

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19877626>

Exploring Beliefs and Practices of Head Teachers about Early Childhood Education in Public Schools of Islamabad



Shahida Sultan	M.Phil Scholar, Early Childhood Education and Elementary Teacher Education Department, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad. shahidasul@gmail.com
Muhammad Athar Hussain (Corresponding Author)	Associate Professor, ECE&ETED, Faculty of Education, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad. Muhhammad.athar@aiou.edu.pk

Abstract: *The purpose of the study was to explore beliefs and practices of head teachers about ECE in Federal government schools of Islamabad. Early Childhood Development (ECD), normally termed as Early Childhood Education (ECE) is relatively a nascent field in the education context of Pakistan. ECE Programmes are normally introduced at pre-primary level (Kachi level) in government schools in Pakistan. In this context, the role of headteachers as leaders becomes significant to have a positive impact on ECE practices in schools. The study was conducted in four government schools in Islamabad through a qualitative case-study method. Face to face interviews were conducted with participants including four headteachers and four teachers representing each school. Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs) were also held in two schools with six parents/mothers. The study findings reveal that all female headteachers believed in a nurturing approach for supporting early childhood development among children. They believed that joyful learning, physical well-being, strong learning foundations, emotional development; and positive relationships are key to build strong life foundations for children. However, at the same time, it was also found that headteachers were limited by various factors to put their beliefs into practice in terms of creating a learning environment for holistic development of the children, in line with National ECE Curriculum Standards of Pakistan. The study recommends providing opportunities for headteachers to develop their knowledge, skills and capacities in the domain of ECE.*

Keywords: *Early Childhood Development (ECD), UNICEF, ECE, Pakistan, Finland*

Introduction

There is ample research literature available on educational leadership, however, research on quality leadership practices ECE settings is very limited at local and global level. This study aims at exploring leadership practices of headteachers in ECE settings in government elementary schools in Islamabad Pakistan through a qualitative case study method. The following section provides the background of ECD explaining the concept and context.

The term Early Childhood Development (ECD) or Early Childhood Education (ECE) is used interchangeably in the educational context of Pakistan. The notion emphasizes the holistic development of young children. The concept is unpacked as under:

Early childhood covers the period from birth to eight years, an age where a child's brain develops rapidly. This is an important age where a child's growth and development is influenced by many external factors especially with

interaction with people around them. Given the fact Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is given more importance these days to prepare children for education. ECD programmes primary focus aims to develop at child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical capacities through a holistic approach to build a solid foundation for children for their success in life as adults (UNESCO, 2021).

Early Childhood Development Framework

Early childhood education refers to structured

activities and curriculum developed with a specific purpose to include learning content focused for age 3 to 6 years children. According to UNICEF ECD framework (2020), “the focus of pre-primary education programmes includes developing children's school-readiness skills (e.g., early literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills) and providing opportunities to interact with peers and educators (p.9)”. For maximum development of children in all domains, it is important that children participate in pre-primary education.

The following diagram provides the concept of ECD and ECE.

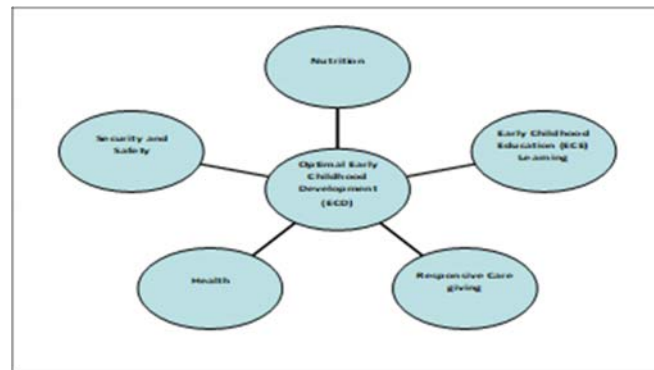


Figure 1: Early Childhood Development Framework (UNICEF, 2020).

