

**THE QUALITY OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN
PRESCHOOLS OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN**

by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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DEDICATION

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my parents,

Mushtaq Ahmed and Saleema Bibi,

my father in-law Muhammad Ramzan Yazdani,

my mother in-law Surriya Yazdani,

my dear husband Muhammad Atif,

and my loving son Muhammad Danial Atif.

Their moral support, faith, love, and joy

have energized me to pursue and

accomplish my goals.

*Irem Mushtaq
31.10.2014*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

ASQ	American Society for Quality
CD	Child Development
CDA	Child Development Associates
CIS	Caregiver Interaction Scale
CLASS	Classroom Assessment Scoring System
DEO	District Education Officer
DPI	Directorate of Public Instruction
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
ECERS	Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised
FACES	Families and Child Care Experiences
FBISE	Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ITERS	Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCCSS	National Child Care Staffing Study
NICHD	National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
NPA	National Plan of Action
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WDE	World Data on Education

KUALITI PERSEKITARAN PEMBELAJARAN PRASEKOLAH DI PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

ABSTRAK

Kekurangan data dan statistik yang signifikan, satu analisis penyelidikan yang komprehensif diperlukan dalam menilai situasi semasa prasekolah di Pakistan. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai mengenal pasti kualiti persekitaran pembelajaran di peringkat prasekolah dari aspek i) ruang dan perabot, ii) rutin penjagaan diri, iii) penaakulan bahasa, iv) aktiviti, v) interaksi, vi) struktur program, dan vii) ibu bapa dan staf. Kajian ini merupakan kajian deskriptif yang menggunakan reka bentuk model triangulasi. Data telah dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan tiga kaedah, iaitu soal selidik, pemerhatian dan temu bual. Pada peringkat pertama, *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)* telah digunakan sebagai alat pemerhatian dalam 24 prasekolah, dan telah diberikan kepada guru di sekolah yang sama sebagai soal selidik. Terdapat perbezaan yang tidak signifikan (ujian-t bebas dengan nilai $p > 0.05$) dalam skor min apabila *ECERS-R* telah digunakan sebagai soal selidik dan alat pemerhatian. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa *ECERS-R* boleh digunakan sebagai satu soal selidik tadbir sendiri dan alat pemerhatian. Pada peringkat berikutnya, *ECERS-R* telah diedarkan kepada 579 guru (seorang guru dari setiap sekolah) di prasekolah awam dan swasta melalui persampelan rawak berstrata di lima buah daerah wilayah Punjab di Pakistan. Akhirnya, empat orang guru (seorang guru dari setiap sekolah), telah ditemu bual untuk mendapatkan gambaran kualitatif tentang kualiti persekitaran pembelajaran. Dapatan mendapati bahawa skor min keseluruhan adalah 3.94 (skor min bagi *ECERS-R*) telah diperolehi bagi keseluruhan sampel kajian. Prasekolah swasta menunjukkan skor min yang lebih

tinggi daripada prasekolah awam (4.39 berbanding 3.72). Terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan terhadap kualiti persekitaran pembelajaran bagi prasekolah awam ($p < 0.0005$; $F(2, 384) = 8,484$) dan prasekolah swasta ($p = 0.001$; $F(2, 189) = 6,816$) berdasarkan kelayakan guru. Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa tidak terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kualiti persekitaran pembelajaran bagi prasekolah awam ($p = 0.89$; $F(2, 384) = 0.115$) dan prasekolah swasta ($p = 0.823$; $F(2, 189) = 0.027$) berdasarkan pengalaman mengajar. Melalui analisis regresi linear, peramal kualiti persekitaran pembelajaran adalah jenis prasekolah, $\beta = 0.252$, $t(578) = 5.913$, $p < 0.005$; dan kelayakan guru, $\beta = 0.191$, $t(578) = 4.741$, $p < 0.005$. Bagi dapatan kualitatif pula, dapatan utama temu bual guru adalah seperti berikut ; a) ruang dalam yang baik dan amalan keselamatan yang ada, b) tiada kemudahan makan dan makanan ringan serta tiada pengawasan kanak-kanak semasa menggunakan bilik air, c) komunikasi yang baik antara kanak-kanak dan staf, d) kekurangan aktiviti kerana kekurangan bahan untuk semua aktiviti-aktiviti, e) interaksi yang baik antara kanak-kanak-staf, f) masa yang mencukupi untuk aktiviti kumpulan, dan g) hubungan baik antara ibu bapa-guru, penyeliaan dan penilaian staf yang baik namun kekurangan peruntukan untuk keperluan peribadi dan profesional staf. Secara kesimpulan, kualiti persekitaran pembelajaran prasekolah di Pakistan bagi semua dimensi *ECERS-R* adalah sederhana. Kualiti persekitaran pembelajaran prasekolah swasta menunjukkan tahap yang lebih tinggi berbanding prasekolah awam. Bagi kedua-dua prasekolah awam dan swasta, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kualiti persekitaran pembelajaran berdasarkan kelayakan guru. Keselarasan antara data kuantitatif dan data kualitatif mengukuhkan dapatan kajian ini.

