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Effectiveness of Early Childhood Teachers' Pre-service Training Regarding Social and Emotional Development among Children: An Analysis of Pre-Service Teacher Competencies

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| 1. Ms. Sadaf Iqbal | PhD Scholar, Department of Education, Hazara University Mansehra
Email: sadafmansehra@gmail.com |
| 2. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Majoka | (Corresponding Author)
Department of Education, Hazara University Mansehra
Email: iqbalmajoka@yahoo.com |
| 3. Dr. Sadaf Naz | Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Hazara University Mansehra
Email: sadafhu@yahoo.com |

Abstract



The purpose of this study was to review ECE pre-service teachers' training in the context of social and emotional development of children. A mixed method sequential explanatory research design was used. Two research instruments (questionnaire and semi-structured interview) were developed to have an understanding of research problem through the triangulation of data. A sample of 300 teachers was selected through purposive sampling from 8 selected districts of Pakistan (100 teachers were selected from Government Schools, 100 from Beacon House Schools, and 100 from City School System). Quantitative data were analyzed, using chi-square test of independence. A semi-structured interview was administered to 10 teachers from public and private schools (Beacon School System, City School System, and Government school). No significant difference was found in the views of public and private sector teachers regarding most of the factors of social and emotional development. Teachers indicated that pre-service teachers' trainings were ineffective in developing skills among teachers for fostering the social and emotional development of the children. Similarly, findings from qualitative data also indicated that socio-emotional development was not given due consideration in ECE Pre-service teachers' training programs. This research has implications for heads of teacher training institutions, early-year caregivers, and policymakers in Pakistan.

Keywords: Early Child Education, Pre-Service Teacher Training, Socio-Emotional Development (SED)

Introduction

Children need well-balanced social and emotional development to grow as successful individuals in society. Therefore, SED among students is the main purpose of education and has been a major focus of research and practice over the last several decades (Martinsone et al., 2022). It is acknowledged that education and human growth go hand in hand, and that applying and learning social emotional competence—which consists of knowledge, skills, and aptitude—is a crucial aspect of education (CASEL, 2020). Springstein, Growney, and English (2022) indicated that context has long been focused in the study of emotions, it relates to emotional development, highlighting particular elements of the immediate surroundings (familiarity, cognitive demands, and social aspects) as well as sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts situated within ontogenetic development and historical time. Moreover, SED has been regarded as a vital component of the early childhood curriculum (Bertran & Pascal, 2016). Owing the importance of the SED of children in early years, educationists and psychologists have put efforts to explore and describe this phenomenon.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has operationalized SED as a process of learning: (1) self-awareness, (2) social awareness, (3) self-management, (4) positive decision-making, and (5) relationship skills (CASEL, 2021). Mitter and Putcha (2018) stated that social and emotional learning is based on the process by which people gain and apply their knowledge and skills for managing their emotions and showing empathy for others, establishing positive goals for developing and maintaining positive relationships, and making responsible

decisions. Collaborative efforts are required for academic, social, and emotional learning. Usually, young children do not know how to cope with intense feelings. It takes a long time to regulate their emotions. Children who are unable to control their emotions, feel problems in their adjustment in school and are poor in academic performance (Bierman, Domitrovich, Nix, Gest, Welsh, Greenberg, & Gill, 2008). Young children need support in the form of realistic expectations, exemplary role models, and expected routines for emotional regulation (Thompson, 2009; Ulloa, 2011). Cooper, Masi, and Vick (2009) have also asserted that the early years of childhood play a vital role in SED. In this crucial span of life, children may suffer from different problems that may retard their social and emotional development (SED). Therefore, parents and teachers need to play a very important role. Usually, parents are not trained enough to cope with these developmental problems, and this fact signifies the training and professional development of teachers who are involved with early child care and education. Ahmad, Anjum, and Rehman (2015) reported with reference to Pakistan that in both public and private sectors, trained teachers are not available as per need, and facilities are deficient in the private sector and not available in public sector schools. Khan (2018) has reported that the social and emotional development of children is a neglected aspect of ECE in public sector schools. According to Arshad and Zamir (2018), the ECE in Pakistan is facing a lack of trained teachers, a lack of facilities, and a lack of awareness and political will. Therefore, policies and ECE curricula have not been properly implemented in public sector schools so far. Accurate teacher training needs a workforce with qualifications (specialization in Early Childhood Education) as this is the requirement to provide ECE quality education. Therefore, it was considered imperative to analyze the existing pre-service training of ECE teachers with reference to social and emotional development (SED) of the children.

