

## ATTITUDE REGARDING PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION: A STUDY BASED ON PRE-SCHOOLS IN JAFFNA

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### **Introduction**

“Learning begins at Birth” this generalization can be transformed into reality if a nation can provide to its young children a stimulating environment and safeguard their rights for their holistic development. More specifically early childhood is the ideal period when the child loves learning to acquire control over the environment and to explore it. Early childhood education in these days receives greater attention as the first and essential stage in the basic education process because of its importance for the all round development – physical, social, emotional, intellectual and moral of the child.

However, the pre-school educational activities have generally been carried out by different institution in our region, the true purpose, the significance and focus of pre-school activities are in vague condition. As a result, many drawbacks and insufficiency continue to exist. Thus, this study attempts to reveal the opinion and attitude of pre-school teachers, administrators and parents on the three aspects such as true purpose of pre-school; significance of pre-school and focus of pre-school activities.

### **Methodology**

For this study, the investigator has done a comprehensive literature survey on the areas of programme approach (Singh 1997, Swaminathan 1998, Shrestha 1999); pre-school facilities (Katz and Mohanthy 1985, Decker 1992, Singh 1997) and curriculum practices (Freidu 1993, Aggarwal 1997, Shrestha 1999). Among the above mentioned studies certain literatures have helped the investigator to formulate the objectives, the area of studies, and the appropriate research tool & research methodology.

Based on these ideas descriptive survey method has been adopted for this study by the investigator. A questionnaire was developed by the researcher to identify the opinion / attitude regarding pre-school education from the three types of people such as pre-school teachers, administrators and parents on the following aspects: True purpose of pre-school, Significance of pre-school and Focus of pre-school activities. The selected sample from the schools in Jaffna consisted of 72 pre-school teachers, 63 administrators, and 144 parents. The researcher has given a number of questions all of which are related to the above three aspects and found out the answers. All responses were converted into percentage and percentage analysis has been used.

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

Findings of the research studies are as follows:

1. Majority of the administrator 93.7% and average of the preschool teachers 51.4% considered early childhood education as preparing child for primary school.
2. Majority of the administrators 77.8% and preschool teachers 54.2% gave importance for pre-school education because of developing the preparatory requirement for school.
3. Only 23.6% of the pre-school teachers gave priority for rapid child growth.

4. According to the pre-school teachers the existing pre school education had focused on socialization 33.3%, health and nutrition 19.4%, mental development 15.3%, respectively and for academic achievement 51.4%.
5. The majority of the parents 65.3% opinion reveals that the parent send their children to the pre school for teaching of 3 R<sup>s</sup> and 52.1% for school readiness.
6. Minority of parents accepted that development of good health habit 33.3%, social development 32.6%, creative development 29.2%, development of motor skills 26.4%, and emotional maturity 10.4%

It was found that majority of the pre school teachers and administrators defined Early Childhood Education (ECE) as preparing child for primary school and also gave importance for developing school readiness. Minority of the teachers focused on health and nutrition. They had not understood its importance on growth and development of the child. Likewise majority of the parents also regarded ECE as teaching of the 3 R<sup>s</sup> and school readiness. The other development and growth of the child have been almost neglected by them.

All these results reveal that pre school teachers, administrators and parents simply wanted small children to achieve success in the future grades through academic preparation only. They did not seem to have clear concept and understanding of the early childhood education. Therefore they have first to be aware of ECE not as downward extension of primary education process.

Thus, the realization of true concept and significance by the above three participants becomes inevitable and very urgent. It is also necessary on the part of decision makers, educationists and researchers to be attentive in this regard. If not, the true meaning and significance of pre school education could not be realized even though there is increase in the number of pre school and activities in Jaffna.

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