The above ECD framework developed by UNICEF provides five key elements for optimal early childhood development given as under:

1. Nutrition
2. Health
3. Responsive Care Giving
4. Early Learning/Education/ECE
5. Security and Safety

From the above concept, we understand that ECD is the broader approach while ECE is a subcomponent of ECD. Sometime these two terms are used interchangeably, however, the difference needs to be understood¹.

Research on Early Childhood Development reveals that early experiences of a child lay foundations for her/his lifelong learning and health as an adult. For example, Centre on the Developing Child, Harvard University (2015)

explores, “Basic architecture of the brain of a child is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood; and early experiences shape the brain architecture by establishing either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for children for their learning, health and behavior as adults in later life (p.1)”. The research further establishes that supportive relationship and positive learning experiences both in school and at home benefit healthy brain development in young children. Such research findings have led to increased recognition of early childhood interventions at the global level towards ensuring that young children have access to opportunities for optimal development.

The government of Pakistan is also committed to promoting ECE for young children in Pakistan in line with its commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which

¹ ECD/ECE and ECCE are used interchangeably as a terminologies. All refer to holistic development of

the child. In this study, the term ECE will be used as per the context of research.

states that “By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”. Accordingly, the National Education Policy of Pakistan makes its commitment to ECE in these words:

“Free and compulsory quality pre-primary education for children of age group four to five years and equal access to early childhood education and holistic development for the children of age group three to four years by 2030 (Education Policy 2017, p.26)”.

Investing on children through early childhood development programmes has become a key requirement to meet other SDGs as well where ECD is a cross cutting theme. Specially SDG Target 4.2 exclusively addresses ECD, which requires all nations to ensure universal access to ECD programmes for all children (The Lancet, 2016).

Context of ECE in Pakistan

Pre-primary education was first introduced in 1970s through education policy and pre-primary level was called Katchi class for children between the ages of three to six; under the policy Katchi classes were regularly organized in government primary schools, till 1980s (Khan, 2011). The subsequent education policies did not give much importance to nursery education. Later, under the Education for All (EFA) declaration 2000, the government of Pakistan committed to providing access to education for all young children at the primary level by the end of 2015. In line with the target, ECE curriculum was developed for the first time in the history of Pakistan in 2005, which was revised and published in 2007. Later, Education Policy 2009, clearly focused on Early Childhood Education and Development. ECE curriculum was revised again in 2017. UNICEF specially promotes ECE in the government schools. Many private sector education institutions offer ECE programmes at pre-schools level. Generally, these programmes are called Montessori programmes.

According to the Academy of Educational Planning and Management (AEPAM, 2017), all

Junior Model Schools in Islamabad are offering ECE for children aged 3-4; and among these, 41-60% schools have dedicated teachers for ECE at pre-primary level. ECE training for teachers is provided through Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) in collaboration with NGOs. In addition, FDE provided 75 schools with mobile technology to promote ECE Education.

Purpose Statement

The government of Pakistan has made a few efforts to introduce ECE in schools, working with UNICEF and other national and international organizations. For example, ECE curriculum was developed for age 3-5 children in 2005, and ECE was included in Education Policy 2009. Provinces have recently developed education sector plans which include ECE plans as well. UNICEF introduced child-friendly schools in some districts. However, there is a lack of concrete action at the government level to implement policies and to ensure access to ECE opportunities rapidly and at scale. The Government of Pakistan held the first National Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in partnership with Allama Iqbal Open University in 2017 and the second ECCE conference in 2019. The purpose was to raise awareness on this new concept and bring all stakeholders together or action.

The purpose of the study was to explore and understand the headteachers’ beliefs and practices regarding ECE. The objectives were:

- to identify and analyze perceptions of headteachers about ECE
- to identify and examine the factors involved in headteachers practices about ECE
- to examine and analyze similarities and differences among participants perceptions across cases

Research Question

How the headteachers perceive and practice ECE in federal government elementary schools in Islamabad?

Subsidiary Questions (probing questions)

- What are the headteachers' views about ECE?
- Do headteachers have any relevant training or orientation about ECE?
- How headteachers ensure National ECE Curriculum implementation in schools?
- How headteachers influence parents, families and communities for improving early childhood development practices?
- How headteachers engage ECE staff in professional development and reflective practice?
- How HTs are working with partners specially to ensure health and nutrition services for children?
- What are the leadership challenges with regards to ECE practices in schools?

