



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eCommons@AKU

Institute for Educational Development, Karachi

Institute for Educational Development

November 2012

“Exploring the current practices and perceptions of ECD teachers for the implementation of high scope curricular teaching approach.”

Sultana Qamar

Aga Khan University, Human Development Programme

Arisha Qayyum

Aga Khan University, Human Development Programme

Seema Laasi

Aga Khan University, Human Development Programme

Dilshad Ashraf

Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, Karachi

Follow this and additional works at: http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan_ied_pdck

Recommended Citation

Qamar, S., Qayyum, A., Laasi, S., Ashraf, D. (2012). “Exploring the current practices and perceptions of ECD teachers for the implementation of high scope curricular teaching approach.” *In Search of Relevance and Sustainability of Educational Change : An International Conference at Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development, November 1-3, 2012*, 465-496.

Available at: http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan_ied_pdck/229

“EXPLORING THE CURRENT PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS OF ECD TEACHERS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HIGH SCOPE CURRICULAR TEACHING APPROACH”

Sultana Qamar, Arisha Qayyum and Seema Laasi, Aga Khan University Human

Development Programme

Dilshad Ashraf, Aga Khan University Institute for Education, Pakistan

Abstract

Early Childhood of human life is crucial in terms of holistic development of children. In this regard, the teachers of early years need to play a significant role in the teaching and learning process. Currently educators and teachers are using a number of curricular teaching approaches. High Scope is one of the mostly used curricular teaching approaches in the context of Gilgit Baltistan, of Pakistan.

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions and practices of early childhood teachers to implement High Scope curricular teaching approach.

The findings suggest that prior training on curricular teaching approaches provided the participants an understanding to relate the theoretical knowledge into practice. The study also reveals that these teachers are using learning from High Scope, which involves active learning, integrated teaching with integration of different subjects and using teaching learning material. The findings also highlighted that these teachers face difficulty in full implementation of High Scope teaching approach due to lack of relevant teaching and learning material, multi-age children in the classroom, and open admission throughout the year. These challenges minimized the teachers' motivation to follow High Scope with its true essence in their local context.

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays an integral role in child development. A child who develops well physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and intellectually during the early years is more likely to be a happy and a productive member of society than the one who is not provided the opportunities to develop holistically. According to Riley (2007) and Mustard (2002), poor development during early years effects key aspects of brain development. It affects all body tissues and the immune system. Besides, it also influences cognition, imagination, behaviour and skills of a child.

Early years are the learning years of life, children are exposed to conducive learning environment during these year will develop optimally. According to Coulbeck (2005), Bowman, Burns and Donovan (2000) unless, we know and understand our children, unless we act effectively on what we know, we cannot help them very much. Children are viewed as active learners who learn from activities based on their personal interest (Homan 2002).

Kay (2001), states that teachers of young children have one of the most important and difficult of educational jobs. The job of teaching encompasses a set of skills and knowledge that is both wide and complex. Coulbeck (2005), reports that a teacher of early years children entails a variety of exchanges with the child in a complex social setting in which the teacher

seeks to motivate the children, organize activities, present information and stimuli and provide security within which the child may learn.

The purpose of doing this study was to explore the perceptions, opinions and practices of teachers. Generally there is concern that teachers are implementing certain curricular teaching approaches because they are being observed by the system teacher educators and management. In addition, some of the ECD teachers also have impression that teaching through curricular teaching approach is time consuming method. It is therefore believed that doing a study can explore the existing reasons behind the issue which will help to understand the existing classroom practices linking with the perceptions of teachers. High Scope teaching approach is implemented in more than fifty schools of Gilgit-Baltistan successfully that is why for further implementation it was essential to explore the perceptions and practices

Secondly, study has explored the reasons and factors behind which hindered the implementation of High Scope teaching approach. The results of the study will assist system to design the short training courses according to the reasons and will help to design the training course content accordingly. The study findings will also help to apply the High scope teaching approach in other schools in future. It will also make me understand the coming flaws in the teaching practices according to teacher's perceptions. The purpose of taking one ECE approach out of six frequently used teaching approaches is because it is the only approach which is implemented in most of schools in the context of the north part of the country and particular in system schools.

Literature Review

“ it is striking that modern neurosciences have demonstrated that long before the age of six, children are aware of the different cultural backgrounds amongst each other in their classes. It is thus before that age that pluralism can be instilled as a life value” (His Highness The Aga Khan, Mombasa, 14 august 2007).

