## PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational research provides evidence that preschool education is an important factor in the provision of equal opportunity for all children. For many children, the early childhood setting may be their first contact with the preschool teachers beyond their home. Mukherji and Dryden (2014) mentioned that parents are the child’s first educators and some families given more opportunities to engage in domestic conversation, and their research highlighted the importance of developing skills within a familiar context.

Presently, preschool education is considered as a responsibility of the preschool community and therefore the role of preschool teachers and parents is significant. Many early childhood educators believe that developing a partnership with parents and other members of the family, regarding their child’s development can strengthen the child's ability to learn. Therefore, it necessary for parents to provide support for their children. National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development report has mentioned the aims related to parents as follows.

* To promote the importance of the roles of parents/caregivers and the community in the development of children.
* To enhance the capacity of parents/caregivers and communities to be able to adequately support their children’s development. (2004, p.11)

The Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, The Open University of Sri Lanka (2009) completed a research study on awareness raising of parents of children of age 0-5 years in disadvantaged school communities. The main aim of this study was to bring about a qualitative change in the role of parents of preschoolers by enabling them to create stimulating environments conducive for learning and development of the child through an awareness raising programme. The main finding of the project was that preschoolers’ achievement levels improved because of the awareness raised in parents on child development.

Kurtulmus (2016) in his study parental involvement dimensions in early childhood education showed that parents moderately involve in their children’s education during early childhood. Study also indicated that parents participated in reading books and home type of activities with their children frequently. The study indicated that parents help their children to understand how to complete their activities successfully.

Jensen (2010) considered the relationship between parental opinions of play and other parenting roles about his thesis on parental perspective of play with preschool children. This research found that parents’ opinions of play were very

much related their acceptance of creativity, belief in themselves as educators, and their ability to handle the stress of parenting.

**AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To identify parents’ awareness about children’s learning in the preschools
2. To examine parents’ expectancy towards their children’s learning from the preschools.
3. To identify any difficulties faced by the parents sending their children to preschools.
4. To make suggestions to overcome difficulties faced by parents’ sending their children to preschools.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach was used as the research design in this study. To achieve the above objectives, purposive sampling method was used to select the sample. Twenty preschools were selected as the sample in this study. From twenty preschools hundred and sixty parents were randomly selected for the focus group discussions. Data were collected through focus group discussions from the parents (6-8 parents were selected from each preschool) Discussions were held after closure of the preschools. Discussions were recorded and notes also were taken where necessary. Narrative analysis was used for data analyzing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data has been analyzed in line with objectives of the study.

## 1.0 Parents’ awareness about children’s learning in the preschools

**Parents’ views on activities**

Most of the preschool teachers from non-government encourage children to write simple letters and numbers. However, eighty percent of the sample from the government preschools did demonstrate the use of paper activities for their children. According to the above parents are aware of activities children engage in preschools. Non- government preschools children did more paperwork than children in government preschools.

# Teaching - learning methods

Majority of parents from non-government schools have identified some teaching methods their teachers used in preschools such a as activity books, children’s paper, story books, storytelling, writing some numbers and letters. The following excerpts demonstrated how preschool teachers use methods when they are involving in teaching -leaning processes.

“Our children do some activities at home related to preschool work. This preschool does sets of homework. (Non-Government)

“We are satisfied with the progress of the children, because of our children like to engage in various types of activities. The preschool does not encourage writing, reading, but we ask the teacher to do at least in the third term at the end of their last year” (Government)

Parents have the understood the methods and they recognized that writing is the commonly used activity. Comparing both parents of government preschools have recognized storytelling, writing and reading are the other teaching methods that were used.

# Reception of a child

According to the following statements some parents from non-government and government were satisfied, and some were not satisfied with the education of their children. Some excerpts from some parents’ groups from the both non-government and government preschools are given below.

“Every day one of the teachers welcome the children” (Non-government)

“Some days the children are welcomed. The teacher comes from faraway and can be a little bit late. This situation is not good for our children (Non-government) someone from the preschool welcomes our children. There are volunteer teachers also teaching there. Our Head teacher or somebody comes to the front. It is very seldom that no one welcomes” (Government)

Parents of both types of preschools have identified welcoming children as a good approach to keep children happy.

# Communication strategies

The following statements below shows what non-government preschool parents have mentioned several methods used for communication.

“The teacher leaves the messages in the notice book. There is a good communication connection with the teacher and the parents. Sometimes the teacher will call us”. (Non-government)

“We meet the teacher every day after the preschool. “The teacher tells me everything what they need”. (Non-government) Some messages we put on the notice board. Every day our children talk to us. We are satisfied with communication” (government)

Parents from both types of preschools mentioned that teachers maintained good communication with parents

## Progress of learning during the year

The following statements show that non-government preschool parents have mentioned that they were satisfied with development of their children progress and some were not. The government preschool parents have mentioned that they were satisfied with development of their children progress.

“The teacher has a good knowledge about preschool education and children. We can see the difference in our children day by day” (Non-government)

“Our children learn a lot of things when they visit some places, but they should learn more things from the books, because when they go to the schools our children will face a lot of problems if they don’t know the letters, numbers and sentences”. (Non-government)

“We are happy. We can see the difference over time. At the beginning our children did not know anything, but now they do”. (Government)

## 2.0 Parents’ expectancy towards their children’s learning from the preschools

Parents mentioned that it was important to teach English and that children should be guided correctly. Also, the basic knowledge of English and skills for mathematics and language should be taught in preschools. They expected teachers to report the progress of their children. They should identifying children’s strengths and weaknesses and provide extra support to prepare them for admission into popular schools. Therefore, children should learn languages, especially English and other subjects also. Seventy percent of the sample request that teachers should give homework to children.

# 3.0 Difficulties faced by parents in sending children to the preschools

Most of the both types of parents’ groups mentioned that they were not satisfied with the level of English teaching. Some preschool teachers teach English, but parents were not satisfied. According to them letter writing, writing sentences and counting numbers, writing numbers were given by preschool teachers, but the level of activities was not adequate. Reading English was also important but teaches did not give such opportunities for them. Some parents mentioned that they did not have time to support children to do work at home, because they were employed. However, most of the teachers from Non- government preschools give activities but they faced difficulties in completing them, because they did not have good understanding about those activities. Some parents are more interested on academic work and they said that teachers pay more attention only on some children.

# 4.0 Suggestions to overcome difficulties faced by parents’ sending their children to preschools

There should be parental awareness programs conducted on developmental aspects of a child in preschool years. Also, parents need to be told that the level of the capacity of children and to realize learning it should combine the element of fun. Simultaneously, teacher training should be also planned under a standard programme. It is important to keep good relationship between parents and preschool teachers.

# CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the preschools from non - government and a few government preschools conduct a lot of activities, however, some were beyond the preschool curriculum. Parents with children in both sectors request letter writing, writing sentences and writing numbers to be a part of the curriculum. As a result of that, most of teachers encourage paperwork in class. Reception of a child is one of the most important factors to motivate children and encourage them. Both types of preschool sectors used effective methods for their communications. Based on the parents’ request homework was given by some teachers which made some parents happy. Progress of learning during the year was satisfactory due to the fulfillment of their requirements, however, some parents have high expectations for their children.

Government should make monitoring a part as the state responsibility to find out what is happening and what support needs to be provided for the total development of their country’s preschool child. Awareness raising programs for parents should be planed and implemented to create a positive attitude on activity- based learning in all preschools. It should encourage the fostering of good understanding and good relationship among preschool teachers and parents.

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