

A Study On The Attitude Of Primary School Teachers Towards Implementation Of Early Childhood Care And Education In School Curriculum

Dr. T. Sharon Raju¹ and Harini Peta²

¹Associate Professor & Head; Chairman, BOS in Education (UG)

Department of Education, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam-530003, A.P., India

²Research Scholar, Department of Education, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam-530003
Andhra Pradesh, India.

Abstract

Today, the world is undergoing rapid changes in the knowledge landscape. Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India’s continued ascent and leadership on the global stage. It is the need of the hour to transform India sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all; and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. In the entire ladder of education, the foundational stage of education comprising the age group 3 – 8 years plays a significant role in the life of a child. This stage lays the foundation for lifelong well-being, and overall growth and development of the children across all dimensions - physical, cognitive and socio-emotional. The Government of India has taken initiative to introduce Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for the children in the age group 3 – 8 years with the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) -2020 across the nation. The teachers, parents, students and all other stakeholder should take the responsibility for the effective implementation of the Policy. In this context, the researchers made an attempt to know the attitude of Primary School teachers towards implementation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in school curriculum. The researchers used a well prepared and standardized questionnaire as the tool for collection of data from a sample of 100 teachers (30 Headmasters and 70 Secondary Grade Teachers) selected from 30 Primary schools located in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique. Mean score values, standard deviations and independent t-tests were used for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that the demographic variables – Gender, Age and Location of the school have no influence on the attitude of teachers towards introduction of ECCE in school curriculum.

Key words: *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Primary School Teachers, Attitude*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the tool through which our cultural values can be preserved and transmitted to the upcoming generations and may liberate the masses from the clutches of ignorance and prejudices. It makes them aware of their fundamental rights and responsibilities towards their family, society and also towards the nation at large. Education is an effective means of social reconstruction. It is fundamental for achieving full human potential; and developing an equitable and just society. It helps to increase the productivity, achieve national and emotional integration; and accelerate the process of modernization.

Education seeks to develop the innate capacities of the individuals. It is a potential tool for creating awareness among people and enabling them to lead a happy and peaceful life. Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India’s continued ascent and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement; and cultural preservation. Universal high-quality education is the best way forward for developing and maximizing our country's rich talents and resources for the good of the individual, the society, the country and the world. The Government of India has taken an initiative to revamp the existing system; and to provide universal access to quality education on the foundational pillars of access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability in education with the introduction of National Education Policy (NEP) -2020 in the country. The Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transform India sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all; and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. The Policy has suggested 5+3+3+4 pattern in School Education in our country restructuring the existing system by introducing five years of foundation stage (one year Nursery, one year Lower Kindergarten, one year Upper Kindergarten,

and one year each for classes 1 and 2) followed by three years of preparatory stage (one year each for classes 3, 4 and 5), three years of middle stage (one year each for classes 6, 7 and 8) and four years of secondary stage (two years for Lower Secondary comprising of classes 9 and 10; and another two years for Upper Secondary comprising of classes 11 and 12). The first eight years of a child's life are truly critical and lay the foundation for lifelong well-being, and overall growth and development across all dimensions - physical, cognitive and socio-emotional. Hence, the foundational stage of education for children in the age group 3-8 years is very crucial in the institutional setting; and hence these children should be taken care of for their growth and development through Early Childhood Care and Education.

II. THE CONCEPT OF 'EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE)'

The National Education Policy 2020 proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure with a view to create a new system that is aligned with the expected goals of 21st century education. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the 'foundational capacities' of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and problem solving; but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions. In the new 5+3+3+4 structure, a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from age 3 is also included, which is aimed at promoting better overall learning, development and well-being. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is one of the thrust areas in school education as envisaged by National Education Policy-2020. This is the foundation on which the entire structure of education rests.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is generally defined as the care and education of children from birth to eight years. It refers to all programmes for children between ages zero to the start of primary education. This includes both early childhood educational development (ECED) and pre-primary education.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) ideally consists of flexible, multi-faceted, multi-level, play-based, activity-based and inquiry-based learning, comprising of alphabets, languages, numbers, counting, colors, shapes, indoor and outdoor play, puzzles and logical thinking, problem-solving, drawing, painting and other visual art, craft, drama and puppetry, music and movement. It also includes a focus on developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behavior, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork and co-operation. The overall aim of ECCE is to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional and ethical development, cultural/artistic development; and the development of communication and early language, literacy and numeracy.