Statement of the Problem

There is a worldwide focus on SED in ECE due to its importance. The government of Pakistan has developed an Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum for the improvement of children's education. Children who have joined high-quality ECE are determined to get valuable benefits in the educational and social spheres. Generally, teacher training institutions do not offer a special training program for ECE. There is a need to meet the requirements of ECE pre-service teachers' training and implementation of SED activities mentioned in the curriculum 2007. In order to bridge the knowledge gap regarding effectiveness of ECE teachers' training programs in Pakistan in terms of SED of children, a study was conducted with the title 'Effectiveness of Early Childhood Teachers' Pre-service Training Regarding Social and Emotional Development Among Children: An Assessment of Pre-Service Teacher Competencies'.

Objectives of the study

- a) To examine the effectiveness of pre-service training in preparing ECE teachers for the social and emotional development of children?
- b) To find out the deficiencies in pre-service teachers training regarding the social and emotional development of children?
- c) To explore the problems faced by ECE teachers in the social and emotional development of children.

Research Questions

1. To what extent pre-service training of ECE teachers is effective for developing the required competencies and skills among ECE teachers for the social and emotional development of children?
2. What is the difference between the views of teachers from the government and private sectors about the effectiveness of pre-service teacher training?
3. What are the deficiencies in pre-service ECE teachers' training regarding the social and emotional development of children?
4. What are the problems faced by ECE teachers in social and emotional development of children?

Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to the ECE teachers from Government schools, BeaconHouse schools and City Schools of the selected districts from 3 provinces i.e. Mansehra, Mardan, Abbottabad and Peshawar in KP; Rawalpindi, Lahore and Chakwal in Punjab; and Maleer in Sindh province.

Review of Related Literature

Schools usually hire teachers with limited or no exposure and experience to tackle with social and emotional abilities of the children (Humphries, Keenan, & Wakschlag, 2012). Teachers training in the context of childrens' need and families' expectations must be paid due consideration for the overall development of the personality of children (Tiko, 2012). Conners-Burrow, Patric, kyzer, and Mekerlvey (2017) as well as Jensen and Rasmusen (2018) have also reported that teachers' professional development plays a very crucial role in fostering social and emotional skills among children. Training programs focused on enabling ECE teachers to cater to the children's social and emotional development are usually rooted in ecological and social interaction theories of development. These theories were presented by Bronfenbrenner (1998) and Vygotsky (1978). Mashburn and Pianta (2010) have described the application of these theories. They are of the view that learning and development take place during the interaction of the child with peers, adults, and learning materials. Learning is more progressive when there is continuity in interaction, and these are matched with the child's ability. Therefore, Hamre et al. (2013) have suggested managing social interactions in the classroom that are instructionally and emotionally supportive, and well-organized.

