited in Amelewok, 2007) in sense that special on-job training in early childhood education for teachers is deemed as key element to address the objectives of ECCE program.

### **3.2. Current Quality Status of Preschool**

Teachers were asked whether they have ECCE curriculum. All teachers 100% were responded as "No". One of the issues that emerged from this finding is that all public preschools follow their own curriculum and the government also did not provides guidelines standard curriculum. However, the findings of the current study did not support OECD's (2006) study. It was stated that presence of a curriculum assisted what to do and how to do in ECCE learning. Teachers were asked whether they had ECCE textbooks or not. Majority of them responded as "No" 100% with respect to the availability ECCE text books. Teachers were asked about the language of instruction in the center and all 100% used "Somali" as the language of instruction for teaching and learning. As per the minimum standard, set by the policy, all school has failed to meet the standard, by not fulfilling not having curriculum that is approved by the ministry of education and teacher not taking advantage of local materials in using them teaching and learning process. It was witnessed that 64.3% of the respondent disagreed with the issue of adequate number of staff hired in government ECCE centers. Similarly 28.6% of the respondents agreed the aforementioned issue and the rest 7.1% remain undecided. This showed that how ECCE Center suffer lack of adequate number of staff and affected their service delivery negatively and consequently affected the quality of ECCE programmes. During an interviews with principals, they admitted that there was shortage of ECCE teachers and the reason given were

*"Since it is a new field in the region, and the university and teachers' colleges had just introduced ECCE teacher training"*

The study sought to establish whether the level of teacher qualification in ECCE programmes had an impact on service delivery. More qualified staff can have a positive influence on those who work with them and who do not have the similar qualifications (Sammons, 2010).

It was further indicated that 78.6% of the sample respondent were agreed on the idea of teaching experience can contribute to better quality of teaching. The rest 21.4% of the respondents disagreed with the issue asked for them. With regards to teachers/ caregivers attending in their relevant training to build their knowledge and skills in child development 42.9% of the teachers agreed while majority 57.1% of the respondents disagreed on this issue. It was reported that lack of relevant training affected their service delivery negatively and consequently the quality of ECCE programmes. It was observed that there were unqualified teachers per class and they shared responsibility equally. This was not consistent with the ministry document. According to the MoE standard, it is equally important to give continuous training and in spite of their training teachers stressed the need for continuous training. The present findings seem to be inconsistent with other research which found by Govindasamy (2010). "A well trained ECD teacher is a professional who knows how to coordinate and deal with the ECD children and parents to promote the quality of education and care. A skilled teacher has goals intended to achieve specific outcomes, a standard of performance to adhere to and makes informed judgments that are applied effectively to improve the quality of ECD education and care".

Teachers were asked whether they use child-center method of teaching or not. Out of the respondents 42.9% agreed that the use child-center instructional methodology in their class. While the majority 57.1% of the

respondents disagreed on the issue of child-center method of teaching. The study revealed that teaching methods in all ECCE were teacher-centre and did not used drama/role play in teaching ECCE children. This was not supported by other study. Most preschool shall create favorable situation for children by seeing how other children act, and support a group-oriented approach in which children's interactions are given great freedom (Johansson and Sandberg, 2010). Out of the respondent 92.9% showed their agreement with teaching aids and 28.6% of teachers did not agree on this regard. This is contradicted with Ackerman and Barnett (2009:335) argued ECD resources and materials do have a greater impact on the quality of ECCE program.

With respect to utilizing mother tongue instruction in preschools, majority of the respondents (85.7%) agreed the idea of using mother tongue is appropriate for the children's age. The remaining 7.1% of the respondents disagreed on the issue of using mother tongue in preschools. This result implied the importance of mother tongue in early years. This is consistent with ministry education documents in sense that mother tongue is expected to use in preschool education (MoE, 2010).