The ultimate goal of foundational stage of education is to provide the children universal access to high-quality ECCE across the country in a phased manner. Special attention and priority is to be given to districts and locations that are particularly socio-economically disadvantaged. ECCE shall be delivered through a significantly expanded and strengthened system of early-childhood education institutions consisting of (a) stand-alone Anganwadis; (b) Anganwadis co-located with primary schools; (c) pre-primary schools/sections covering at least age 5 to 6 years co-located with existing primary schools; and (d) stand-alone pre-schools - all of which would recruit workers/teachers specially trained in the curriculum and pedagogy of ECCE. Further, the persons who are interested in the child care services should alone be invited into the profession. Necessary orientation is to be provided to the new entrants to provide motivation and develop right perceptions towards ECCE.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

A review of research studies carried out earlier by the other researchers in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) has been conducted by the investigators; and a brief summary of the studies is provided below.

Simone Schaub & Matthias Lutolf (2023) conducted a study to examine the relationship between attitudes and self-efficacy as key predictors of preparedness of early childhood educators for inclusion. The study was conducted in Switzerland, a country with a young tradition of inclusive early childhood care and education, (ECCE) but with increasing numbers of children with disability in public day-care facilities. Early childhood educators ($N = 214$) completed a questionnaire on their feelings, beliefs, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze paths of effects of participants' background on behavioral intentions. Results show that inclusive ECCE experience, private interactions and training on disability were associated with higher behavioral intentions. This effect was mediated by participants' self-efficacy and their beliefs. General ECCE experience was directly associated with lower behavioral intentions. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Dr. Shaheen Pasha et al. (2021) conducted a descriptive research study to analyze the attitudes of elementary school head teachers towards the early childhood care and education (ECCE) against seven factors, viz., Scope, Curriculum Expediency, In-service Training, Policy Implementation, Parents Involvement, Inclusion and Budgeting. Seventy Head Teachers (32 male and 38 female) were randomly selected as a sample

from 80 elementary public schools of Kasur district. A survey questionnaire consisting of 35 (thirty-five) statements was designed to collect data; and attitudes were analyzed using a 5-point Likert scale. Non-parametric statistical analysis was conducted for data analysis by using SPSS and interpretations were made accordingly. The received data were analyzed in the light of seven investigated factors. The study found a significant difference in the attitudes of Head Teachers gender-wise. However, no significant difference was found in the attitudes regarding the experience and qualification up-gradation during their service. The study revealed that the participants considered ECCE a good program, but they had shown concerns related to the budgeting condition allocated for the ECCE program. The study recommended that government should allocate sufficient budget and provide in-service training to public school teachers to meet the international standards in ECCE.

Cagla Banko-Bal & Tulin Guler-Yildiz (2021) conducted a study to investigate the attitudes, behaviors and views about the rights of the child of early childhood education (ECE) teachers in Turkey. A mixed-method sequential transformative design was used, and 205 ECE teachers' attitudes towards children's rights were analyzed using a quantitative questionnaire. Ten of these ECE teachers were then observed, and their views in terms of the rights of children were elicited through interviews. According to the findings, teachers' attitudes toward the rights of the child were positive; however, their behaviors and views were not compatible with most of these rights. While teachers were sensitive to the right to protection, they did not meet the requirements of the rights to development, growth and participation or the principles of best interest and non-discrimination. The study revealed that teachers need to properly understand the rights of the child, how to protect them, and how to reflect these rights in their practices.

Jerusalem Yibeltal Yizengaw & Milatework Tessega (2020) conducted a study to assess the implementation of ECCE between private and public pre-schools in Bahir Dar city administration. The implementation was assessed through main factors that include: the physical and learning environment that encompass the materials used for children holistic development, curriculum guidelines, teachers' know how, teaching learning methodology, health, the relationships with parents and community and administrative issues. The study has taken a form of descriptive survey in a comparative perspective. The study examined the pre-school education policy and practices of 2 public and 2 private pre-schools. The four pre-schools were selected through purposive sampling technique. The participants of the study included pre-school educational experts, teachers, parents and principals. Data collection tools include questionnaires, observations, interviews and document analysis. Frequency, percentage, one sample *t*-test, and independent *t*-test have been employed for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that there are curriculum implementation differences between public and private pre-schools.