THE QUALITY OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN PRESCHOOLS OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

ABSTRACT

There is a lack of significant data and research analysis that can comprehensively define the present situation of preschools in Pakistan. Therefore, the objective of this study was to identify the current status of the quality of learning environment in the preschools of Pakistan with special emphasis on i) Space and Furnishing, ii) Personal Care Routine, iii) Language Reasoning, iv) Activities, v) Interaction, vi) Program Structure and vii) Parents And Staff. It was a non-experimental, descriptive study in which methodological triangulation design model was used. Data was collected by three data collection methods, i.e., questionnaire, observation and interview. In the first stage, the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS-R) was used as an observational tool in 24 preschools. Subsequently, in the same preschools, it was administered to the teachers as a questionnaire. There was no significant difference (independent sample t-test with a p-value > 0.05) in the mean scores when the ECERS-R was used as a questionnaire and observation tool. This represented that the ECERS-R could be used as a self-administered questionnaire and an observation tool. In the next step, the ECERS-R was administered as a questionnaire to 579 teachers (one teacher from each preschool) in the public and private preschools through stratified random sampling in five districts of the Punjab, Pakistan. Finally, four teachers (one teacher per school) were interviewed to get the qualitative insight about the quality of learning environment. The findings showed that an overall mean score of 3.94 for ECERS-R was obtained for the total study sample. The private preschools showed higher mean score than the public preschools (4.39 compared to 3.72). There was significant difference in the quality of leaning environment of public ($p < 0.0005$; F

(2, 384) = 8.484) and private preschools ($p=0.001$; $F(2, 189) = 6.816$) based on teachers' qualification. The result also showed that there was non-significant difference in quality of learning environment of public ($p = 0.89$; $F(2, 384) = 0.115$) and private preschools ($p = 0.823$; $F(2, 189) = 0.027$) based on teaching experience. From multiple linear regression analysis, predictors of quality of learning environment identified were type of preschool $\beta = 0.252$, $t(578) = 5.913$, $p < 0.005$ and teachers' qualification $\beta = 0.191$, $t(578) = 4.741$, $p < 0.005$. In the qualitative part of this study, teachers' interview exhibited the following main findings; a) good indoor space and safety practices are available, b) no facility for meal and snacks and no supervision of children while using washroom, c) good communication between children and staff, d) lack of activities due to insufficient material for all the activities, e) good staff-child interaction, f) enough time for group activities, and g) good parents-teacher relation, good supervision and evaluation of staff but lack of provision for personal need and professional need of staff. In conclusion, the quality of learning environment of preschools in Punjab, Pakistan regarding all dimensions of ECERS-R was medium. The private preschools showed a higher level of quality than the public preschools. For both public and private preschools, there are significant differences in the quality of learning environment found based on teachers' qualification. A good level of agreement between the quantitative data and qualitative data strengthened the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Preschool is a place where children learn as they play and share experiences with other children. It is a place where teacher provides the children along a variety of experiences and materials appropriate to their requirement, and where they offer guidance and encouragement to them as they learn (Read, 1971).

Advance psychological research has determined that between 0–6 years of age children learn at the fastest rate. The things that a child understand within the initial eight years of life have a lifelong impact shaping up personality and also career (Penwell, 2011). The initial years of children's life are very critical for the development of intelligence, personality and social behavior. The child learns cognitive and life techniques which include emotional stability through accommodation (McCartney, Dearing, Taylor, & Bub, 2007). Cognitive foundations in preschool prepare children to satisfy the requirements in the best way of their future schooling. They find themselves as more skilled and independent students. It is also easy for teachers to teach the children who had a strong background of early childhood education in listening comprehension, language skills, attention management skill and as well as they have a good attitude toward learning (McClure, 2011).

All the preschools may not be equally effective for the development and promoting the learning of children. Long lasting benefits are usually observed in high quality preschool programs. Different studies have found a strong relationship between preschool quality and children's development (Belsky, Vandell, Burchinal,

Clarke-Stewart, McCartney, & Owen, 2007; Peisner-Feinberg *et al.*, 2001; Sylva *et al.*, 2006). It is a common view among researchers that better development outcomes of children is related to higher quality of care (Belsky, 2001; McCartney *et al.*, 2007; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000).

The overall effectiveness of preschool is dependent upon many aspects, such as consistent scheduling, proper grouping practices, an appropriate environment and parental involvement (Encyclopedia of Children's Health, 2011). Likewise, many studies have also enlightened a positive relationship between quality of pre-school education and teacher's qualification. Similarly, a few studies have explained a direct relationship between positive attitude of the teachers and their qualification as well as their experience (Brown, Molfese, & Molfese, 2008; Early *et al.*, 2006; Goelman, Forer, Kershaw, Doherty, Lero, & LaGrange, 2006; Snider & Fu, 1990; Whitebook, 2003).

