

## Challenges Primary School Teachers Face in Implementation of Early Childhood Education: Teachers' Perception

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### Abstract

Early Childhood Education (ECE) comprises of essential programs and activities that are critical to holistic development, academic success and future achievements of children. The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing early childhood education in primary schools. The descriptive research design was used. All the primary schools located in Lahore district was the population of the study. A sample of two hundred ECE teachers was selected randomly from the population. The sample consisted of one hundred male and female teachers from rural and urban primary schools. There was a questionnaire developed for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that most of the teachers were not completely aware of the early learning development standards. Materials related to ECE classrooms were not enough for the students. Moreover, primary school teachers need more training and facilities for the implementation of ECE in their schools. There was a significant difference between the perception of the male and female and rural and urban teachers. In light of the findings, researchers recommended that teachers' training should be arranged for awareness of early learning development standards and pedagogical skills.

**Keywords:** challenges, primary school teachers, early childhood education.

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## **Introduction**

Early childhood education is imperative for the holistic development of a child. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a foundation on which Education for All (EFA) and essential education has to be provided to the early learners (Nyamwange, 2012). It is necessary to provide early childhood education to young kids before entering primary education (Obiweluozor, 2015). ECE is also significant for young children as the researches show that the age of five develops ninety per cent of the brain of a child. This time is the basis of the achievements and development of a child as a whole throughout their life (Ghazi, Ajmal, Saeed, 2018). According to Early Childhood Education Policy of 2017, early childhood education has gained importance in both Pakistan and Punjab's educational reforms agenda. The National Education Policy of 2009 has prioritized the countrywide ECE for 3-5-year-old children. After the 18th amendment, the government of Punjab has taken the initiative of ECE through Punjab Education Sector Plan of 2013-2017. Early years teachers play a vital role in the implementation of early childhood education. It is their core job to implement early childhood education in their schools successfully (Malik et al., 2014). The early year teachers try to make an understanding of how young children learn and create influence on pre-school educational programs (Syeda, 2016). Kern, Kruse, and Roehring (2007) also stated that a teachers' observation about teaching and learning are emphatically impacting the implementation of early year teachers. The teachers are protectors of the system of early childhood education, which is to be executed.

## **Literature Review**

### **Early Childhood Education**

The term, early childhood education refers to the education of a child's age from birth to eight years old (Miles & Browne, 2004). Grotewell and Burton (2008) explained that this range of age is between zero and eight years old. Early childhood education amalgamates through primary school until grade three (Miles & Browne, 2004). It can be said that early childhood education is an extraordinary part of education that is offered early learners up to grade three (Mena, 2008).

Life's early years are generally recognized as the most significant period during which youngsters "experience intellectual, language, perceptual, socio-passionate and cognitive development" which are the requirements for accomplishments and social working in the future. Correspondingly, the motivation behind the early years should be taken

with extraordinary care and point by point considerations (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016).

Early childhood education is a unique part of childhood education, presenting with youngsters from the earliest stages. Early childhood education revealed youngsters (birth to eight) into the world. Early childhood education has gained significant importance in recent twenty years over the world. This circumstance is in correlation with the research results dependent on high heavy impacts of early instruction to later life (Mena, 2008).

### **The Importance of Early Childhood Education**

Early childhood education in recent two decades has considered various fields, for example, formative brain science, social brain research; youth contemplates social humanities, history, and theory (Johnson, 2005). As indicated by Clough, Nutbrown, and Selbie (2008), researches are wholly focused on various part of youngsters' life since small kids are brought into the world with the ability to comprehend their general surroundings provided that the essential condition and qualified instructors are available to them.

Early childhood education is productive for those children who come from a low background of socio-economics (Botta, 2009). Botta (2009) further distinguished that the advantage of kids who are served with early education, originating from low-salary families, their cognitive development and school status are profoundly impacted. Early childhood education, from the recent times, has taken consideration of different fields (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005) for example, "developmental psychology, cultural psychology, childhood studies, cultural anthropology, history and philosophy". The researches demonstrated that kids are brought into the world with the ability to comprehend (Nutbrown, 2006).

### **Early Childhood Curriculum**

The Early childhood education curriculum gives us a chance to perceive how youngsters and their method for learning are seen by the past ages considering "religious, ethnic, political and economic" forces (Jackman, 2005). Pestalozzi considers that kids learn through their senses and that they can accomplish their regular potential. Teachers teach the perception to observe the "whole person", for their development (Clough, Nutbrown & Selbie, 2008). Even today, the same idea works to develop young students' behaviour and beliefs (Morgan, 2006).

