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## QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN CONTEXT OF TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN PAKISTAN

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Early Childhood Education, Teachers' Knowledge & Skills, Primary Schools, Bannu Division, Pakistan	<p>The improvement in quality of education including ECE/Play group/ Nursery/ Kachi/Prep/Pakki/ kindergarten at primary school level in context of teachers' knowledge and skills is very important. The study was descriptive (survey) in nature. Total numbers of (N =3529) in Bannu Division were the population of the study, and ECE teachers were the target population of the study in which the total numbers of (n = 360) teachers were taken as sample of the study through simple random and stratified sampling techniques. Main objective of the study was to examine knowledge and professional skills of ECE public and private school teachers in Pakistan. Data were collected over teachers' competencies inventory. Validity and reliability of research instrument were ensured. Results and conclusions were drawn by revealing that GPS teachers were better than private school teachers. Thus, some recommendations were offered to government, education department, policy and decision makers, planners, educationists, philosophers, and teachers' trainers to promote the quality of ECE Education in Pakistan by promoting the teachers' knowledge, competency and professional skills.</p> <p> 2022 Journal of Social Research Development</p>
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### INTRODUCTION

Khan (2018) explained that when a child enters in classroom, learning process takes place and it can bear either positive or negative impacts on child next coming life. In this period child have greater possibility to be grown and developed, however children at this stage are at weaker position and the possibility to be left behind if proper nourishment was not provided. In this case the children of poorest countries are suffered due to deprived social

group. It is also investigated that four out of ten chances of survival of a child in poorest countries and the same case is inflexibly persist in the many developed nations. Children belong to deprived group have beneficial from ECE and many other lose when excluded. So, early childhood education laid foundation of child personal and social development whereas the improvement of social skills, interaction with peers, teachers, family members and community develop. [Tonge, Jones and Okely \(2019\)](#) pointed out that emotional and language skills are develop.

The development of early childhood education provides healthy environment and health safety, so the chances of survival, improvement in nutrition and hygiene are possible. The proper provision of early childhood education (ECE) enhances progress and performance to a satisfactory level. It maximizes enrolment rate at primary level and minimize chances of repetition in a class. The reduction of dropout rate and better performance in the next class is due to proper imparting early childhood education. [Abdin \(2018\)](#) found that for the efficient education teachers who are crammed with pedagogical skills and subject-matter knowledge is vital ([Pakistan Economic Survey 2020-21](#)). In this connection, teachers are the patrons of uplifting and educating learners. There is a lack of such trained teachers in Pakistan which consequently leads to poor educational quality. Untrained teachers, their knowledge and lack of the skills which affects the methods of teaching and imparting the knowledge, lack of interest of students and increasing dropouts. In this linking, pedagogy which is non-interactive is deeply concerned with lack of concerned teachers training and poor academic achievement.

[Iqbal \(2016\)](#) cited that child first eight years have been recognized in developing learning experiences of individuals. In this decisive period individuals feeling and consciousness is also built. It is base for the child dexterity and responsibility to be happened in future life. The growing early childhood education is focused on literacy and numeracy skills in recent era and promotes a formal pedagogy leading the adults. Beth Lewis mentioned the early childhood education as project-based instruction and processes to be planned for up to eight age children. This is the most significant and dependant period of individuals' times. According to [Annual Status of Education Report \(2019\)](#), it is revealed through the research that limited budget deficit adequate spacing, learning materials, and training of teachers that contributes less attractiveness and ineffectiveness in ECE. It is recognized by [National Plan of Action \(2001-2015\)](#) that there is a dare need of certain rooms, instructors, AV aids and learning materials. Moreover, limitations which becoming obstacles in delivering of standardized services of ECE have been emphasized by national education policy ([National Education Policy, 2017-2025](#)).

### **Objectives of Study**

1. To know teachers' knowledge regarding Early Childhood Education in public and private schools in Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan.