For developing social and emotional skills, ECE teachers need to provide children autonomy, perseverance, and social and collaborative skills. For fostering autonomy, the ECE teacher needs to provide choices, in order to inculcate autonomous motivation interest, and engagement in learning. This also promotes cognition among learners (Coelho et al., 2019; Cadima et al., 2019; Pianta, 2017). ECE teachers may also provide opportunities for all children to take on roles in the classroom environment which is the characteristic of a high-quality ECE classroom (Christopher & Farran, 2020; Coelho et al., 2019). For fostering perseverance, ECE teacher needs to prepare and motivate children to work on challenging tasks using praise and appreciation (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017) for this purpose, the teachers can also help and train children for task planning (Crook & Evans, 2014). Similarly, for fostering social and collaborative skills among children, the ECE teachers may manage supportive teacher-child interaction, and arrange scaffolding through group work activities, peer interaction (Whitebread et al., 2014), and successfully engaging children in collaborative problem-solving activities (Warneken et al., 2014). ECE teachers can also make use of high-quality playful games, extended conversation among peers and with teachers, and scaffolding through working with more competent peers. Evans and Harvey (2012) pointed out that the most effective learning is not left to chance; it occurs when teachers utilize naturalistic and moment-to-moment experimental opportunities for learning. A less caring classroom acts as a risk factor because it disturbs the social-emotional need of children (Han, Lee, & Suh, 2017). More caring classrooms protect children – suggesting that a curricular emphasis on teaching social and emotional skills is necessary (Hussein, 2013).

In the recent past, research and literature had a deficient focus on the professional development of teachers for fostering the social and emotional competence of students and now a concern in this regard can be observed from educators, parents and policymakers. Bierman, Domitrovich, Nix, Gest, Welsh, Greenberg, and Gill, (2008) have acknowledged that training programs that are more focused on teachers to foster social and emotional competence among children, prove to be more effective in enhancing their social skills and reducing their problem behaviours. UNESCO (2015) reported with reference to Buen Eomienzo, where a training for preschool was conducted to grow as successful individuals in society, fostering interest, motivation, and socio-emotional skills. The training had a significant impact on providing SED support and classroom organization. Moazami-Goadaszi, Zarra – Nezhad, Hatti, Heiskanen and Sajaniemi (2021) evaluated the Roundies program of training early childhood teachers about children's social and emotional learning. The study revealed that teachers rated the training program as highly effective in preparing teachers for fostering social skills like positive interaction skills and improved expression of emotions while coming across different situations.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted using a sequential explanatory research design. This design consists of two distinct phases in which the quantitative part is completed in the first step and the qualitative part of the study is completed in the second phase (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2012). The researcher in the design collects and analyzes the quantitative data at firsts, and then based on these finding the qualitative data is collected and analyzed in the second phase. The second phase (qualitative part of

the study) helps to explain and elaborate the findings of the first phase by conceptualizing the spectrum of perspectives according to the research question (Danaher, 2016). This design is useful in the situation when there is a need to explain the same mechanism through qualitative data after getting results from quantitative data (John, Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

The population of the study

Eight (8) Districts of Pakistan: 3 from KP (Mansehra, Mardan, Peshawar and Abbottabad), one from Sindh (Maleer), and 3 from Punjab (Chakwal, Lahore and Rawalpindi) were selected as target area of the study. All the 3000 qualified ECE teachers in targeted area constituted the population of this study.

Sample of the Study

The sampling process involves the selection of a number of individuals from a defined population of the study. Two different samples were selected in the study i.e. one for quantitative phase of the study and other for qualitative phase of the study. While selecting sample for quantitative part of study multistage sampling was used. At first stage districts were selected from each province using purposive sampling. Those districts were selected purposively where BeaconHouse and City schools were established. At 2nd stage 45 government, 20 Beacon House, and 20 City Schools were selected from the above-mentioned districts through disproportionate sampling. At the 3rd stage, 100 teachers from Government, 100 from Beacon House, and 100 from City Schools were selected using purposive sampling. Only those teachers were selected who had attended pre-service training and had been teaching to students of age 3 to 8 years.