Literature Review

In this section, relevant and available literature on ECE leadership practices has been reviewed based on the research question.

Defining Beliefs and Practices of Headteachers

According to Oxford Dictionary, “a belief in something/somebody, is a strong feeling that something or someone exists or is true; confidence that something or someone is good or right (p.1)”. In this sense headteachers’ beliefs towards ECE would mean the headteachers perceptions and worldviews about holistic development of young children in early years and the level of importance they attach to it towards holistic and inclusive development of children enrolled in ECE classrooms. Also beliefs would mean their understanding of the science behind ECE.

According to the Oxford dictionary, practice means doing an activity or training regularly so that one can improve skills. In the context of this study headteachers' practices would mean their daily routines activities and programmes for promoting holistic early childhood education through a child-friendly and nurturing environment by involving parents, teachers, and stakeholders.

Headteachers Beliefs about ECE

Garvis, Fluckiger, & Twigg (2011) assert, “Beliefs are an important foundation for early childhood educators and educational leaders. The way they engage with their work is dependent on a strong understanding of what an early childhood educator is (p.93)”. Headteachers’ beliefs and perceptions can have an important impact on their leadership practices in ECE settings. However, there is little evidence to show how headteachers in ECE settings perceive and practice leadership to guide ECE programmes. Such literature is almost scarce especially in the education context of Pakistan.

Leadership Practices in ECE Context

Recent research support that the leadership role is central in providing high-quality learning experiences (Klevering & McNae, 2019). However, it is not clear how leadership might look like in ECE settings (Aubrey, 2007). Leadership is a multifaceted concept and, to develop trustworthy knowledge about ECE leadership specially, time is for reflection because there is a lack of literature on examining leadership in ECE settings, and a “lack of agreement about what leadership means or looks like” in this field (Klevering and McNae, 2019).

Aubrey, et al. (2013) found that “Within EC settings leadership was being ‘stretched’, with emphasis primarily upon engendering collaborative ways of working. While EC leadership takes different forms and carries different structures, there is evidence from this study of a core vision, collegial ways of working and a climate of trust and openness” (p.25). They further argue that one model or a single leadership approach will not be appropriate for such a diverse sector and therefore, they suggest for a flexible leadership approach as the way forward. They also emphasize the continuous debate on the best practices on ECD in different settings concerning ECD leadership. Hallet (2015) concluded that early years’ professionals led EC as Leaders of Learning. They demonstrated emotional passion and enthusiasm to work with young children and led change in pedagogy through collaborative and reflective

practice. Literature (e.g. Coleman, 1994) suggests that women bring strength to educational management. However, we know very little how gender has an impact on ECE leadership practices in the schools in the context of Pakistan.

From the brief review of literature, it can be concluded that there is a lack of literature on ECD leadership particularly in the context of Pakistan. Therefore, there is a strong need to explore the current practices in this field to inform ECE related policies and programmes in the country both in the public and private sectors.

Recent trends in ECE Leadership Research

Recently it has been found that trends are emerging in research on ECE specially in the context of European countries specially in Finnish schools and New Zealand to document ECE leadership practices. The following findings are recent.

Distributive and Pedagogical Leadership in ECE

Finland put a high focus on education especially high-quality ECE. In Finland, a research study was conducted to discern leadership effectiveness in ECE settings using the distributive and pedagogical model. Distributed pedagogical leadership has been a new concept that has appealed to researchers' interest in early childhood education leadership. Research on ECE leadership is growing to exploring how leadership is enacted between leaders and teachers in ECE settings (Johanna, Pitkäniemi, Kettukangas & Hyttinen, 2021).

Pedagogical improvement within ECE centers involves designing distributed leadership roles among ECE directors and teachers (Johanna, Pitkäniemi, Kettukangas & Hyttinen, 2021). The researchers further highlight that in distributed leadership practice, ECE centre leaders and teachers share responsibilities and tasks as pedagogical leaders, this requires teachers to be active facilitators learning and development in their teams and at the center, ultimately focusing on building a working culture in which all ECE workers practice

pedagogical leadership together.