2. To determine teachers' professional skills regarding Early Childhood Education in public and private schools in Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan.
3. To compare knowledge and professional skills of public & private school teachers regarding Early Childhood Education in Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is level of teachers' knowledge regarding Early Childhood Education in public and private schools in Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan?
2. Are ECE teachers' professional skills regarding Early Childhood Education in public and private schools in Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan?
3. Is there any significant difference between the knowledge and professional skills of public and private school teachers regarding Early Childhood Education in Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

[Hussain \(2018\)](#) described that early childhood teaching is special area in field of education that is focused on the child. A whole child approach to early childhood teaching facilitates children's development in all areas: physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, and aesthetic. The teachers' instructional competency works as the developmental instrument in the children development regarding their knowledge and skills. Cognitive development begins from the pre-natal phase. It is important to enhance individual abilities; learning skills & expression of emotion, to ensure individual interaction as highlighted by ministry of federal education of Pakistan. According to [ITA \(2019\)](#), obligation and teacher positive belief in such scenario play pivotal role to harmonize the schools set up and training of teachers. It also provides a base for the instructors' aspiration by highlighted motivational factors in learners. Early childhood Education needs certain approaches for the development and promotion of a child learning. In this connection, these approaches have been proved fruitful for the better success of early learners. In this regard, many studies proved to be utilized these approaches for learners understanding and comprehension. Thus, some of the leading and outstanding approaches are highlighted.

[Setodji, Schaack and Le \(2018\)](#) stated that Montessori approach is referred as approach which improves learning. The exponent of this approach is Maria Montessori, an educator and physician. There is a need of Montessori certificate and undergraduate and graduate degree for the teachers, who impart ECE. Teachers guide the learners with exploration and experiences. Thus, approach is characters' builder, intellectual developer, academic ability provider and practical life skills of young learners. [Arshad and Zamir \(2018\)](#) asserted that focusing and concentration is vital in Montessori program. Concentration and focusing are two most important components that lead to quality education to children. The approach also throws lights on the needs of imparting organized lessons where interruptions are not allowed in the process of learning. For instance, before receiving and understanding one

ideas or topic teacher does not move forward to next topic. The approach provides space to various learning styles.

[Black et al. \(2017\)](#) revealed that at Montessori level of teaching there is an application of various skills, teachers implement with available materials. Children in Montessori program acquire proficiency, self-respect at the higher level and collaboration. In learning process children use various styles and skills such as listening, seeing, feeling, gestures/mingling the above skills. By teaching lessons children are enabled to learn these skills. According to [GOP \(2017\)](#), Waldorf approach is an Australian writer, Rudolf Steiner. Waldorf asserts that cultivation of child interest, body, spirit and soul leads to achieve learning. In pre-school of Waldorf due to productive actions, metrical repetitions and practical learning activities, a child learns best. The cooperative environment is also offered by this approach where the development of latent abilities and children learning curiosity are measured the key gears. This approach has practices and theory to education, but still appropriate and exercised in many pre-schools globally. Children who are beneficiary from Waldorf program become stimulating learners. To impart enthusiastic form of learning this program inspires utilizing unusual human gestures, spirit and soul. By getting experiencing children get into quality learning over inner interest.

[Obsuth et al. \(2018\)](#) highlighted that Reggio Emilia is an approach formed in 1940 in Italy, which is used in many schools worldwide. The projects, arts and activities as per children interest are encouraged through this approach. Moreover, Reggio Emilia system stresses the need for environmental exploration, fluency and importance of community. Although this approach lacks organized system of documentation, curriculum and teachers' training. Since the beginning of this approach to till date many pre-school children have taken the advantages as it encourages the expression of free will. It induces the sense of community importance. [Ali \(2014\)](#) found that children free will support to arise the latent abilities and interest, but free environment was not provided to the children at this stage they would be suffered. It is helpful for children to have freedom while speaking so that their abilities and dexterities may not left undeveloped. Additionally, it is to be noted that children in early days may best learn through adopting this philosophy. It is blessing of this approach which provides encouragement to children to perform their tasks and others skills arouse by their ideas and choices.