Quantitative Study Sample

Provinces	Beaconhouse Schools	Beaconhouse School teachers	City Schools	City School Teachers	Government Schools	Government School Teachers
Punjab	10	50	10	50	20	50
KP	6	30	6	30	15	25
Sindh	4	20	4	20	10	25
Total	20	100	20	100	45	100

The statistical data about primary schools overall in Pakistan was taken from internet sources (GOP Statistical Department). The sample for the qualitative phase was taken as ten (10) ECE teachers from public and private schools (3 from the Beacon School system, 3 from the City School system, and 4 from Government school) using purposive sampling technique.

Research Instruments

Two instruments: i) a questionnaire about SED in ECE Pre service teachers training; and (ii) interview about SED in ECE Pre service teachers training, were developed after extensive review of related literature. To achieve first objective, a questionnaire with four points Likert type scale was developed in order to explore the viewpoints of ECE teachers about their developed competencies for the social and emotional development of children as a result of completing their professional degrees. Each statement had four-point Likert type scale (from 4 up to 1 respectively). The points on the scale were: 4 for V. E= very Effective; 3 for S. L= Satisfactory level; 2 for V. W=Very weak; and 1 for V.I = Very Ineffective. A semi structured interview was developed for exploring the role of pre-service training in preparing ECE teachers for SED of children, and the competencies of teachers to deal with SED of children.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was presented to 4 experts in the field of ECE for the process of validation. They thoroughly reviewed the questionnaire for its face validity, content validity, and construct validity. They suggested a few changes as well as the addition of some statements in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was improved in the light of feedback from the experts and then tried out among 10 ECE teachers other than the sample for pilot testing. This process further highlighted some language difficulties and ambiguity of some terms which were removed at the final stage. The data obtained through pilot testing was used for calculating the reliability coefficient. The reliability of this questionnaire was found to be 0.850.

Validity and reliability of the interview

For validating the semi-structured interview, it was also presented to 3 (three) experts for reviewing it in the light of objectives. The suggestions from the experts were incorporated, and it was also

administered to three ECE teachers for pilot testing. Pilot testing highlighted the administration problems, time, and required pace and space for conducting the interviews. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of the qualitative research were maintained during the data collection and interpretation process. For this purpose, the interviews were administered in a very flexible way in a conducive environment. While interpreting the qualitative data, member checking, and debriefing were used. Five respondents checked and reviewed the themes and concepts to assure that analyses and interpretations really depicted the phenomenon being investigated.

Data Collection

The data was collected through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews for the quantitative and through qualitative phases respectively. In order to collect these data, the researchers personally visited selected institutions and administered questionnaires after having permission from the administration and consent from the participants. For conducting interviews, the selected teachers were contacted for setting dates and times, and then their interviews were conducted accordingly. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the information provided by them.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Chi-square, Mean scores, and percentage were used as statistical tools for analyzing the quantitative data. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. For this analysis, general themes were sought at the first step, and all the themes were identified and categorized in the second step. Then the themes were aligned with the research objectives and the fitness of the themes with data was reviewed. This process helped in filling the gaps and refinement of the themes. Finally, the research themes were labeled, finalized, and the write-up was completed as proposed by Lochmiller (2021).

Results

The results of quantitative data are presented in 4 tables. The first 2 tables depict social development and the other two tables are about Emotional development.

Pre-service training for social development

To explore the effectiveness of Pre-service training in enabling ECE teachers to use different activities and practices to support social development among children, 11 statements were included in the questionnaire. The responses of the participants have been analyzed and interpreted in the following table.

Table.1 Effectiveness of Pre-service training for activities to support Social development