The study found that the children who attended high quality preschool programs perform much better than those who have not attended high quality preschool programs. High quality preschool has a short and long term effect in improving the outcomes of a child (Aboud & Hossain, 2011; Schaefer & Cohen, 2000). A study in Vietnam (Watanabe, Flores, Fujiwara, & Tran, 2005) showed that children who attended preschools with more material and trained teacher showed higher visual-spatial skills within the first and second grade as compared to those children who failed to attend preschools regularly. For the last thirty years, considerable studies has reported the average quality of numerous child care centers and their effectiveness in optimizing children's development (Coelen, Glantz, & Calore, 1979; Helburn, 1995).

Growing concern about the poor quality of early learning has encouraged the early education professionals and policy makers to develop and launch different strategies to enhance preschool quality. In recent year millions have been spent in enhancing the quality of child care programs (Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002; Whitebook, Sakai, & Howes, 1997). Given the importance of high quality child care to children's developmental well-being, as well as large public investment targeted toward improving care, the way in which researcher define and measure quality is under renewed examination (Chang, Muckelroy, Pulido-Tobiassen, Dowell, & Edwards, 1996; Love, Schochet, & Meckstroth, 1996; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

The quality of preschool programs is usually measured both by the quality of the preschool environment and experience of children in this environment (Love *et al.*, 1996). Learning environment contributes to both student behavior and learning (Taylor & Vlastos, 1983). It is the second element of creative curriculum. It includes the use and organization of the space in the classroom, the daily schedule and routine and the social and emotional atmosphere (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, & Bickart, 2002). Positive learning environment protects, encourages and enriches the spirit of children. It increases the opportunities for children with a feeling of safety, comfort, love and acceptance (Ott, 2007). A good quality environment can increase the cognitive and potential development and also provide a foundation for the emotional development of children (Isbell, 2008). It is well understood that every aspect of sensory, emotional, social, cognitive and linguistic growth is affected by a well-organized, attractive and participatory environment (Graves, Gargiulo, Sluder, & Holmes, 1996). Studies have shown that learning environment is a strong determinant of the child's learning, and they learn better when they perceive their environment positively (Dorman, Adams, & Ferguson, 2002). An appropriate

environment can provide a family like setting and children feel it be a good spot (Isbell, 2008). The quality of the program can be measured by both structural and process variable (Carolee, Whitebook, & Deborah, 1992; La Paro, Sexton, & Snyder, 1998). Structural and process measures have been shown to relate to each other (Berk, 1985; Cost Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Howes, 1997; Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992).

1.2 Background of the Study

This study was conducted in Pakistan. In Pakistan Ministry of education organized the public school education. Within the ministry, the curriculum wing formulates the national curriculum through a wide stakeholder consultation. Twenty six boards of Intermediate and Secondary education are controlled by the Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC). From this one board is federal, and the remainder is provincial. They affiliate schools, regulate, monitor and implement curricula and schemes of studies and also hold Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) exams. The boards are autonomous institutions that are financed by fees and from the affiliated schools and from students' examination.

In Pakistan preschool education, also termed as katchi or pre-primary classes, is defined as formal and informal as well as public or private education services for children aged 3-5 years (EFA, 2006; World Data on Education, 2011). Until 1970s, preschool education was well established in formal primary schools, however, during 1980s this practice was officially discontinued. Again realizing the role and importance of preschool education for promoting the learning achievement, plans have been made in the National Educational Policy 1992, to reintroduce katchi as a formal class in primary schools. (Hunzai, 2007).

Beside the katchi classes in public schools, numerous private schools also offer preschool classes as Montessori, kindergarten or Nursery style of education. Private schools are often located in urban areas and are often profit making. Here children aged 2-5 years are nurtured in appropriate classroom. Their teachers are well trained, and they use proper preschool educational material (World Data on Education, 2011).

The quality of teacher is poor in Pakistan. The main reason is the low level of qualification required to become a primary school teacher (Memon, 2007). In public schools qualification required for teaching in katchi class is the same as that for primary schools, i.e. higher secondary education certificate and teaching experience of one year. In all four provinces of Pakistan usually same criteria is adopted for the selection of teachers. To improve the quality of education, the criterion of minimum required qualifications for a teacher is upgraded to minimum degree level for new appointment (MOE, 2008a).

In Pakistan the primary objectives of preschool education are: help the children to develop their potential to grow and learn, to provide a proper environment for safety and holistic development, use play way methods and concrete experiences in teaching and learning, prepare children for formal schooling and develop awareness of basic cultural values and norms of the society (world Data on Education, 2006). In public preschools, particularly in rural areas, children below five years of age attend the school informally and learn the basic concepts of literacy and numeracy. However, the numbers of pre-primary schools are insufficient to accommodate the total population in the age group of 3-5 years (World Data on Education, 2011).