It was further stated that 42.9% respondent agreed on the presence of developmentally appropriate toys and learning materials for children to play and gain mastery and success in preschools. Whereas majority of 57.1% of them disagreed on the issue of having adequate developmentally appropriate toys and learning materials available for children to play and gain mastery and success in preschools. This had a negative impact on the quality of ECCE programmes. This finding was not supporting the study conducted previously. Bauer (2010:88) stated that material resources should provide stimulation to encourage physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills of children. In addition, the material resources must be developmentally appropriate and should provide for concrete hands-on activities. There was no enough playing equipment's and children forced to allow children to play one class at a time. This has created to do different schedule for each class.

During an interview, the principals revealed *"Our schools don't have adequate and age-appropriate material resources due to lack of adequate funding. So the government should allocate budget to buy adequate material resources"*

Concerning children use learning materials (culturally relevant and region specific) in the class, out of the total respondents 57.1% of them were agreed on the issue raised. On the other hand, 42.9% of the total respondents disagreed on the aforementioned idea. This was not consistent with the actual observation it was made. There were no age-appropriate materials that the child can use in a variety of ways. This was affected the interaction the teachers had with their students. Teacher- children interaction was low since there was large number of children in the class. And teachers were preferred to utilize teachers-center teaching approach in classes.

As far as using continues assessment implementation of in preschools, however, the result was not very encouraging. The assessment of children is not holistic and was not focused in all aspects of their development. Assessment of the child's development should be continuous and using appropriate methods. There was no regular continuous assessment of each child on reading, writing, children cognitive thinking skills, emotional development, social skills and numeracy skills. The children are not assessed formally (via children portfolio) and informal (via unstructured observation) and such assessment was not recorded. As it was trapped from FGD, participants have said the government was thriving to open preschools for low income families in all parts of the city. Even though the expansion of opening preschools needs to be encouraged on one hand, the quality issue is something that needs improvement on the other hand. In other words, what the standard document recommends and what is on the ground is very different- quality is very low.

As it was witnessed in all ECCE centers (gathered via the observation checklist) the equipment, teaching-learning materials and playing items were not available. There was shortage of properly working utensils and enough materials and equipment suitable for all children. It was furthered observed that outdoor games were not available in preschools. Majority of the schools lack outdoor play equipment like climbing frames and locally made swings and seesaws. It can be said that in all preschools the minimum standard is not fulfilled. It looks that these schools were giving high emphasis on literacy and numeracy of the child development. Learning-teaching process was not address the child holistic development.

The other factor that affects the quality of ECCE program was the emphasis the teachers and schools gave to stimulating materials. It was found that majority of the ECCE center lack variety of stimulating play and learning materials instead children were forced to sit in crowded spaces. In some schools, the tables provided are too high and children are always standing to use the table for writing. This was reported as material shortage and did not have enough space in the preschools.

**Parental Involvement in ECCE:** Majority of the respondents 78.6% agreed with the role of parental involvement in their children education and has great role in enhancing quality of education in preschools though 21.4% of the respondent also disagreed with the raised idea. Even it was expressed in this way their interaction with the schools "I believe that a good relationship between the school management team and parents will lead to positive result if any problem arises". For such item, majority of them 85.7% were agreed with the idea. On the other hand, 14.3% respondents disagreed for it. With regard to regular consultation with



teachers to discuss on their children education, majority of the respondents did not agree (64.3%) that parents did not have such regular meeting with them though they have agreed that their role would have a significant impact on quality of preschool education. The study further confirmed that majority (83%) of parents occasionally visited the preschools (17% responded usually).