IV. NEED FOR THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

Research in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is crucial for several reasons. ECCE plays a significant role in shaping the overall development and well-being of children. The early years of a child's life are critical for brain development and the formation of cognitive, emotional, social and physical skills. High-quality ECCE programs can provide the necessary stimulation and support to promote optimal development in these areas. Research helps identify effective practices and strategies that can maximize the potential of young children. The experiences and learning opportunities children receive during their early years have a lasting impact on their future academic achievement, social competence and overall well-being. Research helps us understand the long-term effects of early childhood interventions, enabling policymakers and educators to make informed decisions about program design and implementation. In this context, the investigators thought it relevant to explore the attitude of primary school teachers towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum. The present study is an attempt in this direction.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present study is to find out the attitude of primary school teachers towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.

The study also aims at finding out the influence of certain demographic variables, viz., gender, age and location of the institution on the attitude of primary school teachers towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.

VI. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the present investigation:

(i) There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers working in primary schools towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.

(ii) There is no significant difference in the attitude of primary school teachers aged below 40 years and those aged 40 years and above towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.

(iii) There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in rural and urban primary schools towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to find out the influence of three demographic variables, viz., gender, age and location of the institution on the attitude of teachers working in primary schools towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum. Further, the study is confined to 100 Primary school teachers working in the rural as well as urban primary schools in Visakhapatnam District.

VIII. METHODOLOGY

Method of Research

Since the present study involves collecting data with the help of survey, the investigators used Descriptive Survey method for the present investigation.

Sample

The sample consisting of 100 teachers (30 Headmasters and 70 Secondary Grade Teachers) has been selected from 30 primary schools located in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh using ‘Stratified Random Sampling’ technique. In this method, no significant group is left unrepresented and this gives a greater control over the sample. Here, in addition to randomness, stratification introduces a secondary element of control as a means of increasing precision and representativeness.

Research Tool

The researchers used a well prepared questionnaire consisting of 36 items as the tool of research for the present investigation.

Administration of the tool

The tool was initially administered to 20 teachers (5 Headmasters and 15 Secondary Grade Teachers) under Pilot study. The measures of reliability, validity and objectivity of the tool have been calculated. Further, the researchers conducted item analysis for the items included in the tool. Out of 36 items selected for the tool, the discriminating power of 30 items has been found positive and is negative in respect of 6 items. The items whose discriminating power is negative have been removed; and the final tool consists of 30 items, which are foolproof in all respects. The final tool has been administered to 100 teachers (30 Headmasters and 70 Secondary Grade Teachers) working in 70 Primary Schools located in the rural as well as urban areas in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh.

Analysis and Interpretation of data

The data collected has been analyzed and interpreted using different statistical techniques such as Mean scores, Standard Deviations and t-ratios; and are presented in the following table.

Table showing t-values of different variables relating to the attitude of Primary School Teachers towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum

S. No.	Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Result
1	Gender	Male	40	99.00	28.77	0.31*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		Female	60	100.83	28.63		
2	Age	Below 40 yrs	70	98.79	29.03	0.41*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		40 yrs. & above	30	101.17	25.55		
3	Location of the institution	Rural	45	101.39	27.31	0.29*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		Urban	55	99.77	27.49		

IX. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the researchers have arrived at the following findings and drawn the conclusions.

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers working in primary schools towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.

2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of primary school teachers aged below 40 years and those aged 40 years and above towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in rural and urban primary schools towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.

X. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that Gender, Age and Location of the institution have no influence on the attitude of primary school teachers towards implementation of ECCE in school curriculum.

XI. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- (i) The study would help the teachers working in primary schools realize the need for ECCE in school curriculum.
- (ii) The present study helps the teachers working in primary schools evolve suitable methods of teaching for ECCE.
- (iii) The study would help the primary school students to have a better understanding of different techniques and strategies in the implementation of ECCE.
- (iv) The study would help the Academic Organizations like SCERTs, IASEs and the State Departments of Education to take necessary steps to provide orientation to ECCE teachers working in stand-alone Anganwadis and other Anganwadis attached to primary schools.

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