

Facilitators and Impeders of School Readiness Attainment

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Abstract:

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a vital role in preparing children for successful entry into formal schooling. Research in neuroscience emphasizes that stimulating early learning environments promote children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, thereby enhancing school readiness. This study assessed the effectiveness of ECE programmes in promoting school readiness among first-grade children in Bengaluru North District. A School Readiness Assessment Tool was developed based on key developmental domains and indicators. The study included 587 children from 41 feeder schools (13 government, 12 aided, and 16 private), all of whom had completed three years of preschool education. Data on pedagogical practices were collected through teacher questionnaires and interactions. The findings indicated that children from private schools demonstrated higher levels of school readiness than their counterparts in government and aided schools. Better infrastructure, availability of learning materials, effective pedagogical practices, and active parental participation were positively associated with school readiness. These factors emerged as key facilitators in the attainment of school readiness, highlighting the need to strengthen ECE quality across all school types.

Keywords: School Readiness, Early Childhood Education, Pedagogical Practices, Parental Participation

Introduction

For every individual, learning begins at birth. It is very important for any nation to focus upon early years of learning as it lays foundation for next higher levels of learning. Hence, early years of learning has drawn attention worldwide today. In

India, each community offers its own form of early care and learning experiences to children. In recent times we find structural change in the family pattern and many children are receiving early education and care outside the home

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in child care centers, preschool programs, and other community-based early learning settings.

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

Early Childhood Education

The duration from birth to 6 years of a child's life is considered as the most critical years for lifelong development since the pace of development in these years is extremely rapid. Research in the field of neuroscience, has proved that brain development reaches the optimum level during this period. Quality of the education provided at this level stimulates the brain development of the children. This stage in life is also important as a

foundation for the inculcation of social values and personal habits, which are known to last a lifetime. The strong foundation laid for the children will enable them to grow as productive individuals.

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

School Readiness

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

Children enter into class I with diverse background due to different Early Childhood Programs in our country. Some may do not have this preschool exposure

and experience. As a result, each child possesses varied level of School Readiness. Study assessed the School Readiness of children in Early Childhood Education programs and analyzed the facilitating factors of school readiness in the Early Childhood Education programs.

Operational definitions

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

Research Gap

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

In India, very few studies are done on Early Childhood Education and no study

is done to assess the early childhood education programs in the perspective of school readiness. Hence, this line of thought prompted the researcher to take up the same for research.

Statement of the Problem

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

The children who complete their preschool education, either in ICDS or in private setting, do not possess the required abilities and competencies. This has the negative impact on school readiness of the children. The concept of School Readiness is considered as a major aim of early years of education because of its significance in future success of the children. There are various factors facilitating school readiness like curriculum, suitable learning experiences, infrastructure facilities of Early Childhood Education Programs, pedagogical processes of teachers and parental involvement.

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

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To study the attainment of School Readiness of children of ECE feeder schools
2. To identify facilitators and impeters in the attainment of School Readiness of ECE programs.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey method was used in the present study. Survey was conducted

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

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

Sample size

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

Data Collection and Tools for Analysis**Tools used for the study*****School Readiness Indicators Checklist***

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

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

School Readiness Assessment Tool

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

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

Part A – consisted of items that the child performed independently

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

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

ECE Materials and Infrastructure Checklist

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

ECE Process data capture format

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

teachers through a set of questions developed by the investigator.

Data Collection

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

Analysis and Interpretation

Attainment of abilities in various domains of development was assessed through self-constructed School Readiness Assessment Tool. Items of this tool were constructed using the list of Indicators developed by the researcher. The tool was administered for class 1 children of Government, Aided and Private schools after completion of three years of preschool education. Performance of

children in different domains of development is given below:

Table 1: Attainment of abilities by children in different domains of development

Sl No	Domain	Max Score	Mean Score	%
1	Physical and Motor	8	7.77	97.12
2	Personal	8	7.77	97.12
3	Social and emotional	12	11.66	97.16
4	Language	32	27.80	86.87
5	Numeracy	12	10.55	87.9
6	Cognitive	29	28.03	96.6
7	Creative	09	8.24	91.5

Above table reveal that children considered for this study showed highest abilities for physical, personal, social domains and the abilities were marked by the teachers. They have shown high performance in cognitive domain also. Performance of children in language, numeracy and creative domains was comparatively low.

