

Quality of ECE Programmes in Government and Private Sectors in Bangalore District of Karnataka State

K. SUJEEVANAMMA*¹ AND K. ANURADHA²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar and ²Professor

Department of Home Science, S.V. University, Tirupati (A.P.) India

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to assess the quality of ECE programmes in different sectors of Bangalore District of Karnataka state. The study sample were 120 pre-schools (60 Government and 60 Private), selected from six ICDS projects of Bangalore, Karnataka state using stratified random sampling technique. The ECE Quality Assessment checklist was developed based on Quality Standards Framework given by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD, 2013), and standardized was used to collect the data. Results revealed that according to quality indicators, 90 per cent of Anganwadicentres (AWCs) fell under average category and 10 percent under good category. With regard to private pre-schools 40% of sample schools fell under poor and an equal percent under average category. Around 20 per cent of pre-schools run by private management were graded as 'good'. Comparatively, schools run by Government scored more on aspects of Interaction, Health nutrition, personal care and routine, Organization and management and Children experiences and learning opportunities. Whereas, pre-schools run by private management scored more on Infrastructure/physical environment and Assessment and outcome measures.

Key Words : Quality of ECE Programmes, Anganwadis, Private pre-schools, Grading of pre-schools

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood period which extends from around two to six years of age is acknowledged as the most crucial period, when the rate of development is very high and foundations are laid for cognitive, physical, social, emotional, language and personality development. This period is crucial especially because a large proportion of human brain development takes place after birth as a result of interactions with the environment. Given the importance of the early years in shaping a child's brain development, every child has a right to an enriched and supportive environment in order to reach the full potential. Early childhood education is directly linked to the effectiveness and efficiency of success in later stages of education. Children who attend preschool are more likely to be ready for primary school and are more likely to persist and succeed in education. Quality preschool education plays an important compensatory role in

reducing the developmental gap between children from resource backgrounds and their more privileged peers.

All children have the right to education resources and services that support their development in early childhood. In addition to young children's right to early childhood education, quality early childhood development interventions are proven to alleviate the effects of poverty on children, families, women, communities, and societies.

ECCE programs are typically rated on two dimensions of quality – process quality and structure quality. The interactions, activities, materials, learning opportunities, and health and safety routines are observed and rated as a measure of process quality. The second dimension, structural quality, includes the size of each group of children, the adult-child ratio, and the education and training of the teachers and staff.

Experimental research demonstrated sustained high-quality early care and education (ECE) can mitigate the consequences of poverty into adulthood (Andres *et al.*,

2022). High-quality early childhood services not only benefit the children and families served, but also have far-reaching economic benefits for society as a whole (Heckman and Masterov, 2004).

Equally compelling as research on early intervention is brain-development research by neuroscientists and developmental psychologists have concluded that responsive, predictable relationships are essential for healthy brain development (Thompson, 2008). A focus on the quality of relationships permeates high-quality early care and education services. The relationship between the early childhood educators and children, between children and their peers, and between early childhood educators and family members, matters in maintaining the quality of pre-schools.

Considering the importance of early education, Ministry of Women Child Development (MWCD, 2013) has framed the Quality Standards Framework. These quality standards are being framed for ECCE Centre's across all sectors. These are applicable to all ECCE provisions that cater to care, learning and developmental needs of young children from birth-6 years. Considering the standards framed, there is a need to assess the quality of ECE Centres and provision and quality of services by existing pre-schools under different initiatives like public, private, NGOs etc.

With this background a need was felt to develop a tool to assess the quality of ECE using the quality standards framework and to assess the quality of existing pre-schools.

The following are the objectives framed.

Objectives :

- To assess the quality of ECE Centres run by Government sector.
- To assess the quality of ECE Centres run by private sector.
- To Find out the difference in sample ECE Centres run by Government and Private sectors in terms of quality standards.
- To find out the association between quality of ECE Centre and type of management.
- Based on the objectives the following null hypotheses were framed.

Hypotheses :

- The sample preschools did not differ significantly in their quality score according to type of ECE Centre.

- There was no association between quality of ECE Centre and type of management.

METHODOLOGY

Sample :

A Sample of 120 pre-schools were selected from both Government (Anganwadi Centre's) and Private preschools in Bangalore, Karnataka state, using systematic stratified random sampling method. Among the 6 Government ICDS projects in Bangalore 10 Anganwadi Centres were identified from each project randomly. Private pre-schools nearer to selected Anganwadi Centres were identified and thus, 120 pre-schools (60 Govt. and 60 Private) constituted the sample.