Multiple Roles of ECE Leaders

Recent research on ECE leadership conducted in New Zealand reveals that ECE leaders in school play multiple roles and have less time to focus on the quality of ECE. Klevering & McNae (2019) assert that ECE leaders were playing multiple roles in different contexts. What turned out to be clear was the strain and intricacy in leaders' jobs between dealing with different matters and also driving the learning. The complex idea of authority across the participants was recognized as a critical role to their leadership success. The study found that the office management, financial administration, and employment issues, left little time for the ECE leaders to concentrate on the leadership side.

Research on ECE Leadership in Pakistan

ECD leadership research seems to be limited globally and it is extremely scarce in Pakistan. assert that “the lack of agreed definition, limited access to experienced role models and mentors, the reluctance many display towards roles and responsibilities that involve authority and power, and limited opportunities for leadership preparation and training have impeded the development of an understanding about what leadership in early childhood entails and whose responsibility it is (Rodd 2013, cited Klevering and McNae, 2019, p.6)”.

The available research in Pakistan is more focused on programme effectiveness. For example, Zaidi (2003) did a study on the ECD programme of Aga Khan University, Institute of Human Development (AKU-HDP) that revealed that a circular model of intervention that bridged between families, ECD workers, and teams of ECD professionals from beyond the local community, led to a successful ECD programme in Sindh. Safdar (2013) did a study on headteachers' leadership role focusing on ECD specifically. She found that the headteacher who was trained in Early Years Education was more effective in introducing curriculum and other related initiatives for early years education.

Conceptual Framework for a Holistic ECE

Leadership

Several research studies on leadership of ECE setting identify patterns of ECE leadership. Among all, Lewis, & Hill, (2012,) and Siraj-Blatchford & Manni (2006), were found relevant to the questions of the proposal. The earlier is

the Australian research model and later is taken from the UK research. The UK model is more focused on effective management while the Australian model is more inclined towards nurturing care. Therefore, these two frameworks are adapted to develop a conceptual framework to guide the intended investigation.



Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of Effective Leadership in ECE. Adapted from Lewis & Hill (2012) and Siraj- Blatchford & Manni (2006).

After a thorough review of literature, the key aspects of leadership for ECE can be concluded in terms of the following 10 Dimensions for effective leadership, as shown in the figure 2, above.

10 Dimensions of Effective Leadership for ECE

1. A Vision and Passion for ECE
2. Focusing on Holistic Child Development
3. Promoting Child Rights and Child Protection
4. building Partnerships with Parents and Community
5. Building Warm and Nurturing Relationships
6. Staff Professional Development
7. Creating Learning Communities
8. Effective Management of Resources
9. Developing a Culture of Ethical Inquiry

10. Developing Collaboration and Networking

The above 10 dimensions are essential for leadership in ECE settings. This research will explore what extent headteachers in elementary schools in Islamabad practice these dimensions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the leadership practices of headteachers in Islamabad. Creswell (2012) says that qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which one does not know the variables and needs to explore. Headteachers' practices in terms of leading change particularly for ECE education, have not been studied extensively specifically in Pakistan. Therefore, qualitative research will enable the researcher to explore this new phenomenon. Further, in qualitative research, the researcher will focus on understanding the phenomenon by collecting the data from the participants through interviews and audiotapes which is analyzed line by line to interpret

meaning (Creswell, 2012). In the first research question, the researcher is asking views of headteachers which links to phenomenology. Through exploring headteachers views the researcher is exploring headteachers ideology and perceptions of ECE for gaining insights into phenomena. In literature, "Phenomenology is sometimes considered a philosophical perspective as well as an approach to qualitative methodology. It has a long history in several social research disciplines including psychology, sociology and social work. Phenomenology is a school of thought that emphasizes a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. That is, the phenomenologist wants to understand how the world appears to others" (Trochim, 2006).