Provision of support and base for getting more and more information facets of Reggio Emilia philosophy. In the same way creating constant environment by help of teaches, team and organizational activities leads to initiate improved learning practices, is valid instance of this philosophy. [Zada \(2014\)](#) said that Bank Street approach is the most extraordinary approach implemented in the ECE. The exponent of this approach is John Dewey. Cognitive, emotional, social & physical development is concern to this approach. Teachers' instruction is based upon experience and active learning is encouraged in this approach. Similarly, the

teachers provide guidance to children and provide opportunity to arrange learning process for them. Practical work such as modelling, puzzling, acting and building blocks are major activities that teachers teach the students. Naudeau (2011) illustrated that the Bank Street philosophy is suitable and well organized now-a-days, while its educational experiments are started in 1918. Children know how to learn over experiences as argues by Bank Street philosophy. Children are given tasks of painting and drawing, and students are given free will, how to paint and draw.

The philosophy also gives the opportunity to the learners to adjust to the environment by field trip and favourable sites. Consequently, children learn through practical experiences. When a child learns practically, he/she learn best and knowledge stores in the memory as compare to that learning get theoretically. Thus, the learners who get knowledge through experiences proved excellent by the tutors than the others. Sayeed (2011) investigated that participation of the students is encouraged for early childhood learners in the High Scope philosophy. By developing such perceptions instructors provide activities in which children are engaged constantly in classrooms. Practical interaction with environment is ensured by such practices where children are actively engaged. Thus, in order to become a trustworthy individual in community the high scope approach attempts to inspire values in learners. Learners' daily schedule may attain this objective. Repetition of text or subject continually leads to get mastery in that subject event comprehend well. Sayeed (2011) investigated that the philosophy of the parent's cooperative is used as the best approach for imparting knowledge to young children.

On such program, teachers and parents both care their children by teaching them particular activities. Preschool children are encouraged to develop learning through cooperation and sort out differences. Involvement of parents is notable by learning their children as well as manages specific activities of concerned institutions. It is to be noted that children in early days may best learn over adopting this philosophy. It is caring for children to have freedom while speaking so that abilities and dexterities may not left undeveloped. As involvement of parents is its basis so it has great importance for learning children. The cooperative environment is also offered by this approach where the development of latent abilities and children learning curiosity are measured the key gears. The active performance shown by both parents and teachers as strategy needs, leads to children understanding of lesson. In such institution parents learn like children and cooperative skills may be gain by both parents and children. Such principles facilitate preschooler to be trained from peers and share their knowledge Moreover, it teaches preschooler sense of appreciation as well as peers background consciousness.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The Research Methodology of the study comprised of: All Public and Private ECE schools in Bannu Division (District Bannu, District Laakki Marwat, & North Waziristan Tribal District)

were the population of the study. The total numbers of (N =3529) ECE Schools teachers were the target population of the study in which 2799 were public and 730 were private schools) Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan. The total numbers of (n = 360) ECE / Play group/ Nursery/Kachi/ Prep/Pakki/ and kindergarten teachers were taken as samples of the study. Simple Random and Stratified Sampling Techniques were used. Data were statistically analysed through SPSS by using Mean and Standard Deviation, and independent sampled t-test. The study was delimited to Early Childhood Education Public and Private School teachers in Bannu Division only.

## RESULTS OF STUDY

Table 1 Scale and Range used for Teachers’ Competencies Inventory (TCI)

Weight	Scale	Range
1	Never	1.00 to 1.50
2	To Some Extent	1.51 to 2.50
3	Usually	2.51 to 350
4	Always	3.51 to 4.00

Table 1 represented that scale and rang used for Teachers’ Competencies Inventory (TCI). The scale for “Never” ranged from 1.00 to 1.50, likewise the scale: To Some Extent” ranged from 1.51 to 2.50, scale “Usually” ranged from 2.51 to 350, and the scale “Always ranged from 3.51 to 4.00 respectively.

Table 2 Teachers’ Knowledge Regarding Early Childhood Education

SN	Statement	M	SD
1	I know how to engage children in various learning activities.	2.90	0.58
2	I know how to cater differently-able children.	2.86	0.61
3	I have Knowledge of active learning and value of play.	2.75	0.56
4	I know and understand the development of children.	2.73	0.54
5	I am familiar to children pro-social behaviour.	2.65	0.68
6	I know theories of learning and methods of teaching.	2.47	0.71
7	I have read and understood single national curriculum for ECE.	1.58	0.86
	Overall	2.56	0.31