Frobel, the father of kindergarten, introduced a planned curriculum for early learners (Gordon & Browne, 2004). Nowadays, toys are being used to teach early years students. The idea of learning through play is an excellent contribution of Frobel (Morrison, 2008). It might be

perceived that early childhood education has a great historical background (Gordon & Browne, 2004) and has established a curriculum to make early learners learn indeed. One who manages perspective on instructing and supporting youngsters as students (Catron & Allen, 2003).

### **Early Childhood Curriculum Implementation**

According to Connelly and Clandin (1988), as cited in Ntumi (2016), Early Childhood Curriculum implementation involves placement into training. The procedure includes helping the student to get experience. Educational curriculum implementation cannot occur without the student. The student is the focal figure in the educational implementation process. Implementation happens as the student procures the arranged or expected encounters, information, aptitudes, thoughts, and mentalities that are planned for empowering a similar student to work successfully in society. Similarly, a curriculum cannot be implemented without the teacher. The teacher is in the driving seat of implementation of the curriculum.

### **Facilities**

For early childhood education, the schools need to accomplish quality education, accessibility of educational facilities and a great foundation. These facilities have been observed primarily for the environment of school learning (Boaten, 2015). Physical facilities are the most important of all, for the implementation of early childhood education.

Chepsiror, Tonui and Too (2014) has referred Standa (1980) that more consideration is required for the arrangement of adequate facilities, assets and open doors for teachers to share thoughts on the utilization of accessible, available and suitable assets in the arrangement of educational issues. Facilities of Schools comprises of a wide range of list, i.e. “equipment, classroom facilities, furniture, toilet, ICT, library and laboratory materials and others”. It aids towards a vital job to efficiently execute an educating and learning development (Hailu & Biyabeyen, 2014). Buckley, Schneider, and Shang (2004) described that school facilities empower the educator to achieve his/her assignment too and help the students to learn and develop (Chepkonga, 2017).

Facilities of schools required appropriate consideration as they provide an extraordinary incentive towards both the teachers and learners’ spirit, inspiration and perform in improving education, especially for young students. Khan and Iqbal (2012) investigated that the school's physical facilities encourage showing the learning process in early childhood education. Researchers have contended that the nature of school physical facilities indirectly affect the learning in early childhood education. Furniture and equipment ought to be proper for the size and age of the kids.

**Early Learning Standards**

According to Illinois state board of education (2013), the essential objective of the Early Learning Standards (ELS) is to give a far-reaching asset of sensible desires for the advancement of kids in the preschool years (ages 3 to 5) for all educators. The main focus of these standards is the holistic development of the child. The terms 'Early Learning Standards' is utilized to name the different parts of the guidelines and to depict the manners in which that preschool kids show what they know and can do identified with clear benchmarks in every space. Significantly, instructors utilizing the early learning standards become acquainted with this phrasing so they can comprehend the gauges and use them in manners that are best for kids

The Government of the Punjab has taken initiative of early childhood education in the province. She has established more than fifteen thousand rooms for early childhood education by training head teachers, teachers, caregivers and school councils. Along training government also claims for child friendly environment by providing resource material and wall paintings. The objective of the study was to investigate the problems faced by the teachers in implementing early childhood education in public primary schools. Another purpose was to explore the problems faced by the teachers in implementing early childhood education in public primary schools by gender and locale. The researchers also want to identify the factors that influence the implementation of early childhood education and to explore the prevailing facilities in the ECE classroom.

The study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the problems faced by the teachers in implementing early childhood education in public primary schools of Punjab?
2. What are the problems of ECE for male and female teachers in implementing early childhood education in rural and urban primary schools?
3. What are the factors that influence the implementation of early childhood education?
4. What are the prevailing facilities in the ECE classroom?

**Methodology**

The descriptive research design was used to investigate the factors that influence the implementation of early childhood education in primary schools of Punjab. The descriptive survey design was suitable because the data was to be collected from ECE teachers. All ECE teachers teaching in public primary schools were the population of the study. The study was delimited to the Lahore district only. Random sampling technique was

used to take appropriate sample. Random sampling eliminates the biasness by giving equal chance to all population. Thus two hundred ECE teachers were selected randomly from the population. The sample was consisted of hundred male (50 urban & 50 rural) and hundred female teachers (50 urban & 50 rural) and was randomly selected from rural and urban schools of Lahore district accordingly. A self administered questionnaire was developed by the researchers to gather data after consideration of experts. This questionnaire was on 5 points Likert scale; SA, A, U, SD, D (strongly agree, agree, undecided, strongly disagree, disagree). The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert opinions. A pilot study was also conducted on a small scale other than sample. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. Overall reliability was .891.

The following table shows the reliability of subscales:

Table 1

*Reliability of Subscales*

Facilities	Learning Material	Training	Early Learning Standards	Curriculum	Overall
.864	.730	.590	.660	.876	.891

The researchers personally visited the sampled school. Items of the questionnaire were explained to the respondent clearly, and data was collected. Data were analyzed through SPSS. Percentage and frequencies were measured regarding personal information of ECE teachers. Independent sample t-test was applied to find out the difference between male, female, rural and urban teachers' responses. Mean and the standard deviation were also calculated.