### **3.3. Factors that Affect Quality of ECCE Program**

All (100%) teachers agreed that there was shortage of trained early childhood education teachers and parental involvement in the selected ECCE centers. Insufficient teaching and learning materials was another challenge it was reported in the study. Besides, 92.9% teachers agreed that there was insufficient teaching and learning materials selected in ECCE centers. While the rest 7.7% respondents disagreed on the issue raised. This result showed that human and material resources have adverse impact on the quality of ECCE program. Another serious challenge it was stated by respondents was that teachers did not have ECCE curriculum. They taught children from their own experience and sometimes they had brought some guidelines from private preschools. All (100%) of the respondents agreed that there was no curriculum in government owned ECCE centers. The government even did not address the problems observed in the preschools. Majority of teachers (100%) did not get continuous training on the ECCE program in government owned ECCE centers. Besides, majority of the respondents 92.9% agreed that there was no culturally relevant story books in preschools as well as teachers (100%) did not use aid materials to make students understand their lesson. Teaching methods were reported as a challenge in government preschools. Teachers did not use developmentally appropriate teaching methods. All (100%) reported that teachers were used inappropriate teaching methods and techniques in the government ECCE center.

Let see the quote it was taken from the participants. *“Government gave focus to ECCE access not on the way to enhance preschool education. Standards stated in the government documents with regard to quality and the actual implementation do not match”*

## **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1. Conclusions**

The following conclusions were made on the bases of the findings captured from the study.

The evidence from this study revealed that the current ECCE Curriculum was not as per MOE's approved curriculum. Lack of harmonized curriculum was identified in the study since they use different curriculums and the emphasis was more given to literacy and numeracy than including courses that would address holistic child development. Concerning following the standard of ECCE curriculum, it is very discouraging as almost all teachers did not use it as a guide and also did not use it to assess the children learning progress. The results of this study indicate that lack of qualified teachers is a major obstacle to expanding quality preschool education. The study revealed that lack of teachers, and particularly lack of trained teachers, as a major impact in the teaching and learning process. Therefore it is difficult to the teachers to understand and identify the needs of each individual. With respect to quality of facilities and availability of teaching materials, the finding showed that ECCE center facilities were poor in its quality and there were not enough materials availed for the preschools as well as the physical environment and materials were not developmentally appropriate. Majority of ECCE centers lack teaching materials for classroom use and the teaching orientation was not child-centered and not developmentally appropriate. There were no age-appropriate materials that the child can use in a variety of ways. The teacher- children interaction was very limited since they had large number of children in one class and found to be not suitable for the teacher to freely move and interact with students. In fact, in few schools, teachers develop materials with locally available and low cost materials as part of their training courses. This was appreciated but not habitual work in all schools to develop local materials for learning. Besides, many schools in this study lack appropriate play and educational materials and supplies and are often overcrowded and suffocated. All these facts had affected the quality of ECCE program in the identified area.

Similarly, different challenges were identified which had directly affected the quality ECCE program in the study area. As the current study further verified, All the schools are suffering from severe shortage in physical facilities, specifically in the availability of quality classrooms, playgrounds, and toilets. Many service providers complained about a severe shortage of classroom space and poor quality of school buildings. Playgrounds are not always available or in poor condition. Besides, parents were not involved in their children education as well as government commitment in term of allocating resource for the program was very low and in turn hampers the quality of ECCE program.

On the bases of the research findings, recommendations are made. Regional Education Bureau should develop standard ECCE curriculum with contextualized text books by using its curriculum expert, shall work on quality of the teachers and should put quality and safety control monitoring system in the teaching materials created by the teachers. They should be upgraded through the training and qualification to fit into ECCE. And

allocate more funds for ECCE programs in the region. The funds should be directed at improving the physical infrastructure in the ECCE centers and enhance the quality of teachers, and improving ECCE School Quality. Besides, city education office and NGOs should provide indoor and outdoor games for children to play and develop different skills and learn through play. Principals should create open and transparent system and structure which enables parents to get adequate information about their children as well as about the school. The system should also help both the school and parents to forward feedbacks and comments. And principals should facilitate and monitor the learning environment by making child friendly, providing adequate opportunity for interactions among children. Teaching must be child-centred and teachers shall get continuous training on this regard.

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