Tools:

ECE Quality Assessment Checklist (ECE QAC):

The ECE Quality Assessment Checklist was developed by the investigator based on Quality Standards Framework given by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD, 2013) which mentioned seven indices of quality viz., 1. Interaction, 2. Health, Nutrition, Personal Care and Routine, 3. Protective Care and Safety, 4. Infrastructure/ Physical Environment, 5. Organization and Management, 6. Children Experiences and Learning Opportunities, 7. Assessment and Outcome Measures. The data was collected using observation and Interview methods. The checklist was scored based on the type of statements. A score of '1' was given for 'Yes' and '0' for 'No'. Thus there were total 138 statements and the expected minimum score was 0 and maximum was 138. Higher the score indicates that ECE Centres have good quality provisions and less the score shows that ECE Centres have poor quality standards.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was pooled, tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis. The descriptive statistics for quality scores according to the type of pre-school is given in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for Quality Assessment score of sample pre-schools run by Government (Anganwadi Centre's) and Private Pre-schools and also for total sample pre-schools (N=120).

From Table 1 it is known that the mean Quality score was more for Anganwadi Centre's (Mean=86.300; SD=9.589; range= 73-106) than private pre-schools

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Quality Assessment Score According to Type of Management

Frequency Distribution	ECE Centres Quality assessment Score		
	Govt. (AWC) (n=60)	Private (n=60)	Total (N=120)
Mean	86.300	75.200	80.750
Median	85.50	74.50	83.50
Mode	73	50	74
Std. Deviation	9.589	19.286	16.157
Range	33	58	58
Minimum	73	50	50
Maximum	106	108	108

quality score (Mean=75.200, SD=19.286; range = 50-108).

The frequency distribution of scores of ECE quality checklist according to type of school is given in Table 2.

Table 2 depicts that frequency distribution of ECE Centre's Quality score across Govt. and Private Pre-schools. From table it is known that half of the Govt. pre-schools (Anganwadis) and 20 per cent of private schools fell in the mean range of quality scores (76-90).

As mentioned in methodology the ECE quality assessment checklist had 7 components viz., Interaction,

Health, Nutrition, Personal Care and Routine, Protective Care and Safety, Infrastructure/ Physical Environment, Organization and Management, Children Experiences and Learning Opportunities and Assessment and Outcome Measures. Based on these components scores were obtained to measure the quality of ECE Centres. Means and S.Ds were calculated.

The first hypothesis framed was “*The sample preschools did not differ significantly in their quality score according to type of ECE Centre*”.

To test this hypothesis t-test was conducted and presented in Table 3.

When the sample Anganwadi Centres (AWC) and private schools were compared based on ECE quality score from Table 3, it is clear that out of seven components the sample AWCs scored more than private ECE centres in four components. The four components were Interaction, Health nutrition, personal care and routine, Organization and management and Children experiences and learning opportunities. Among these four components it is interesting to know that especially in the second component i.e. Health nutrition, personal care and routine more variation has been seen between AWCs and private pre-schools. The t-value 88.135 was highly

Table 2 : Frequency Distribution of Quality Score of ECE Centre's Across Govt. and Private Centre's

Sr. No.	Quality Score	Govt. (AWC) (n=60)		Private (n=60)		Total (N=120)	
		Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Below 60	0	0.0	24	40.0	24	20.0
2.	61 – 75	12	20.0	12	20.0	24	20.0
3.	76 – 90	30	50.0	12	20.0	42	35.0
4.	91 -105	12	20.0	6	10.0	18	15.0
5.	106 and Above	6	10.0	6	10.0	12	10.0
6.	Total	60	100	60	100	120	100.0

Table 3 : Mean and SD values of Components of ECE Quality Scores and t- values

Sr. No.	ECE Centre Quality Components	ECE Centre Quality Score				t-test	
		Govt. (AWC) (n=60)		Private (n=60)		t-value	Sig.
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1.	Interaction	10.200	.988	9.800	1.338	1.863@	0.065
2.	Health nutrition, personal care and routine	11.700	.788	2.100	.303	88.135**	0.000
3.	Protective care and safety	5.700	1.197	5.700	2.257	0.000@	1.000
4.	Infrastructure/ physical environment	13.700	3.316	15.100	4.120	2.051*	0.043
5.	Organization and management	18.200	3.118	14.600	5.359	4.498**	0.000
6.	Children experiences and learning opportunities	20.500	2.753	17.600	4.648	4.159**	0.000
7.	Assessment and outcome measures	6.300	0.908	10.300	2.431	11.941**	0.000
	Total	86.300	9.589	75.200	19.286	3.992**	0.000