Sr. No	Statement	Sector	Response Frequency				χ^2	P
			VE	SL	VW	NA		
1	Effective Problem solving skills	Govt.	5 (5%)	29 (29%)	60 (60%)	6 (6%)	2.139	0.544
		Private	10 (5%)	43 (21%)	135 (67%)	12 (6%)		
2	Appropriate conflict resolution	Govt.	20 (20%)	20 (20%)	55 (55%)	5 (5%)	7.314	0.062
		Private	10 (5%)	32 (16%)	140 (70%)	18 (9%)		
3	Providing opportunities for Cooperative plays	Govt.	5 (5%)	36 (36%)	53 (53%)	6 (6%)	7.943	0.047
		Private	28 (14%)	61 (30%)	99 (49%)	12 (6%)		
4	providing opportunities for interaction	Govt.	15 (15%)	30 (30%)	52 (52%)	3 (3%)	3.410	0.332
		Private	32 (16%)	50 (25%)	94 (47%)	24 (12%)		
5	Modifying situations to prevent problems	Govt.	5 (5%)	25 (25%)	65 (65%)	5 (5%)	1.239	0.744
		Private	10 (5%)	39 (20%)	141 (70%)	10 (5%)		
6	Using Positive Guidance-Messages	Govt.	6 (6%)	33 (33%)	55 (55%)	6 (6%)	0.635	0.888
		Private	12 (6%)	75 (37%)	101 (50%)	12 (6%)		
7	Positive Guidance-Choices	Govt.	7	28	58	7		

	(7%)	(28%)	(58%)	(7%)		
Private	14	36	140	10		
	(7%)	(18%)	(70%)	(5%)	5.050	0.168
Private	10	74	104	12		
	(5%)	(37%)	(52%)	(6%)		

V. E= very Effective; S. L= Satisfactory level; V. W=Very weak; N. A = Not at all

Results regarding the effectiveness of Pre-service training of ECE teachers indicate that the majority of teachers of both public and private sectors viewed very weak to develop teachers' competence in helping children to use effective problem-solving skills and appropriate conflict resolution, and providing opportunities for interaction, modifying situations to prevent problems, and using positive guidance-messages and choices. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the views of ECE teachers from the public and private sectors ($P>0.05$).

Table.1 Effectiveness of Pre-service training for developing understanding among children about society

Sr. No	Statement	Sector	Response Frequency				χ^2	P
			VE	SL	VW	NA		
		Private	14 (7%)	36 (18%)	140 (70%)	10 (5%)		
1	Children understanding about- Heritage	Govt.	25 (25%)	27 (27%)	43 (43%)	5 (5%)	26.536	0.000
		Private	10 (5%)	77 (38%)	98 (49%)	15 (8%)		
2	Children understanding about-culture	Govt.	5 (5%)	39 (39%)	50 (50%)	6 (6%)	0.271	0.965
		Private	10 (5%)	84 (42%)	94 (47%)	12 (6%)		
3	Children understanding about-peers	Govt.	5 (5%)	30 (30%)	60 (60%)	5 (5%)	6.932	0.074
		Private	26 (13%)	52 (26%)	108 (54%)	14 (7%)		
4	Children understanding about-neighbors	Govt.	5 (5%)	39 (39%)	50 (50%)	6 (6%)	.000	1.000
		Private	10 (5%)	74 (37%)	104 (52%)	12 (6%)		

V. E= very Effective; S. L= Satisfactory level; V. W=Very weak; N. A = Not at all

In table 2, the results regarding the effectiveness of Pre-service training of ECE teachers indicate that teachers of both public and private sectors viewed the pre-service as very weak to develop teachers' competence in fostering understanding about heritage, culture, peers, and neighbours. Moreover, there was no significant difference ($P>0.05$) between the views of teachers from both sectors regarding culture, peers, and neighbours. However, the teachers from the private sector viewed fostering an understanding of heritage as significantly ($p,0.05$) weak as compared to teachers from the public sector.