1.3 Problem Statement

Published studies have documented the quality of different countries' child care plans and their effectiveness in children's development (Coelen *et al.*, 1979; Helburn & Culkin, 1995; Keyserling, 1972; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney, & Abbott-Shim, 2000). Quality of preschool is of interest because of its critical impact on children's development. It is obvious from many published studies that it is necessary to evaluate the quality of preschool to take appropriate measures for further improvement.

Pakistan is one of only 12 world countries that spend less than 2% of its Gross National Product (GNP) on education (Kronstadt, 2004). In Pakistan, there is a lack of free, universal and compulsory education, although it has been stated as a constitutional right. Lack of free provision of education has resulted in two trends in the society; increased the provision of education by the private sector and enhancement in the enrollment of children in madrassas (religious institutions).

In general, private schools have a significant share in preschool education both in terms of number of preschools and proportion of children enrolled. Parents generally perceive that the quality of private preschools is better as compared to public preschools. Financially well-off parents prefer to send their children in private preschools. This trend shows that the public preschool education system does not satisfy the public demand for giving quality education (MOE, 2008b), yet there are no proper measures that can judge what are the difference between the quality of private and public preschools.

The educational history of Pakistan indicates that none of the elected government has given required attention to the education sector. As a result, the education system of Pakistan suffers from a crisis of quantity, quality and relevance (Dean, 2005; Dean, 2007; Hayes, 1987; Warwick & Reimers, 1995). Likewise, financial allocation was also negligible particularly in proportion to the demands of the children.

According to the National Plan of Action (2001-2015), peoples are not aware of the importance of preschool education. Although, importance of preschool has also been recognized in the National Educational Policy, but implementation is seldom at school level. A published study from Pakistan showed that teachers' qualification and experience are lower than other countries (Khan, 2005). This problem persists probably because the eligibility criteria to become a primary school teacher are low in terms of experience and qualification. Besides this, preschool teachers do not have job satisfaction due to inadequate professional growth opportunities (Ghazi, Shahzada, & Shah, 2012). It is known that teachers are the critical component of education system. How well they teach depend on their qualification, experience, and training. Various studies showed that teachers' qualification and experience has direct and positive impact on the quality of teaching performance and students' achievement (Barnett, 2003; Jatoy, 1992). The Education Sector Reform Action Plan (2001- 2005) identified teacher education as a critical area of concern to improve the quality of education through preparation of better teachers. Similarly National Education policy (1998-2010) also highlights a number of concerns including: absence of coherent policy framework for teacher education courses, inadequate and irregular in-service teacher training, outdated and heavily

theoretical pre-service teacher education courses, lack of qualified and experienced teacher educators (UNESCO, 2004).

The quality of existing learning environment is evident from the fact that a large number of schools are missing basic infrastructure facilities (Farooq, 2009-10). According to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2008-2009, 71931 preschools have no availability of electricity; 34890 schools have no drinking water; 37318 schools have no washrooms; 38049 schools are without boundary walls and 19495 schools have only one classroom. Therefore, children in these schools face problems due to inadequate facilities (Ministry of Education, 2009). So there is need to provide the basic infrastructure facilities to improve both output and quality of education. Another problem is a lack of coordination among government departments and various service providers such as managements of public and private schools, NGOs and other related community based organizations (NPA, 2003).

According to a mapping study of 'Early childhood Development and Initiatives in Pakistan' the quality of preschool is an issue due to many factors, such as: limitations in terms of finance and human resources, and general apathy towards pre-primary limited the growth of preschool in education. As per the recommendation of this study there is a lack of significant data and statistics, and research analysis that can comprehensively identify the present situation of preschools in Pakistan, and that greatly hampers the evaluation of the situation (Early Childhood Development, 2009; MOE, 2008b).

In the National Report on the Development of Education, the government of Pakistan is committed to cater the needs of all children without any discrimination. They said that there is a need for Pakistan to build a policy on the experiences gained

over many years by different countries. The government of Pakistan is also cognizant of the fact that there is need to intensify the efforts for exchange of expertise and materials at the regional and global level. So everybody must join hands, share experiences and provide support to fully implement the policies of inclusive education. This will surely lead the way to the future by making every single citizen a contribution to the national development (MOE, 2008b).

According to the National Education Policy 2009, for the quality of education there is a need to take action in the areas of teachers' quality, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment approaches, the textbook, facilities and the learning environment. Another element of the learning environment is that the authentic data is not available regarding teacher student relationships (MOE, 2009). There is some program that are working to improve the quality for the preschool education in Pakistan such as Releasing Confidence and Creativity (RCC) and Creating Democratic School Program (CDR). There are a few studies (EFA, 2006; Shakil, 2002) carried out in different issues related to preschool education and present the situation of preschool. However, these studies did not concentrate on quality of learning environment of preschool. Furthermore, these studies did not use any childhood environment rating scales; hence this study utilized more effective assessment instrument that may generate more valid and reliable observation for policy and decision maker in the future.