**Results**

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Teachers*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	100	50
Female	100	50
<b>Academic Qualification</b>		
Metric	12	6
FA/FSc	69	35
BA/BSc	95	48
MA/MSc	24	12
<b>Professional Qualification</b>		
PTC	12	6
CT	17	9
B.Ed	118	59
M.Ed	27	14
<b>Teaching Experience</b>		
1-5	107	54
6-10	44	22
>10	49	25
<b>Number of Students</b>		
15-25	68	34
>25	132	66

The results of the conducted study by researchers of 100 males and 100 females in qualification of BA/ BSc remained the highest f- 95 (48%) and the lowest Metric f-12 (6%), their professional qualification B. Ed stayed highest f- 118 (59%) and the lowest PTC f- 12 (6%), their teaching experience at 1-5 years was maximum f-107 (54%) and minimum f-44 (22%), and their number of students >25 was maximum- 132 (66%) and 15-25 was minimum f- 68 (34%).

Table 3

*Mean and SD of Challenges*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>CI</b>
Facilities	200	1.90	4.50	2.78	0.73	2.68	2.88
Learning Material	200	2.00	5.00	3.32	0.70	3.22	3.41
Training	200	1.00	4.33	3.01	0.90	2.89	3.14
Early Learning Standard	200	2.14	4.29	2.78	0.62	2.70	2.87
Curriculum	200	2.00	5.00	3.53	0.82	3.41	3.64

The results of the study shows that the facilities (mean=2.78, SD= 0.73 and CI= 2.88) in public ECE school are below average and not available adequately, the learning materials (mean=3.32, SD= 0.70 and CI= 3.41) are presented at ECE schools on the average level, and the teachers training programs regarding implementation at public ECE schools (mean=3.01, SD= 0.90 and CI= 3.14) are conducted regularly and updated, the early learning standards (mean=2.78, SD= 0.62 and CI= 2.87) are not fully informed to teachers and used in Public ECE schools, and the curriculum (mean=3.53, SD= 0.82 and CI= 3.64) is used appropriately according to the needs of students by the teachers.

Table 4

*The difference of challenges in male and female teachers' responses*

	Male		Female		Independent samples t-test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Facilities	2.66	.76	2.89	.67	-2.34	198	0.20
Learning Material	3.19	.72	3.44	.64	-2.55	198	.011
Training	3.05	.80	2.97	.98	.682	198	.496
Early Learning Standard	2.65	.59	2.91	.62	-2.99	198	.003
Curriculum	3.31	.84	3.74	.73	-3.80	198	.000

The table portrays the comparison between male and female teachers in the challenges of ECE implementation. It shows that there was a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between male and female teachers on learning materials, early learning standards, and regarding curriculum. The mean values of female teachers on the indicators of leaning material ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=.64$ ), early learning standards ( $M=2.91$ ,  $SD=.62$ ) and curriculum ( $M=3.74$ ,  $SD=.73$ ) of these are better than the mean values of male teachers on these challenges it reveals the female teachers are better in these indicators.



Table 5  
*The difference of challenges in rural and urban teachers' responses*

	Rural		Urban		Independent samples t-test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Facilities	2.59	.63	2.95	.77	-3.59	198	.000
Learning Material	3.18	.67	3.44	.69	-2.72	198	.007
Training	3.09	.84	2.93	.94	1.21	198	.224
Early Learning Standard	2.69	.56	2.86	.65	-2.01	198	.046
Curriculum	3.40	.85	3.64	.77	-2.12	198	.035

The table portrays the comparison between rural and urban teachers in the challenges of ECE implementation. It shows that there was a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between rural and urban teachers on facilities, early learning standards, and curriculum. The mean values of urban teachers on the indicators of facilities ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=.77$ ), early learning standards ( $M=2.86$ ,  $SD=.65$ ) and curriculum ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=.77$ ) of these are better than the mean values of rural teachers on these challenges it reveals the female teachers are better in these indicators.