A qualitative approach is acceptable in this case also because due to rapid social change and diversified world in research settings, social researchers are faced with new realities and context with new perspectives that deductive methods fail to reveal the local perspectives and realities (Geertz 1983, cited in Flick, 2009).

Case Study Method

With a qualitative paradigm, a case study method was used for research to get a deeper understanding of the views and practices of headteachers. The promise of case study research is that it allows the researcher to collect data from multiple data sources, a strategy that also enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990, cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008). This type of case study is used to explore events and phenomenon, in which the intervention of the situation being studied, has no clear, single set of outcomes. Also, it is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon in the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003 cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this research four headteachers will be considered four cases to explore their perceptions and practices in ECE. Data will be collected through headteachers interviews, direct observations of the environment and interviews of secondary participants as well as analysis of the available documents. Multiple data sources will enrich the findings and triangulation of the data would be possible.

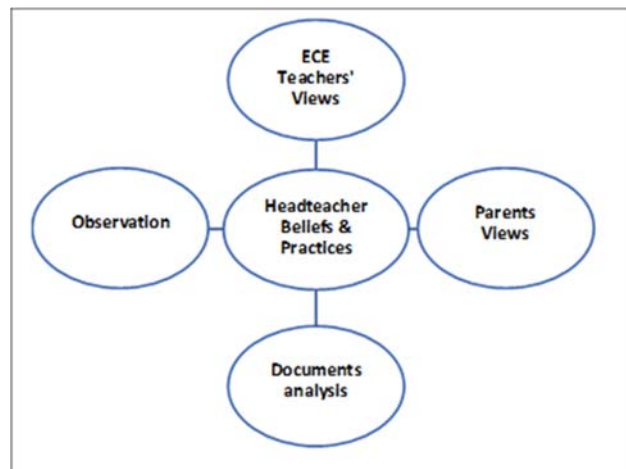


Figure 3: Data Collection through Multiple Sources

Research Participants

Purposive sampling was considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling, to identify the primary participants. The researcher selected the sample based on the research purpose (Greig & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997, cited in Groenewald, 2004), looking for those who had

relevant experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched (Kruger, 1988, cited in Groenewald, 2004).

Headteachers as Primary Participants

The researcher conducted the study in four government elementary schools in Islamabad. The participants included four female

headteachers from these schools. Those headteachers who were willing to give time and were committed to participating in research, were invited as partners in the first place. The schools were selected where there was easy access for the researcher to pay field visits for data collection with minimal cost. Each school was visited three times at least.

First, the permission was sought from the department of education who issued a letter to researcher allowing her to conduct the study in schools and instruction to headteachers to cooperate with the researchers. Schools were closed most of the time due to COVID 19 restrictions and lockdown. However, the headteachers were available for a brief period in schools to perform their basic administrative duties.

ECE Teachers Secondary Participants

As secondary participants, at least one ECE class teacher from each school was also interviewed to get their views about their experiences of teaching in ECE class which was to enrich the data and confirm findings through triangulation. The ECE teachers were also occasionally attending schools as the classes were off.

Parents as Secondary Participants

Parents are key partners in ECE programmes. Therefore, two Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) were conducted and at least 6 mothers were invited for a FGD. The purpose of their involvement was to explore their views about how their children experience ECE and benefit from it. However, it was hardly managed to get these parents because the schools were closed and parents were not easily available. Initially the plan was to conduct FGDs in all schools but due to COVID-19, two other schools did not call parents as policy compliance.

Data Collection Methods and Tools

Interviews

A semi-structured interviews method was used with closed and open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted face to face with the participants. The interviews were not tape-recorded, because headteachers did not allow it.

Therefore, rapid handwritten notes were developed and typed soon after the interviews while data was fresh in mind. It was transcribed verbatim. These were mostly in Urdu. And they were translated into English, without distorting the actual meanings and expressions. Some key questions included: how they understood ECE? If they have obtained any ECE.