Based on aforementioned lack of information regarding quality of learning environment in the preschools, one can understand why it is necessary to identify the current status of the quality of learning environment in the preschools of Pakistan. Findings of this study will help the policymakers to understand the extent of inequity between public and private preschools, lack of infrastructure and facilities and need

for training of teachers for improving overall quality of learning environment in the preschools of Pakistan.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

The study was to develop a body of literature for collective awareness about the learning environment of preschools which may also help to attract financial support for preschool education in Pakistan. In Pakistan, significant data on the quality of learning environment in preschools is absent. Likewise, it is a general concept that the imbalances exist between private and public schools. Usually, people perceive that quality of private preschools is better as compared to public preschools. However, there is no proper measure that can judge the difference of quality between the public and private preschools. Therefore, this study attempted to find out the difference of quality of learning environment between the public and private preschools. This study also identified the factors that contribute to the quality of learning environment of preschools in Pakistan. Ultimately, idea is that the teachers will be able to create a good learning environment in their preschools, provided that they are aware of the factors contributing the quality of learning environment.

1.5 Objectives of Study

The main objective of this study is to identify the quality of learning environment in preschools of Pakistan. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the current status of the quality of learning environment in public and private preschools in Pakistan in terms of i) space and furnishing,

- ii) personal care routine, iii) language reasoning, iv) activities, v) interaction, vi) program structure, and vii) parents and staff.
2. To examine whether there is any significant difference between the quality of learning environment at public and private preschools in Pakistan.
 - 3a. To determine whether there is any significant difference of the quality of learning environment in public preschools based on the teachers' qualifications.
 - 3b. To determine whether there is any significant difference of the quality of learning environment in private preschools based on the teachers' qualifications.
 - 4a. To find out whether there is any significant difference of the quality of learning environment in public preschools based on the teachers' teaching experience.
 - 4b. To find out whether there is any significant difference of the quality of learning environment in private preschools based on the teachers' teaching experience.
 5. To identify the factors that contributes to the quality of learning environment of preschools.

1.6.1 Research Questions

1. What is the current status of the quality of learning environments in preschools of Punjab, Pakistan in terms of; i) space and furnishing, ii) personal care routine, iii) language reasoning, iv) activities, v) interaction, vi) program structure, and vi) parents and staff.

2. Is there any significant difference between the quality of learning environment at public and private preschools in Pakistan?
- 3a. Is there any significant difference of quality of learning environment in public preschools based on the teachers' qualification?
- 3b. Is there any significant difference of the quality of learning environment in private preschools based on the teachers' qualification?
- 4a. Is there any significant difference of the quality of learning environment in public preschools based on the teachers' teaching experience?
- 4b. Is there any significant difference of the quality of learning environment in private preschools based on the teachers' teaching experience?
5. What are the factors that contribute to the quality of learning environment in preschools?

1.7 Null Hypotheses

- H_{02} . There is no significant difference of quality of learning environment between public and private preschools in Pakistan.
- H_{03a} . There is no significant difference of quality of learning environment in public preschools based on the teachers' qualifications.
- H_{03b} . There is no significant difference of quality of learning environment in private preschools based on the teachers' qualifications.
- H_{04a} . There is no significant difference of quality of learning environment in public preschools based on the teachers' teaching experience.

H_{04b}. There is no significant difference of quality of learning environment in private preschools based on the teachers' teaching experience.

1.8 Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this section, variables of the study and relationship among the variables have been discussed. The conceptual framework of this study relates to the objectives and research questions of this study. The main objective of this study was to identify the quality of learning environment in preschool of Pakistan.

The quality of learning environment was identified by a widely used research tool namely Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) which encompass seven dimensions of quality: 1) space and furnishing, 2) personal care routine, 3) language reasoning, 4) activities, 5) interaction, 6) program structure, and 7) parents and staff (Harms, Clifford et al., 1998). These are dependent variable in this study. The rating of these dimensions from 1 to 7 subsequently constitutes the level of quality of the preschool. In Pakistan, private schools have a commendable contribution in raising the quality of education. So, data was collected from both public and private preschools of Pakistan.

Quality of learning environment was also determined in public and private preschools based on the qualifications and experiences of teacher of the preschool. These are independent variables of the study. All these factors are very critical to identify the quality of learning environment (Espinosa, 2002). After statistical analysis, baseline score for quality of the learning environment in preschool was obtained (Figure 1.1).

