

The Impact of Pre-school Education on the Academic Achievements of Primary School Students

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Abstract

The research study showed the effects of pre-school education experience on the academic performance of primary school children in District Peshawar, the capital city of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The research was survey type and descriptive in nature. The population for this study comprised all primary school pupils of semi-government and private schools of District Peshawar. Hundred pupils from three semi-government and two private schools of district Peshawar were selected on the basis of purposive sampling technique. Scores were obtained from the annual results of top four students of class one to five. A questionnaire was also designed for teachers of the schools to give information about the children with preschool experience and without such an experience. After the collection and analysis of data, it was indicated that pupils with pre-school education significantly outperformed their counterparts without such experience in all the five schools surveyed by the study. The paper concluded by observing that pre-school education equip children with pre-requisite skills which make learning easier and faster for children so exposed. They are very much responsible and take active part in curricular and co-curricular activities. The research concludes that there is great need of opening these institutions by the government in different areas of Peshawar because most of them are either private or semi government.

Keywords: Pre-school education, Academic achievement, Pre-school experience, Early childhood program.

Introduction

Education which is given in group setting to the age of round about three up to five years old children is called pre-school education. Pre-school education is designed to investigate and assist the mental, physical,

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emotional, linguistic, and also social upbringing. Different psychologists, educationists and policy makers have given different names to this type of education namely nursery school education, kindergarten education and pre-primary education etc.¹ Pre-school education is also referred to any systematic program in which young children participate before they do enter in primary schools that is designed to promote children's social-emotional, academic, linguistic, and literacy skills, and health and above all well being.²

The first five years of life are highly significant. What children learn and feel during this time, particularly about themselves, will be foundational to the rest of their life. At this stage a child develops good relationship with the people around him.³

Pre-school education is the first step in child's educational journey. Early childhood experts have the opinion that attending high quality preschool program helps to promote children's social and emotional development and prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. Studies have shown that children who attended quality early education programs are more likely to have better test scores and grades.⁴

A great number of educators and researchers are of the view that early childhood education is highly beneficial for the children's cognitive and educational development and well being of young children in terms of their individual needs and characteristics. H.F. Page stated that during the normal pre-school year, the child undergoes a distinct, although very gradual change. He seems to leave his boyhood completely behind, and if he is developing along suitable lines, he emerges as a natural, likeable child whom it is a real joy to meet.⁵ Gabriel is of the view that "by three children have turned the corner away from boyhood and are 'on the straight' with the Kindergarten and the infant school ahead of them. Before the year is out they begin to talk about going to school and to look forward to it. Socially while children are happy to have two or three others around, each child is generally content to carry on with his individual activity."⁶ "Children learn many essential facts about the universe, people and objects simply by playing. Play may be seen, therefore as one of the miracles of childhood by means of which children discover things essential to their well being and thoroughly enjoy the process of discovery. Play provides children with a variety of essential experiences: sensory, exploratory, emotional, and social experiences as well as experiences of mastery or achievement"⁷.

Joanne Hendrick holds that "for more than a decade, research on approaches to early childhood education has sought to investigate the effectiveness of various kind of programs in changing the behavior and enhancing the development of young children. All good pre-school

programs are built on the foundations of sound human relationships. Warmth and empathic understanding have been shown to be effective means of influencing young children's positive adjustment to nursery school, and it is apparent that genuine caring about the children and about other adults in the program is fundamental to success".⁸

At this stage of development, children learn and absorb information very rapidly, and do take keen interest in every type of new discovery. It is a well known fact that the most important years of learning are started at birth. At this stage, the brain of a child develops such imprints which will last for the rest of his life. The environment also has a great influence on the rapid development on the ideas grasping power and emotional skills of the young children. The extensive studies which have been carried out on the high quality pre-schools education have long term fruitful effects on a child and especially for those who are weak in studies.

Pre-school share with parents the responsibility for promoting sound growth in a period when growth is rapid and important. Children come to pre-school endowed with inherent potentials. These potentials serve children in their progress from sensory experience to perceptual experience and to the acquisition of concepts. The protected environment of nursery schools allows children to orient themselves gradually to the realities of their world, by encouraging their expression of fantasy through play. A well planned environment can direct children into acceptable behavior, emotional equilibrium, integrated development and progressive learning. Gardner summarized that children between 3 and 6 need a school experience that contributes to all aspects of their total development in effective programs for young children, whether they be called day care, laboratory-nursery schools, private or cooperative nurseries, there are provisions in the form of physical plant, materials and equipment, program and, especially, qualified personnel, which contribute to that total development.⁹

Methodology

The research design for this study was descriptive survey type, designed to look into the effect of pre-school education on the academic performance of primary school pupils.

The population for this study comprised all primary school pupils of semi-government and private schools of District Peshawar. The sample study comprised of 100 pupils drawn from three semi-government and two private schools of District Peshawar, Pakistan. The selection was based on purposive sampling technique. The data for this study were mainly generated from school result records. The annual results of top

four students from class one to fifth were analyzed. A survey questionnaire was used to collect information from teachers regarding the performance of children having pre-school experience. The data obtained was tabulated and analyzed in order to get meaningful and significant results on the problem under study. Percentage was calculated and interpretation of the tables was made.