### Findings

The findings of the study are based on data analysis. Results of the study revealed that the facilities (mean=2.78,  $SD= 0.73$  and  $CI= 2.88$ ) in public ECE school are below average and not available properly. Study results depict that the learning materials (mean=3.32,  $SD= 0.70$  and  $CI= 3.41$ ) are presented at ECE schools on the average level. The study shows that teachers training programs regarding implementation at public ECE schools (mean=3.01,  $SD= 0.90$  and  $CI= 3.14$ ) are conducted regularly and updated. The early learning standards (mean=2.78,  $SD= 0.62$  and  $CI= 2.87$ ) are not fully informed to teachers and used in Public ECE schools. The curriculum (mean=3.53,  $SD= 0.82$  and  $CI= 3.64$ ) is used appropriately according to the needs of students by the teachers. Female teachers are better in learning materials, early learning standards, and curriculum. Similarly, a significant difference is found in these challenges. The mean values of the female teachers on the challenges of leaning material ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=.64$ ), early learning standards ( $M=2.91$ ,  $SD=.62$ ) and curriculum ( $M=3.74$ ,  $SD=.73$ ) are better than the mean values of the male teachers on these challenges. There are significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between rural and urban teachers on facilities, early learning standards, and regarding curriculum. The mean values of urban teachers on the challenge of facilities ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=.77$ ), early learning standards

( $M=2.86$ ,  $SD=.65$ ) and curriculum ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=.77$ ) of these are better than the mean values of rural teachers on these challenges. It reveals the female teachers are better in these indicators. The results of the study show that the comparison between class size 15-25 students and  $> 25$  students in ECE classrooms. It shows that there was a significant difference ( $p<0.05$ ) between class size 15-25 students and  $> 25$  on facilities, learning materials, early learning standards, and regarding curriculum. The mean values of  $>25$  class size on the challenges of facilities ( $M=3.04$ ,  $SD=.68$ ), learning material ( $M=3.54$ ,  $SD=.61$ ), early learning standards ( $M=2.94$ ,  $SD=.63$ ) and curriculum ( $M=3.76$ ,  $SD=.77$ ) of these are better than the mean values of 15-25 class size on these challenges. It reveals that the  $> 25$  class size is better in these challenges.

### **Conclusions and Discussion**

Considering findings of the study, it is concluded that there were inadequate ECE facilities in public schools. In some schools, there was a lack of learning materials. Most of the teachers were not fully aware of early childhood learning standards. Female teachers play a better role in the implementation of ECE than male teachers. Like this, urban schools were performing better in the implementation of ECE in public schools. The number of students in the class showed that the provision of these resources affects to meet these challenges.

The findings of the study indicated that there was a lack of facilities in primary schools of Lahore district. Facilities are a big challenge in ECE there is need to meet this challenge. Most of the studies support our research finding like Abagi (2009), according to his findings, facilities are essential for the implementation of quality early childhood education. The study of Kombo and Gogo (2012) also favored our research findings that proper facilities affect implementation ECE in schools. They further suggested that the availability of adequate facilities play a decisive role to face the ECE challenges. Another research study (Hailu and Biyabeyen 2014) also positively support the research finding of our study that facilities are beneficial to teachers for the implementation of early childhood education. The current study's findings illustrate that curriculum of ECE is implemented satisfactorily in public primary schools. So the results of Boke (2014) and Ngode (2014) researches were in support of this study. They suggested that proper implementation of the curriculum made a smooth system of education and help for the achievement of objectives. The research finding about learning material's significance role in the implantation of ECE gains support from the study of Abagi (2009). He claimed that learning material plays a significant role

in the implementation of ECE. Learning material should be provided in all rural and urban schools without discrimination of locale. Sitati et al. (2016) and Jibril (2007) researches also carry these research findings forward that availability of learning material made more accessible for teachers to compete for ECE targets regarding classrooms. Present research study findings show that training of teachers regarding the implementation of ECE was conducted regularly. The finding of Goble and Horm (2010) are compatible with presenting research findings, they revealed in their study that trainings of teacher were conducted at regular bases for the betterment of teaching methodology and curriculum implementation for ECE teachers. they further concluded that teacher training has a useful source for teachers. They are aware of the latest knowledge and trends in teaching through training. The researchers also found other studies (Olaleye & Omotayo, 2009; Viatonu, 2011) about the training given to ECE teachers. Present research study findings revealed that teachers have not a complete understanding of early learning standards. So training should be conducted in this regard. Gundogan (2002) found in his study that if training for the awareness of early learning standards were not conducted the ECE curriculum could not be implemented in the right way.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results, the following recommendations were made:

- Facilities plays vital role in the proper implementation of ECE curriculum and helpful for competing the challenges as well therefore researchers recommended that more facilities should be provided in the schools where ECE class is established.
- Learning material supports for provision of quality early childhood education. Learning material should be available in all rural and urban primary schools.
- If teachers have complete awareness about early learning standards than they will try to implement those in ECE classrooms. It is imperative to aware the teachers about the early learning development standards
- Training and workshops should be conducted regularly for capacity building of teachers regarding early learning development standards.
- This research was conducted on a small scale. Further research may conduct on a large scale.

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**Citation of this Article:**

Shakeel, N., & Aslam, A. (2019). Challenges primary school teachers face in the implementation of early childhood education: Teachers perception. *Journal of Early Childhood Care and Education*, 3, 13-26.