Keeping the importance of early years and needs and curiosity of children towards learning, it is important to provide them a safe and stimulating learning environment which allows children to explore and discuss using their various senses independently and with peer and adult support.

The term curriculum model or curricular teaching approaches refers to a conceptual framework and organizational structure for decision making about educational priorities. There are a number of curricular teaching approaches being used in the early childhood education. There may be many other curricular teaching approaches particularly being used in early childhood education setting. Six curricular teaching approaches were identified. i.e. Bank Street, Head Start, High Scope, Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf.

Based on the work of Jean Piaget, High Scope Educational approach views children as active learners, who learn from activities they plan, carry out and reflect upon them. Based on more than forty years of scientific research, it provides teachers and caregivers with a blue print for daily routines, classroom and play ground organization and teacher child interaction all designed to create a warm and supportive learning environment.

Coulbeck (2005), Bowman, Burns and Donovan (2000), emphasize that teachers in the early years play a tremendous role in the proper upbringing of the child. They further emphasise teachers engaged in the early years need to have knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning process, child development, foundation curriculum, which stimulate learning, enable the children to acquire skills and inculcating desirable attitudes in them.

Research question addressed in the study is: How do two ECD teachers translate their learning of High Scope teaching approach in their teaching practice? & what are the factors which influence their classroom teaching practices?

Research Methodology

The research was guided by qualitative research strategy. The purpose of using this method is because it is appropriate for answering my research question. The study was conducted in one of the schools of the Sun Shine school system (Pseudonyms) and in a Government school in the Gilgit region. The schools participated in the study have teachers who are trained through RCC and have selected through purposive sampling method.

The duration of the study was about four months. The duration of the observations and post observation discussions was more than one and half hours on average. Inclusion Criteria was professional training in curricular teaching approach and their affiliation with the public and private system was the main criterion for the selection of these teachers. Semi structured interviews, observations, post observation discussions and content analysis used to collect data for the study. Researcher conducted one interview with the two research participants. 5-6 observations carried out during the study. Interview guideline was developed which helped to explore the opinions of teachers. Observed the teaching and learning practices in classrooms by using an observation tool with some indicators which are based on the High Scope Teaching Approach. (These indicators are taken from Monitoring tool developed by AKES, P). Every observation was followed by the post observation discussion to validate and triangulate the data collected during observations and also probing towards their understanding about the activity done. Document analyses done to validate and enrich the data. I analyzed teachers lesson plans, reflective journals, records of meetings/ contacts with the parents, material related to assessment which has been maintained over a period of time and students work such as note books etc. These artifacts used as an evidence of the implementation of different concepts learnt during the training course. Notes have been taken while observing the classroom practices and tape recorder used to record the interview conversation and post observation discussion. All the raw data typed in Microsoft Word in the form of field notes and interview data collected from the research participant for managing the data. Then same themes categorized into units to manage for the analysis. Data Analysis has been done manually.

Research ethics was given due importance as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) that are righteousness of the research, formal permission, relationship, trust, privacy and confidentiality and special care taken regarding cultural sensitivity.

Informed consent taken before collecting data Pseudonyms used for the research participants and as well as for the context.

Results and Discussions

Findings of the study arranged under six major themes which have emerged from in-depth interviews, classroom observation, and post observation discussions and selected relevant document analysis. The first theme talks about teachers' understanding and perceptions about early childhood education and learning. The second theme describes teachers' understanding about High Scope Teaching approach and its implementation. The third theme tells about the role of High Scope teaching approach providing opportunities for the holistic development of children. The fourth theme talks about the integration of curricular concepts. The fifth theme demonstrates the factors that hindering the implementation of curricular teaching approach

and major challenges faced by these teachers in the implementation of their learning and recommendations for the implementation of curricular teaching approaches in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan.