Table 2: Overall performance of children on School Readiness Assessment Tool

Sl No	Schools	Mean Scores (out of 110)
1	Government	99.24
2	Government Aided	99.35
2	Private	105.78

Above table shows that the mean scores gained by children on School Readiness Assessment Tool differed in

different management schools. Overall performance of Private School children was high compared to Government and Aided school children. There are various factors affecting the School Readiness of the children other than the quality of Early Childhood Education program. Studies have shown that School Readiness is also associated with the factors such as-

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

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

Table 3: Facilitators / Impeders of School Readiness in Government schools

Sl No	Factors	Facilitators	Impeders
1	Materials and Infrastructure Facilities	30% (4 out of 13) centres had sufficient play materials and needed infrastructure	In 70% (9 out of 13) centres- Lack of suitable learning and play materials and infrastructure in most of the centers.
2	Pedagogical Practices of Teachers	30% (4 out of 13) centers had better teaching and teachers involved children with various planned activities	70% (9 out of 13) centers, Lacked innovative methods by the teachers. Teachers lacked awareness about child development
3	Parent Participation		In all the centres, there was a lack of parental support to children; parents' participation in school activities was very minimal.

Table 4: Facilitators / Impeders of School Readiness in Government Aided Schools

Sl No	Factors	Facilitators	Impeders
1	Materials and Infrastructure Facilities	34% (4 out of 12) schools had better facilities for the children	Lack of indoor outdoor play area, proper seating arrangement, drinking water and toilet facilities in 66% (8 out of 12) of the schools
2	Pedagogical Practices of Teachers	16% (2 out of 12) schools had activity based teaching	Much focus laid on writing

3	Parental Participation	16% (2 out of 12) schools, parents visited the school to know about their child and discuss	Schools do not involve parents in the activities of the children
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Table 5: Facilitators / Impeders of School Readiness in Private Schools

Sl No	Factors	Facilitators	Impeders
1	Materials and Infrastructure Facilities	75% of the private programs (12 out of 16) Use of variety of materials like charts, flashcards, paper craft, models etc. by the teachers, display of these materials, wall hangings, painting of attractive picture, print rich environment. Schools have good infrastructure. Well ventilated rooms, seating arrangement, activity area, indoor outdoor play area, sand play.	25% of the private programs (4 out of 16) had very minimal teaching materials. Infrastructure facility was also poor. No outdoor play area was seen
2	Pedagogical Practices of Teachers	In 75% of the private schools (12 out of 16)- Teachers use multisensory, play way method and activity and innovative methods, ICT usage to engage children. They are aware of domains of development and equal importance is given while planning the activities for the children. Individual care and attention for the children	In 25% of the private programs (4 out of 16), teachers used blackboard. Writing was emphasized more
3	Parental Participation	In 81% (13 out of 16) schools parents visit the school during Parent Teacher Meetings to discuss the progress of their wards. They ask their children about what has happened in the school and take special	In 18 % (3 out of 16) schools, parent participation in school activities was very low

		interest in their learning. During the cultural events and celebrations, parents get involved by helping their children to prepare for such events.	
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Discussion

Data analysis showed that Private schools had better Materials and Infrastructure Facilities, Pedagogical Practices of Teachers and Parent Participation that facilitated better attainment of abilities among children.

Private schools had better Materials and Infrastructure Facilities, Pedagogical Practices of Teachers. This result is in concurrence with the studies of Rohaty Mohd majzub and Aminah Abdul Rashid (2012) ; Bhise C.D and Sonawat R (2016); Reeba George (2015); Savita Kaushal, 2021. School Readiness is largely associated with school factors such as materials and infrastructure (Barrett et al,2019) pedagogical practices and overall experiences children gain in the schools. Aided and government schools lag behind in terms of infrastructure (Trisha Singh, 2022) Study conducted by Konica Sehgal (2022) states that quality of the teacher instruction play an important role in student outcome and highest achievement is seen in Private compared to government and aided schools

Parent Participation in Private schools acts as facilitator for better School Readiness. This result is in concurrence with the studies of Lau. E, Li. H, Rao. N (2011), Mungai, David N.(2015) Gullo,

Dominic F.; Miller, Michel (2018). Quality parental care and support for children, stimulating environment at home also contribute for better involvement in learning. Study conducted by Rashmitha and Jasmin (2018) reveals that Private schools involve parents better by having proper communication.

Findings, Suggestions, Future Research Direction and Conclusion

To study the attainment of School Readiness of children of ECE feeder schools

- Attainment of abilities of physical, personal, social and cognitive domains was high among all the children from government, aided and private schools
- Performance of all the children in language, numeracy and creative domains was comparatively low

To identify facilitators and impeters in the attainment of School Readiness of Early Childhood Education programs

- Better materials and infrastructure facilities, activity based, innovative pedagogical practices of teachers and active parental involvement in the school activities facilitated better School Readiness among private school children.

- Poor materials and infrastructure, lack of activity based teaching and minimal parental participation impeded School Readiness among government and aided school children

Limitations of the Study

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

Suggestions for Future Research

1. A study can be taken up to assess School Readiness of children having preschool exposure for less than 3 years
2. A longitudinal study can be taken up to show school success of children in relation to the extent of readiness during school entry
3. A study can be taken up to examine the educational aspects of ICDS centers
4. A study can focus on teacher related factors contributing for School Readiness.

5. A study can be conducted on parent involvement and children school readiness, to understand the home related factors contributing for School Readiness among children

Conclusion

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

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