Pre-service training for emotional development

In order to find the effectiveness of Pre-service training for emotional development of children, 12 statements were included in the questionnaire that have been analyzed and interpreted in the underlying table.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Pre-service training for emotional development

Sr. No	Statement	Sector	Response Frequency				χ^2	P
			VE	SL	VW	NA		
1	Helping children to deal with stress	Govt.	27 (27%)	15 (15%)	52 (52%)	6 (6%)	30.474	0.000
		Private	13 (6%)	60 (30%)	100 (50%)	27 (13%)		
2	Deal with change	Govt.	7	33	49	11		

			(7%)	(33%)	(49%)	(11%)	11.338	.010
		Private	33	45	110	12		
			(7%)	(23%)	(55%)	(6%)		
3	Encourage children to behave with respect	Govt.	20	16	45	19	17.226	.001
			(20%)	(16%)	(45%)	(19%)		
		Private	17	43	127	13		
			(8%)	(21%)	(63%)	(6%)		
4	Helping each child to be accepted	Govt.	9	29	50	12		
			(9%)	(29%)	(50%)	(12%)		
		Private	18	57	101	24	0.009	1.000
			(9%)	(29%)	(51%)	(12%)		
5	Learning appropriate techniques	Govt.	4	14	75	7		
			(4%)	(14%)	(75%)	(7%)		
		Private	27	48	111	14	0.773	0.856
			(13%)	(24%)	(55%)	(7%)		
6	Positive Guidance-Natural and logical consequences	Govt.	10	18	65	7	0.262	0.967
			(10%)	(18%)	(65%)	(7%)		
		Private	20	37	128	15		
			(10%)	(19%)	(64%)	(8%)		
7	Encourage children to develop self-control	Govt.	6	14	75	5	27.489	0.000
			(6%)	(14%)	(75%)	(5%)		
		Private	12	32	145	11		
			(6%)	(32%)	(72%)	(5%)		
8	Encouragement to motivate children	Govt.	20	30	44	6		
			(20%)	(30%)	(44%)	(6%)		
		Private	25	30	85	60	0.120	0.989
			(12%)	(15%)	(42.5%)	(30%)		

The analysis of table 3 shows the effectiveness of in-service training for ECE teachers regarding the emotional development of the children. The statistical values indicate that teachers of both public and private sectors viewed the in-service training as very weak in helping children to deal with stress, deal with change and encourage children to behave with respect. The in-service training was significantly weaker in the view of private sectors teachers in helping children to deal with stress ($X^2=30.474$, $p<0.05$) dealing with change ($X^2=11.34$, $p<0.05$), and encouraging children to behave with respect ($X^2=17.23$, $p<0.05$) furthermore, analysis indicates the teachers of both public and private sector viewed the in-service training weak in enabling teachers to help each child to be accepted ($X^2=0.009$, $p>0.05$), and learning appropriate technique to control emotion ($X^2=0.773$, $p>0.05$); and there was no significant difference in the views of respondents in this regard.

Besides these aspects of training, the statistical values indicate that the ECE teachers of the public and private sectors viewed in-service training as very weak in enabling them to provide positive guidance about natural and logical consequences, encouraging children to develop self-control, and encouraging children to motivate them. The teachers of both sectors had no significant difference in their view regarding the weak effect for positive guidance about consequences ($X^2=0.262$, $p<0.05$) and encouraging children for the purpose of motivation ($X^2=0.120$, $p>0.05$) However, the teachers of private sector viewed in-service training significantly more weak the teachers of the private sector regarding encouraging children to develop self-control ($X^2=27.489$, $p<0.05$).

Table 47: Effectiveness of Pre-service training for establishing environment supportive for emotional development

Sr. No.	Statement	Sector	Response Frequency				χ^2	P
			VE	SL	VW	NA		
1	Establishing environment to Foster trust	Govt.	7	28	55	10	1.012	0.798
			(7%)	(28%)	(55%)	(10%)		
		Private	14	47	119	20		
			(7%)	(23%)	(59%)	(10%)		
2	Establishing environment to Foster respect	Govt.	8	15	70	7	0.032	0.998
			(8%)	(15%)	(70%)	(7%)		
		Private	16	22	148	14		
			(8%)	(11%)	(74%)	(7%)		