1. Plan-do-review process both the teachers shows their concern that it consumes time and they spend only about 40 minutes rather one and half hours in plan-do- review process. In work time although teachers facilitate and support children's learning through integrating different concepts but as soon as children structure their activities and start to enjoy dramatic play teachers wind up the activity and call back children to whole circle. According to my observation I reflect that children need plenty of time to play, and explore the material and discuss it with their peers. Educator Michal Elis (1988) discusses the significance of play as a medium for learning and development.
2. Both the research participants are integrating the concepts with the learning areas which are delivered in concept time. They have developed a sound understanding about integration the curricular concept with other subject areas in the form of learning areas. When teachers teach a concept about the maths this is being integrated with the language and library area as well as with the science area. This provided benefits for both the teacher and child. Teacher feel satisfaction when children recognize, read and even write the targeted concept in given frame of time and children also learn in fun ways. When teacher teach alphabet they try to relate with the material placed in the learning areas. Children's planning for the material work also reflects teacher's expectations they plan not only for the sake of play rather for the learning purposes. As a result of integration children are able to recognize, read and write the alphabet.
3. In both the research setting teachers are providing opportunities
4. In outdoor they are singing round and round in a garden like a teddy, teacher focuses learning students are asked to observe their surrounding and then teacher asked what did u saw they responded c cat, h house, ta titli p pathar
5. Through document analysis I also come to know that teachers are planning their activities in written form on daily basis. One of the research participants said that lesson planning teacher ka hatiyar hai jiss k magair jung h mei jayein tou nakam hotay hain means its teacher's weapon without it when we go to battle we do not succeed.
6. In both the schools teachers were facing difficulty to manage time and manily focus on writing skill.
7. The data reveals that teachers are intentionally focusing the writing by reducing timing to work time they do not care if plan-do-review process is not included in their routine. In my first observation it was found that the daily routine chart without time duration in both settings when asked the reason they said we know the duration how much time have to spend which reveals that teachers 'own perceptions influence teaching practices.
8. Although in both school's classrooms are divided into well-defined learning areas but there is no sufficient learning material to manipulate which may hinder the practices.
9. Children come for admissions throughout the years and children have different ages some are 4 years and some are 6 and 7 years old children. The huge age differences also hinder the proper implementation of HSTA plan-do-review process as teacher has to spend most of the time teaching letter to different groups.
10. Another factor which inhibits the implementation of HSTA is lack of understanding about the national ECE curriculum. Curriculum document is also totally based on HSTA. Both the teachers had limited understanding regarding the National curriculum document.
11. Lack of parental involvement was another hindrance. Parental involvement is essential component of HSTA for the maximum outcomes of child development.

Conclusion

The study highlighted the interplay between the factors that influenced these early childhood teachers' decisions about whether to implement HSTA in their classroom properly both the teachers are aware about the importance of this curricular teaching approach but translation of their knowledge at the classroom level is limited. However, their commitment to their work and system is quite strong they just need appreciation and encouragement from the system and workshops for their professional development. My findings also suggest that parents should be involved at the classroom level. It was huge challenge teachers are facing in ECD section. Lack of parental involvement inhibits teacher's practices and teachers ultimately do what parents expect from their children. Teacher's main focus on writing is only to satisfy parents. There should be certain opportunities to involve parents at classroom level. Without their involvement curricular play based approached will not work and will not be sustainable in future. Furthermore, the findings suggest, however this approach is context feasible to implement to achieve the maximum child' outcome.

References

- Ministry of Education Pakistan (2003). National plan of action for education for all 2001-2015. Islamabad: Government of Pakistan.
- Mustard, J. (2002). Best investment for the future: experiences based brain development, the effects on health learning and behavior.
- Bowman. T.,Donvan,M.S., & Burns, M. S. (Eds.).(2000). Eager to learn: Education our preschools. Washington, DC: National Academy Press
- Benneett.J & Leonarduzzi, S(2004); Starting strong Curricula and Pedagogies
- Coulbeck, J. (2005). Meeting the professional standards for QTS Teaching Foundation Stage. In I. Keating (Ed.), *What makes and effective foundation stage teacher?* (p. 157-173). Southernhay East: Learning Matters Ltd.
- Blanford, S. (2001). *Early professional development for teachers*. London: David Fulton Publishers
- Bowman, T, B, Burns, S, M & Donovan, M, S, (2000). *Eager to learn educating ourPreschoolers*. USA.: National Academy
- Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (1998). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Berg, B.L. (1998). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage Publishers.
- Models for early childhood education; Eric Digest 2002
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study application in education*. San - Francisco: Jossy - Bass.
- Ministry of Education Pakistan (2003). *National plan of action for education for all 2001-2015*. Islamabad: Government of Pakistan.
- Olsen.E Amanda and Sumision Jennifer institute of early childhood Macquarie University: Early childhood Teacher Practices Regarding the use of dramatic play in K-2 classrooms.