Table 2 indicates the highest mean scores (M=2.90) with respective standard deviation (SD =0.58) of the statement “I know how to engage children in the various learning activities” indicates that the said statement falls in the range (2.51-3.50) usually, Similarly the second highest mean score (M=2.86) with standard deviation (SD=0.6) of the statement “I know how to cater differently-able children” denotes that the said statement falls in the range (2.51-3.50) usually. Thus, the third highest mean score (M=2.75) with standard deviation (SD=0.56) of the statement “I know and understand active learning and the value of play” reveals that the said statement falls in the category/range (2.51-3.50) usually. Mean score (M=2.73) with respective standard deviation (SD=2.54) of required statement “I know and



understand the development of children” predicts that said statement falls in category/ range (2.51-3.50) usually.

The statement “I am familiar to children pro-social behaviour” with mean score (M=2.65) with standard deviation (SD=0.68) indicates that said statement falls in the category/range (2.51-3.50) usually. The next to lowest mean score (M=2.47) with the standard deviation (SD=0.71) of the statement “I know theories of learning and methods of teaching” denotes that the said statement falls in the range (1.51-2.50) “to some extent”. While the lowest mean score (M=1.58) with standard deviation (SD=0.86), of the statement “I have read and understood the single national curriculum for Early Childhood Education” respectively falls in category (1.51-2.50) “to some extent”. The overall mean score (M=2.56) with standard deviation (SD=0.31) falls in range (2.51-3.50) “usually” which means that teachers usually possessed knowledge.

Table 3 Teachers’ Professional Skills Regarding Early Childhood Education

SN	Statements	M	SD
1	I know how to ask meaningful questions and handling responses.	2.93	0.59
2	I possess skills to work with parents & children about learning.	2.86	0.62
3	I have sufficient communication skills to effectively engage children.	2.82	0.61
4	I am aware of conflict management skills among children on issues.	2.79	0.73
5	I have Pedagogical skills to facilitate the required learning process.	2.79	0.65
6	I am interested in play activities, and facilitating them while playing.	2.65	0.69
7	I have appropriate skills for evolving & organizing learning resources.	2.10	0.77
8	I know how to observe children and documenting the observations.	2.00	0.79
Overall		2.62	0.34

Table 3 showed that the statement “I know how to ask meaningful questions and handling children’s responses” has highest mean score (M=2.93) with standard deviation (SD=0.59), indicates that said statement falls in range (2.51-3.50) usually. Second highest mean score (M= 2.86) with standard deviation (SD=0.62) of statement “I possess counselling skills to work with parents and children about their learning” denotes that the said statement falls in range (2.51-3.50) “usually”. Third highest mean score (M=2.82) with standard deviation (SD=0.69) of statement “I have enough communication skills to effectively engage with children” indicates that said statement falls in the range (2.51-3.50) usually. Statement “I am aware of conflict management skills among children & colleagues and handle behavioral issues” having mean score (M=2.79) with SD (SD=0.73) reveals that said statement falls in category (2.51-3.50) “usually”. Mean (M= 2.79), SD (SD=0.65) of statement “As teacher I have Pedagogical skills to facilitate learning process of young children such as, engaging them in group work, organizing discussions” indicates the said statement falls in category (2.51-3.50) “usually”.

The statement “I am interested in play the activities, and facilitating them while playing” having mean score (M=2.65) and respective standard deviation, (SD= 0.69) indicates that

the said statement falls in category (2.51-3.50) "usually". Mean (M=2.10) and standard deviation (SD=0.77) of the statement "I possess the appropriate skills for developing and organizing learning resources including displays, scheming material, worksheets, charts, and posters" points out that said statement falls in category/range (1.51 to 2.50) "to some extent" which shows that teachers had appropriate skills for developing & organizing learning resources "usually" lowest mean score (M=2.00) and SD (SD=0.79) of the statement "I know how to observe children and documenting the observations, maintaining children progress record and evolving progress reports "reveals that said statement falls in range (1.51 to 2.50) "to some extent". Overall mean score (M=2.62) with SD (SD=0.34) indicates that it also falls in range (2.51-3.50) "Usually" means that teachers were usually found skills about their competencies.