Result and Discussion

The data collected from schools records about the students' performance was arranged and organized in the tables below:

Table No. 1: Children with pre-school education
(Academic achievement from class 1 to 5)

| Position in Class | Class One | Class Two | Class Three | Class Four | Class Five | Total | |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|--------|------|
| | | | | | | No | %age |
| 1 st | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 20/25 | 80% |
| 2 nd | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 18/25 | 72% |
| 3 rd | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 15/25 | 60% |
| 4 th | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 18/25 | 72% |
| Total | 14 | 15 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 71/100 | 71% |

Table 1 indicated that eighty percent of the students from class one to five of the five schools were high achievers with preschool education. Seventy two percent of the students got second position, sixty percent of the students got third position while seventy two percent of the students got fourth position. Overall Seventy one percent of the students were high achievers with preschool education.

Table No. 2: Children without pre-school education
(Academic achievement from class 1 to 5)

| Position in Class | Class One | Class Two | Class Three | Class Four | Class Five | Total | |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|-------|------|
| | | | | | | No | %age |
| 1 st | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5/25 | 20% |
| 2 nd | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7/25 | 28% |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------|-----|
| 3 rd | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 10/25 | 40% |
| 4 th | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7/25 | 28% |
| Total | 6 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 28/100 | 29% |

Table No. 2 Indicated that twenty percent of the students from class one to five of the five schools under study got first position with no preschool experience. Twenty eight percent of the students got second position; forty percent got third position twenty eight percent got fourth position without any preschool education. Overall twenty nine percent of students without pre-school education attained highest score.

After data analysis it was revealed that pre-school learning has great impact on the academic achievement of students.

- Data was also collected from teachers through questionnaire about the children having preschool experience. Its analysis revealed that
- Eighty four percent of the students complete the homework regularly.
- Seventy six percent of the students take active part in co-curricular activities.
- Eighty percent of the students ask more questions during the teaching learning process.
- Hundred percent of the students who attended pre-school understand the learning material quickly and easily.
- Hundred percent teachers are of the opinion that pre-school has a positive impact on the later education of the child.
- Hundred percent teachers are of the view that pre-school should be established in the public sector.
- Hundred percent of the teachers are of the view that the existing pre-schools in the private sector are not affordable for parents belonging to low socio-economic status in the society.

The research work has drawn a line of demarcation between those students who have got pre-school education and those who have not.

This study has shown that there is a significant difference in the academic performance between pupils with pre-school education and those without. This is not surprising as several studies have shown that early childhood education has significant impact on the academic performance of students.¹⁰ Another positive and important thing is that early childhood education has a huge and a greater impact on the students' future achievements and excellent performance in the major and fundamental subjects namely English, Mathematics and Urdu.

The research carried out in this respect has successfully made it clear that there is a marked difference in class performance among those pupils who have got pre-school education and those who have remained deprived. This result provides us the confirmation of the Anderson¹¹ statement who has commended that when children are exposed to early education, they will develop superior communication skills necessary physical ability, social unity needed in adult life and an increased cognitive and effective educational balance. Finally, the study observed that there is a significant difference between pupils who had pre-school education and those without in motor skills. The result indicated that the pupils with pre-primary education lead an individual in forming a well balanced personality for leading meaningful life.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that pupils who had pre-school education perform better in academics than pupils who did not attend pre-school education.

Most of the students of University Model School (U.M.S), Agricultural University Public School (A.U.P.S), Working Folks Grammar School (W.F.G.S), Qurtaba Public School and Muslim Hands School of Excellence Peshawar who attended pre-school showed good academic results. Children who have gone through the experience take more interest in their studies. They were more responsible and complete the given assignments in time. Most of the students understand the learning material quickly and easily. The students attended pre-school are confident and ask more questions during teaching learning process. Majority of the children participate actively in classroom activities.

Children who have the experience do not feel shy, they are confident and have a number of playmates and so they do not hesitate participating in games or other co-curricular activities. They are also better in their adjustment with the teacher. This is due to the fact that teachers at pre-schools are affectionate and sympathetic and children have had pleasant experiences with them.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made from the findings and conclusion of the study:

- The process of formal education and schooling should therefore begin well before the fifth year in a child's life.
- Pre-school has enormous positive impact on the future social and educational life of a child that's why it receives so much importance in developed countries, unfortunately, in Pakistan

pre-schools are not very common, except in the private sector in some of the large cities however, in the public sector they are practically non-existent. Due to the high cost, pre-schools in the private sector are beyond the reach of most middle income families. As a result, the early years of the vast majority of children from financially poor backgrounds are lost and wasted.

- We are spending a very high amount of funds on improving our higher education. It is suggested that policy makers give top priority to pre-school education and thus pay due attention to providing a strong foundation to the basic building block of our education sector.
- Pre-school education should be encouraged by the government by providing pre-school educational facilities (classrooms, instructional materials, and equipments) needed for the success of the program.
- There should be proper enlightenment campaign on the importance of pre-school education.
- Parents should be involved in their children's early education experience by providing the necessary materials.
- It should also have minimum fees that children coming from lower class of the society can also benefit from learning in pre-schools.
- Teachers in preschool programs should receive intensive supervision and coaching, and they should be involved in a continuous improvement process for teaching and learning.
- The researcher recommends further researches of pre-school effects on child development as a whole be conducted.
- A more comprehensive analysis and a large sample should be used in continuation of the study.

Notes & References

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