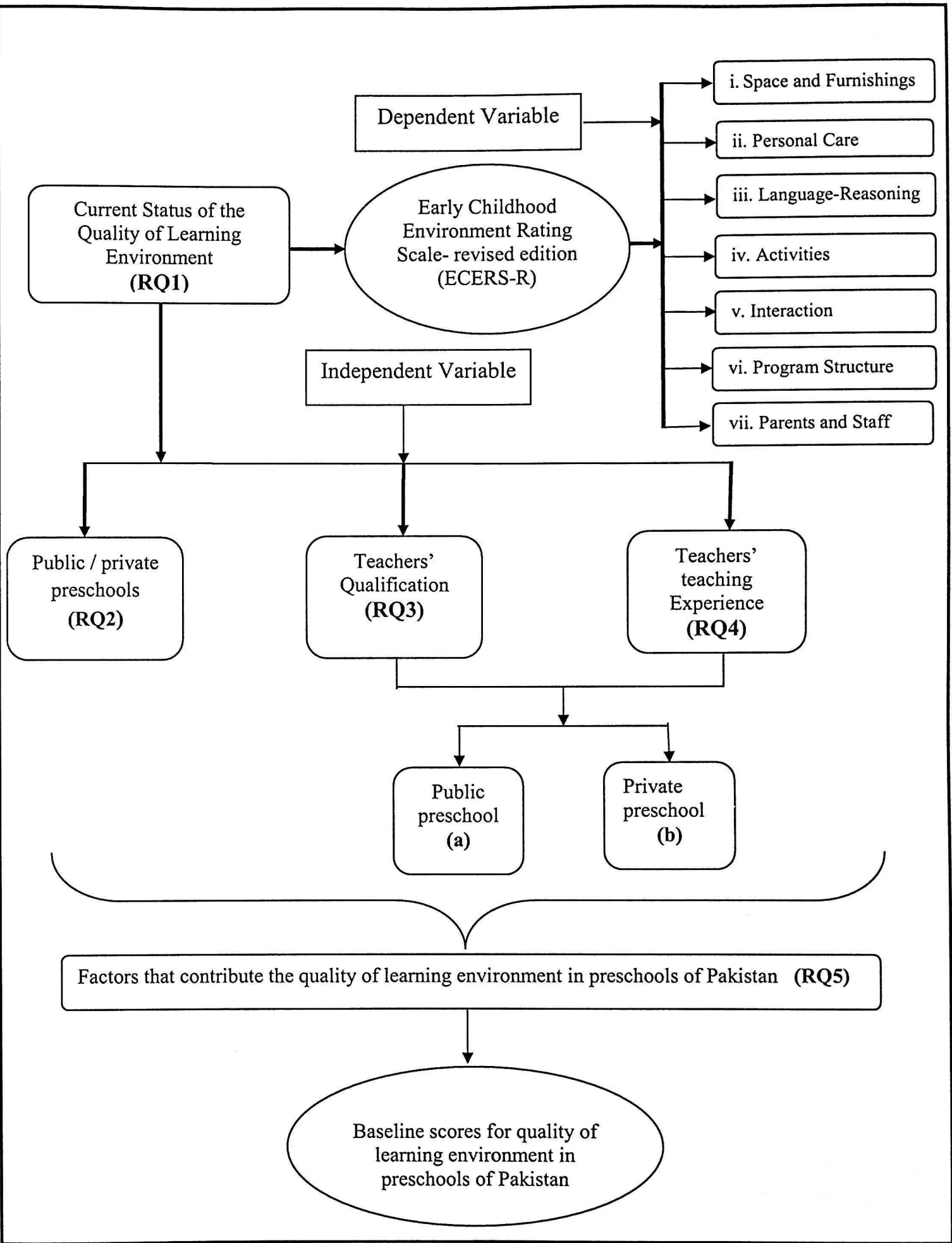


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

1.9 Operational Definitions

The study used a number of concepts and terms that need clarification in order to facilitate understanding of the study. Conceptual and operational definition of the term is given to provide appropriate means of focusing and study needs.

1.9.1 Preschool Education

According to ‘The National Plan of Action 2001-2015’ in Pakistan’s context, preschool termed katchi or pre-primary is defined as the education that serves the children between the age of three to five years and are most often half day programs (NPA, 2003).

1.9.2 Public Preschools

A preschool that is funded by tax revenue, and controlled and managed by a public education authority or local governmental agency is termed as a public preschool.

1.9.3 Private Preschools

A preschool that is established and primarily supported by non-governmental agency such as a trade union or business enterprise is named as a private preschool. Alternatively, it is privately owned and organized as distinct from being part of a state or government system.

1.9.4 Teachers’ Qualification

In this study, qualification of teacher means the level of education or the last degree obtained. In Pakistan Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), Bachelor of Arts/Science (BA/BSc) and Masters of Arts/Science (MA/MSc) are considered 12, 14 and 16 years of education respectively. Masters and Doctor of Philosophy are

further higher degrees. A special diploma or certificate of preschool teaching was also noted as teacher qualification.