## **DISCUSSION**

Results of current study revealed about teachers' knowledge regarding Early Childhood Education in Public and Private Schools in Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan that that teacher "usually" knew children engagement in the various learning activities. They were "usually" familiar with children development and pro-social behavior. They higher active learning, value of the play "usually" and organized differently-able children as well while theories of learning and methods of the teaching were up "to some extent" being known to them and single national curriculum was also "to some extent" read and understood by the teachers. Moreover, it was found that teachers were "usually" competent regarding their knowledge. Likewise, the existing study indicated about teachers' professional skills regarding Early Childhood Education in Public and Private Schools in Bannu Division, KP, and Pakistan that "usually" teachers knew how to ask about meaningful questions and handling children's responses etc. They were "usually" possessing counselling, communication/presentation, conflict management and pedagogical skills to facilitate the parents and improve learning process of young children.

They were "usually" competent in organizing discussions, taking interest in children's play activities and facilitated children in playing environment while teachers were "to some extent" possessed appropriate skills for evolving and organizing learning resources. They were also "to some extent" possessed skills regarding children observation, documenting it and development of progress report. The present study indicates that the research study also revealed that teachers were usually competent in respect of the knowledge and skills, supported by [Ajmal \(2018\)](#) who found that teachers are at competent level in attitude and at advanced beginner level in skills component of multicultural competence. Similarly, the present study is supported by Encyclopaedia analysis, in which it is revealed that most of early childhood teachers were at competent level on ease and knowledge, competent level in attitude and at advanced beginner level in skills part of multicultural ([Encyclopaedia on Early Childhood Development, 2011](#)). It was seen that the respondents "usually" knew how to engage children in various learning activities as well as how to cater differently-able



children while theories of the learning and methods of teaching were up "to some extent" being known to them and single national curriculum was also "to some extent" read and understood by teachers.

It was seen that respondents "usually" knew asking and responses of meaningful questions and possessed counselling, communication and presentation skills to effectively engage with children while teachers possessed appropriate skills for developing and organizing the learning resources including displays, manipulative material, worksheets, charts and posters up to "to some extent". Moreover, it was found that teachers were "usually" skillful about their competencies. According to the previous studies by [Naudeau et al. \(2011\)](#) and [Sayeed \(2011\)](#) that ECE should be kept prior in its agenda for development of a country, similarly, Education for All (EFA) and (MDGs) specified that it smashes the poverty cycle as specified in particular context. [Zada \(2014\)](#) asserted that Education Department is failed to meet the requirement of early childhood education regarding teaching-learning aids in most of the provinces of Pakistan. Even training in the form of both pre-service and in-service failed to have harmony ECE learning needs because there is a lack of the training task handled by primary school teachers in which hinder the provision playful and attractive methods of instruction of young learners.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It was concluded that respondents usually knew how to engage children in many learning activities as well as how to cater differently-able children while theories of learning and methods of teaching were up "to some extent" being known to them and single national curriculum was also "to some extent" read and understood by teachers It was seen that respondents "usually" knew asking and responses of meaningful questions and possessed counselling, communication and presentation skills to effectively engage with the children while teachers possessed appropriate skills for developing and organizing learning funds including displays, manipulative material, the worksheets, charts, and posters etc up to "to some extent". They were "usually" possessing the counselling, communication/presentation, conflict management and pedagogical skills to facilitate the parents and improve learning process of young children. Researcher concluded that public school teachers were found to some extent better from knowledge and opinion as compared to private school teachers in Bannu Division, KP, Pakistan.

The researcher further concluded that the most of the statements in table 2 and table 3 of the results were found to fall in USUALLY range according to the scale used for Teachers' Competencies Inventory (TCI) which revealed that the teachers usually asked meaningful questions and handling children's responses. They usually possessed counselling skills to work with parents and children regarding their learning, and they had usually sufficient communication and presentation skills to effectively engage with children. It was decided that teachers were usually aware of conflict management skills amid children & colleagues

and handle behavioural issues and they usually facilitated students with their Pedagogical skills. Teachers were usually found interested in sports activities, organizing learning funds including worksheets, charts, and posters. Teachers observed their student progress record and various learning activities. Researcher concluded that teachers knew learning theories and different methods of teaching.

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