3	Establishing environment to Foster cooperation	Govt.	6 (6%)	29 (29%)	60 (60%)	5 (5%)	0.406	0.152
		Private	11 (6%)	58 (29%)	121 (61%)	10 (5%)		
4	Establishing environment to Foster appropriate behavior	Govt.	5 (5%)	21 (21%)	69 (69%)	5 (5%)	0.042	0.998
		Private	10 (5%)	32 (16%)	148 (74%)	10 (5%)		

Table 4 shows the effectiveness of in-service training program in enabling ECE teachers to establish an environment supportive for the development of emotional development. The statistical analysis of statements 1,2 and 4 shows that the majority of ECE teachers in public and private sectors viewed in-service as very weak in enabling ECE teachers to establish an environment that is supportive to foster trust, respect, cooperation, and appropriate behaviour among children. Furthermore, there was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the views of teachers from the public and private sectors.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

A semi-structured interview probing the effectiveness of pre-service training of ECE teachers in Pakistan was administered to 10 purposively selected ECE teachers. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Through this analysis, there emerged three main themes, deficiencies and strengths of pre-service teacher training, problems faced by ECE teachers in social-emotional development; and suggested measures for improving ECE pre-service training. These themes have been described as under.

Deficiencies and strengths of pre-service training

This theme had further sub-themes as: theoretical knowledge about child development; deficient practicum; lack of classroom practice; lack of examples and activities SED; and lack of guidance for SED.

- Theoretical knowledge about child development**

The pre-service training contains content about theories pertaining to the social and emotional development of children. However, no practical experience is provided in this regard. While describing this fact, a respondent said,

The current curriculum is proper but ECE was not given due consideration in my B.Ed. classes by teachers. But what I wanted to say that I learned a lot from my experience in pre-service teaching about how to deal with children socially and emotionally and how to make them responsible citizens, not from my B.Ed. classes (R:2).

Another ECE teacher added,

During my pre-service training, I learned everything theoretically but at that time as a dummy in the classroom. But now, during in-service I use to work in a homeless shelter in the preschool room, I learned a lot about social/emotional development in that classroom (R: 6).

- Deficient practicum**

The prospective teachers are not provided the experience and training in ECE classes. They are not made to plan lessons and give model lessons in early childhood education classes. For example, a teacher explained,

In pre-service training, different types of activities need to be taught to engage the students and groom their social capabilities. They should also be taught how to deal with different types of students and how to pacify their emotional needs but unfortunately during our practicum, we were not provided these practices (R:8).

Another teacher added,

Teachers are not taught in their pre-service training to socialize with their students. They aren't taught the concept of cooperation and sharing. They are not taught how to work in groups or partnerships. They are also not taught how to handle conflicts. These things must be shared with student teachers during practicum (R:3).

- **Lack of examples and activities for social and emotional development**

Pre-service training for ECE teachers does not provide ample examples and activities to cope with different situations that teachers come across in the classrooms of children. While expressing views an ECE teacher said,

In the curriculum of B.Ed. program ECE was not given due consideration in my classes by the teachers. Although I wanted to learn about practical examples and activities to deal with children socially and emotionally and grow them as responsible citizens, but program outline did not provide these activities, examples, and guidelines in B.Ed. classes (R:2).

Another teachers described this fact as,

In pre service trainings different type of activities need to be taught to engage the students and to groom their social capabilities. They should also be taught how to deal with different types of students and how to pacify their emotional needs but unfortunately during our training we were not provided examples and activities to practice (R: 6).

- **Lack of guidance for SED**

The teacher training institutions lack in specialized educators in ECE. Therefore, the pre-service trainees do not get proper guidance to deal with children. While explaining this fact an ECE teacher said,

Training to deal with social and emotional development process, requires guidance to participate in practical activities, games, lesson planning, and manage classroom environment. During practicum when I planned lesson for ECE level teaching, my practicum supervisor advised me to plan lesson for upper classes as no one among the educators have specialization in ECE, therefore guidance for dealing with ECE is little bit difficult (R: 1).