1.9.5 Teachers' Experience

Experience means 'the fact or state of gaining knowledge through direct observation or participation'. Teaching experience means the number of years they spent teaching in preschools. Teachers' experience is recorded in a number of years (e.g. one year, two years or more).

1.9.6 Learning Environment of Preschool

Learning environment is the total of all physical, social, emotional and mental factor that contribute to the total teaching learning situation; Seating, light, heat, teacher qualification, teacher experience, teacher-child relationship are key components of learning environment (Carter, 1959). In this study, it specifically refers to seven main areas: 1) Space and Furnishing, 2) Personal Care Routine, 3) Language Reasoning, 4) Activities, 5) Interaction, 6) Program Structure, and 7) Parents and Staff (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998).

1.9.7 Quality of Learning Environment in Preschool

Quality of learning environment preschool is defined as child care services that provide a responsive developmentally appropriate environment for children. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NYCE) reported that a high quality preschool provides safe and nurturing environment which help to promotes the cognitive, social, physical and emotional development of children (Boyd *et al.*, 2005). Preschool quality has been evaluated and conceptualized in term of children's direct experience, such as the ways; teacher use to organize daily routines, daily activities, material available to children and qualities of interaction

between teacher and children (Harms *et al.*, 1998; Mashburn *et al.*, 2008). In this study, quality refers to three levels namely: low level (1.00–2.99), medium level (3.00–4.99) and high level (5.00–7.00) (Harms *et al.*, 1998). Generally classroom have score 5 or above are considered to be high quality, 3 – 4.99 are moderate quality and below 3 are low quality. Range of quality in Pakistan will be determined based on this scoring.

1.9.8 Factors Contributing the Quality of Preschool

In research question 5, the term factors refer to the type of preschool (public and private), qualification of the teachers and teaching experience of the teachers in early childhood education obtained by the teachers.

1.10 Significance of the Study

The present study was designed to identify the quality of learning environment of preschools in Pakistan. The results of this study could be beneficial with regard to formulation of educational policies for serving young children. It will provide a basis for planning next steps for further development and improvement of existing programs and a glimpse of future work and initiatives for emerging and new programs in the fast growing sector of education. The quality score can also be used by the policy makers in decision making about program funding and childcare reforms. It can also improve the perception and understanding of the researchers and practitioners about the early childhood programs. The current study will also highlight the gaps in public and private education sectors which could be effectively filled by adequate policy measures.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

This study focused on identifying the current status of the quality of learning environment of public and private preschools in Pakistan. In addition, the different quality of learning environment based on the teachers' qualification and experience were identified. Finally, factors that contribute to the quality of learning environment were analysed. Thus, the methodological triangulation design model was used in this study. ECERS-R was used as a self-report questionnaire and observation checklist. Due to geopolitical problems, data was collected only from the province of Punjab, Pakistan. The population was scattered and rather difficult to get data of the whole country and almost half of the population live in the province of Punjab and it has 43% area of the total county (EFA, 2000). The teachers who had participated in the study might have different perceptions, belief and understanding compared to those who did not participated in the study. Due to certain reasons, it was not possible to visit every school. Therefore, the findings could not be generalized to the whole country. The current study was limited to only those public and private preschools, enrolling children aged between 3-5 years. The reason is because that in some preschool, children of five or six years of age are placed in 'katchi' class that are found not ready for a proper class 1 curriculum (Shakil, 2002).

1.12 Summary

This study was designed to identify the current status of the quality of learning environment of public and private preschools in Pakistan. Other objectives of the study are to examine the differences of quality of learning environment at public and private preschool and to examine the difference of quality of learning environment in public and private preschools based on the qualification and experience of teachers. This study also aims to find out the factors that contribute the

quality of the learning environment in preschool. In the conceptual framework dependent and independent variables of the study has been discussed, and it also illustrates the relationship between them. The significance of the study presents that the results of this study will provide guidelines in the formulation of policy for preschool in Pakistan. Definitions of key terms show the meaning and concept of different terms used in this study. Limitations of the study describe the limits of the population and scope of the study. This study will be limited only in one province, Punjab.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature related to the quality of learning environment. The current chapter consists of seven sections as follows: (1) Education in Pakistan (2) Learning Environment (3) Quality of Learning Environment Quality in Education (4) Quantifying Quality of early childhood education (5) Related Research Studies (6) Theories on Learning Environment (7) Theoretical framework and (8) Summary.

2.2 Education Background in Pakistan

The key to success of any nation lies in their concern and development of the education sector. Education is the constructive factor in any society. It opens new horizons for the people perceive things in different dimensions. We need education because without it we cannot be a very united and strong nation. If most of our people get education, they can understand the value of unity and discipline in life. They can collaborate with one another in a different field of life. Educated people prove to be more efficient and beneficial for the society.