Note: **significant at 0.01 level; *significant at 0.05 level; @-Not significant

Table 4 : Grading of Govt. and Private Early Childhood Education Centres based on ECEQAC Score and Chi-square values

Sr. No.	Grading of ECE Centre (Based on Quality Score)	Type of ECE Centre			Chi-square
		Govt. (AWC)	Private	Total	
1.	Poor	0 (0.0)	24 (40.0)	24 (20.0)	$\chi^2=37.538$ ($p=0.000^{**}$) df= 2
2.	Average	54 (90.0)	24 (40.0)	78 (65.0)	
3.	Good	6 (10.0)	12 (20.0)	18 (15.0)	
4.	Total	60 (100.0)	60 (100.0)	120 (100.0)	

**significant at 0.01 level: ($p<0.01$)

significant. The best practice in AWC was that the nutritional supplementation has been provided which was totally absent in private pre-schools.

When remaining components were observed, in components of Infrastructure/ physical environment and Assessment and outcome measures private pre-schools scored more than sample AWCs. The private management which expects profits provides good infrastructure to attract parents and young children which may be the reason. The t-value for this component was significant ($t=2.055$, $p<0.05$).

Hence, null hypothesis was partially rejected and it can be said that “*The sample preschools differed significantly in their quality score according to type of ECE Centre*”. The schools run by Government scored more on Interaction, Health nutrition, personal care and routine, Organization and management and Children experiences and learning opportunities whereas schools run by private management scored more on Infrastructure/ Physical Environment and Assessment and outcome measures.

The second hypothesis framed was “*There was no association between quality of ECE Centre and type of management*”.

Based on mean quality score + or – 1 SD the sample pre-schools were classified into three different levels as poor, average and good.

To test the hypothesis Chi-square test was performed and presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows grading of Govt. and Private Early Childhood Education Centre’s based on ECE Quality Assessment Check List (ECEQAC) Score and Chi-square values.

Table 4 shows that there was significant association between the type of ECE centre and the grades obtained to the centre based on quality score. The Chi-square was

significant ($\chi^2=37.538$ $P<0.01$). Ninety per cent of sample Anganwadi Centres (Government ECE Centres) were categorised as average and 10 per cent were categorized as good. Forty per cent of the sample private pre-schools were graded as poor and the equal percent was graded as average. Around 20 per cent of pre-schools run by private management were graded as ‘good’.

Hence, null hypothesis was rejected and it can be said that “*there was significant association between the type of ECE centre and grading of ECE centre based on quality score*”.

Sheridan and Samuelsson (2013) while assessing the role of stakeholders on quality of pre-schools mentioned that high- quality preschool was a product of the combined efforts of stakeholders on different system levels, conforming the significance of a comprehensive perspective when researching conditions for children’s learning in preschool.

It is an encouraging result that no Govt. Anganwadi Centre has fell into the poor grade. The continuous effort of Govt. of India to uplift the quality of AWCs through ICDS programme has been successful and still focus is required to move the Anganwadi Centres in average grade to the category of ‘good’. Forty per cent of private pre-schools were found to be under poor category and this calls for attention and care should be taken by Govt. while granting permission to such private pre-schools.

From the above discussion the following conclusions were drawn.

Conclusion:

- The sample preschools differed significantly in their quality score according to type of ECE Centre.
- *The schools run by Government scored more on Interaction, Health nutrition,*

personal care and routine, Organization and management and Children experiences and learning opportunities whereas schools run by private management scored more on Infrastructure/ Physical Environment and Assessment and outcome measures.

- There was significant association between the type of ECE Centre and grading of ECE Centre based on quality score.
 - *Ninety per cent of sample Anganwadi Centres (Government ECE Centres) were categorised as average and 10 per cent were categorized as good. Forty percent of the sample private pre-schools were graded as poor and the equal percent was graded as average. Around 20 per cent of pre-schools run by private management were graded as 'good'.*

Implications:

The results of the present study revealed that the quality of sample pre-schools differed significantly according to the type of management. Schools run by Government scored more on aspects of Interaction, Health nutrition, personal care and routine, Organization and management and Children experiences and learning

opportunities which need to be implemented in private sector also. Similarly, improvement of Infrastructure/ physical environment and Assessment and outcome measures in Government sector need to be addressed.

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