Similarly, another teacher expressed her views as,

Main problem is that during practicum teaching I had not gone through the process practically for social and emotional growth of children. I can quote that teacher educators in our institution were not specialized in ECE area, and the school where my practicum was arranged had no ECE classroom as it had no primary section (R:7).

Problems faced by ECE teachers in fostering social and emotional development

ECE teachers usually face problems that are related to classroom management. The classroom of pre-schoolers is different from grown-ups and teenagers. The teachers are not trained to cope with different situations that are usually expected in the pre-schoolers classroom. Besides, teachers face problems that are related to individual differences. For example, one the teacher said,

Some children are very problematic, they are never ready to sit on one seat and one place. Such children create problems in the whole class, and I really find it difficult to control them. (R: 5).

The other teacher explained her problem as,

Engaging children in different activities and keeping at task is a big issue for me. Whenever I plan an activity, it is rarely completed according to my planning. Because, during activity some children go on the other way and start some other distracting activity (R: 6).

Suggestions a specialized course for ECE

ECE teachers need a specialization in the field of ECE at teacher training institution that may cover SED of children with special focus on practical activities, and classroom experiences during practicum. For example, an ECE teacher said,

When I got training, no specialization was offered in early childhood education rather our B.Ed. course and practicum was focused on teaching classes at elementary level contents and classes. I think, specialization in ECE covering ECE literature, pedagogies, and practicum is necessary to deal with holistic development of children including SED (R:4).

Another ECE teacher added,

Only specialization in ECE may enable the ECE teacher to deal with social and emotional development of children because it is a complex task. The general B.Ed. does not support the ECE teachers to deal with preschool age (R:7).

Discussion

The current study found that pre-service teacher education programs are not effective in providing training in social development skills (e.g. effective problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, providing opportunities for cooperative plays, using positive guidance messages, understanding about heritage, and culture etc.) as well as in emotional skills (such as helping children with stress, encouraging children to behave with respect, establishing the environment to foster trust, etc.) among children at ECE level. Existing teacher training programs provide only theoretical knowledge to the prospective teachers; lack in provision of practical activities; and examples and practices that may help to foster social and emotional development among children. Therefore, ECE teachers face difficulties in classroom management, coping with individual differences, and arranging and managing activities to support socio-emotional development of children. These findings are contradictory to the finding of study conducted by Moazami-Goadaszi, Zarra-Nezhad, Hatti, Heiskanen and Sajaniemi (2021). It has been claimed that training program for Roundies ECE training as highly effective in preparing teachers for fostering social skills like positive interaction skills and improving expression of emotions while coming across different situations. This contradiction may be due to non-availability of specialized pre-service training for ECE teachers and lack of political will as it has been pointed out by Arshad and Zamir (2018). The study further revealed that training institutions lack in educators' specialization in ECE, therefore, the trainees in these institutions are not provided supervised practical activities and practicum regarding the socio-emotional development of the children, so 'train the trainers in ECE' may be a very important implication of this study. Arshad and Zamir (2018) have recommended developing awareness about the importance of ECE among all stakeholders and having a special focus on the training of ECE teachers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The prevailing ECE pre-service training of the teachers is not effective to prepare them to foster social and emotional development of children in the classroom. The educators in teacher training institutions are rarely specialized. Consequently, ECE is rarely offered as a specialization in the pre-service training of teachers. The existing training programs in Pakistan are not strong enough to support teachers to be able to conduct different activities in ECE classrooms supportive for the social and emotional development of the children. The ECE teachers, with weak pre-service training face difficulties in managing ECE classrooms and coping with individual differences of the children. Therefore, it is recommended to initiate specialized ECE teacher training programs in all teacher training institutions of Pakistan having a focus on the holistic development of children. Teachers be provided opportunities for professional development in the field of ECE. Refresher courses and in-service training be scheduled for ECE teachers.

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