Education is considered as the cheapest defense of the nation. But the downtrodden condition of education in Pakistan bears an ample testimony of the fact that it is unable to defend its own sector. Though 62 years have been passed, and 23 policies and action plans have been introduced yet the educational sector is waiting for the arrival of a savior. The government of Pervaiz Musharraf invested heavily in education leading to visible positive educational change in Pakistani society (Saleemi, 2010).

The education sector in Pakistan is overseen by the Ministry of education and the provincial government. Whereby, the federal government assists with the development of curriculum, accreditation and financing of some research. In Pakistan, there is both the public and private education institution. Private education exists at all levels of education. Detail of education system in Pakistan is as follows.

2.2.1 Administration and Management of Education System

Pakistan is a federation of five provinces and other territories under the direct administration of the federal government. The division of responsibilities between the provinces and center has been defined in the 1973 constitution and subsequent agreement ("The System of Education In Pakistan," 2006).

Education has been and is primarily a provincial matter, under the Federal Ministry of Education (MOE). The federal government continues to be overall policymaking, coordinating and advisory authority on education. The educational institution located in the federal capital territory, the area study centers, the centers of excellence and other institution in various parts of the country are administered by MOE. The Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) established under the FBISE Act of 1975. It is an autonomous body of MOE. It is empowered with administrative and financial authority to organize, regulate, develop and control intermediate and secondary education in general and conduct examinations in the institutions affiliated with it. Universities located in various provinces are administered by provincial government and funded by the federal government through the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The executive authority in MOE, headed by the minister, is vested in the Secretary who ensures policies implementation in close collaboration with the

provincial education department. The provincial education departments are headed by the ministers of education of the respective provinces, and the executive authority is vested in the secretaries of education.

Each province is divided into divisions/regions for educational administrative purposes. Each divisional/regional office is headed by a director. The division/regions further divided into districts and the officer in charge of the district is the District Education Officer (DEO). In the province of Punjab separate Directorates of elementary, secondary and college education have been created. The supervision of primary and elementary falls under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) elementary through divisional director and District Education Officer. The secondary schools are under the administrative control of Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) secondary through Divisional Director and District Education Officer. A separate Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) college through Divisional Directors is responsible for the administration of colleges (World Data on Education, 2006).

2.2.2 Education System

The formal educational system in Pakistan is divided into six main levels: preschool (prep classes), primary (grades one to five), secondary (grades six to eight), high (grade nine and ten, leading to the secondary school certificate), intermediate (grade eleven and twelve, leading to a higher secondary school certificate) and university programs leading to graduate and advance levels. The structure of formal education system in Pakistan can be summarized as follows (table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Education System in Pakistan

Level	Schooling	Age
Preschool	Two year	3-5 year
Primary	Five years	5-9
Middle	Three year	10-13
Secondary	Two year	14-15
Higher (College)	Two year	16-17
Higher Secondary/Intermediate	Two year	18-19
Higher (University)	Two to Five year	20 and above

2.2.3 Private and Public Education

In Pakistan there are both public and private institution exist at all level of education system. A detailed overview of public and private education in Pakistan is as follows.

2.2.3.1 Private Education

The degree to which education systems rely on private education institutions varies from country to country. This range from system where all educational institutions are public to another and the combination of both the public and private institutions share the responsibilities of teaching children. Pakistan is an example of a country where that has both public and private sector educational institutions, which has a larger proportion of its youth attending private institutions than in many other countries. As a result, it is very important for Pakistan to get comprehensive data from both of these types of institutions on a regular basis. To ensure that policy development is based on knowledge of the entire education system not only for the public sector alone (Lynd, 2007).

Before 1972 private educational institutions, constituted a significant proportion of the total educational system of schools and colleges. In 1972, Pakistan government nationalized all private educational institutions, severely restricting the growth of this sector and its potential in educating young Pakistanis. After that, because of overcrowded public school and lack of funding for public education, private educational institutions were again permitted to operate in 1979 ("Private schools in Pakistan," 2004). The government even encouraged private enterprises to open educational institution in rural areas. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) could contractually take over government school for a prescribed time- period. Permission to set up educational institution is given either by Ministry of government and the respective Provisional Educational Department. Private education exists at all levels of education in Pakistan. The medium of instruction is usually English. Registered private schools have to follow government prescribed curricula. However all private schools are not registered. Registration means that the schools' grade will be accepted by others schools and school is subject to taxation and other regulation(Alderman, Orazem, & Paterno, 2001). Registration is obtained by institutions needed government 'recognition' which allow student from school to sit for public examination, however private schools send their students to public examination as private candidates (Aslam, 2009). Enrollment in private schools is predominant among the urban middle and upper income families. Generally private schools are considered to show better performance than public and state schools, but the quality of education varies. In some areas public schools are non-functional or non-existence. Parents send their children to low-cost private school or religious schools (maktabas or madaris).