Observation of the Environment

The ECE classroom environment was supposed to be observed, which would be in line with national curriculum indicators. The purpose of observation would be to support the data for authenticity. However, due to the pandemic, classes were off. The physical verification of classroom space was still conducted and pictures were taken from the consent of teachers

Documents Review

Any documents such as meetings minutes, lesson plans, policy documents, memos and posters and photographs were supposed to be analyzed as evidence. Collection of data from different sources also helps in triangulating the data. However, it was realized that there was very limited documents were available regarding ECE. The researcher analyzed documents if they were available; and avoided forcing participants if documents were not available, since the focus was to hear their views.

Data Analysis

I used a general qualitative approach to analyze data using constant comparative analysis to unfold patterns and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Further data analysis was an ongoing process and it began from day one of the field visits. The qualitative data analysis included:

Thematic analysis of interviews: Interview data were transcribed first and then it was categorized under key questions. Several themes emerged under each question. Similar themes were identified and combined according to key questions. Further analysis of the data was carried out in line with the themes identified in literature review. Conceptual framework was developed during literature review which helped in coding of data in the form of themes. The

rationale for using thematic analysis was to keep data in logical sequence as per the questions and theoretical framework. Also, the themes allowed researcher to make sense of the data where participants views were described to illustrate the settings, situations and views.

Document Analysis: ECD settings use to have many key documents which provide basic evidence to support research findings. For example, parents and teacher meeting records, children portfolios and assessment data and classroom materials. An inventory was to be developed to record the list of documents and key content and themes about each document.

Discourse Analysis: Discourse analysis is done to deconstruct the meaning of expressions, words and symbols used in the local context. This will also help identify patterns of organizational and community cultures. The researcher analyzed the verbatim interviews of the participants which were quoted in the research report. Line by line analysis of the discourse was done and meaning was drawn from the data.

While writing field notes and reflective memos, the researcher was able to identify and make sense of emerging issues. Detail analysis of emerging patterns was done after the field work. Data was coded as per the emerging themes and categories. Common themes were identified from the four cases of headteachers.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited due to the following factors:

Based on purposive sampling, schools were selected from the same locality with the same context. The study does not reflect any wide range of contextual differences which might exist in other setting within Islamabad. Only interviews were conducted, and classroom observations could not be done as due to COVID-19 pandemic, classes were off. Sample schools were those where ECE programmes were not

introduced formally. The model schools where ECE programmes were introduced by the department of education, were not in easy access to include in the study. Therefore, the does not include any comparison if schools having ECE formal programmes would show different leadership practices. Also, all the headteachers were females. Male perspectives are not reflected in the study to show any differences. These limitations can be taken into consideration in future research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis focuses on how headteachers viewed and practiced their roles to lead ECE section in their schools. First headteachers beliefs are described their views through verbatim and then their practices are analyzed, meaning that what activities and roles they performed to lead ECE in school. The data has been categorized based on emerging themes aligned with key research questions. Also, the findings are aligned with relevant literature to authenticate the meaning.

Headteachers Beliefs about ECE

Four female headteachers were interviewed. All the four female headteachers strongly believed in providing nurturing care to children at pre-primary level. Although none of headteachers had any formal training in ECE, their views were still in conformity with globally agreed standards on nurturing care (WHO, 2018)² which are based on early childhood development research. Their beliefs were almost the same regarding the importance of early years and positive educational experiences for children because they thought that this time period is crucial to prepare children with basic skills for later education. The following excerpts from the interviews reflect their views and beliefs:

Early Learning is Lifetime Learning

One headteacher expressed her views as follows:

² WHO has introduced nurturing care framework to member countries to make ECD policies following this framework

What children are learning till the age of seven years, they will member it for the lifetime. This nursery stage is very important stage in schooling of a child. If the child misses basic skills such as reading and writing, his/her weakness will continue in the next classes as well. Therefore, I focus on building the children's reading and writing skills in the KG or nursery class (Interview HT- D, May 27, 2021).

Other headteachers expressed their views in a similar way:

I consider ECE the most important stage of child learning and brain development. Look at Japan, it gives so much importance to young children to give them care and good foundations (Interview HT- A, March 17, 2021).

I think early years' education is very important for young kids because this is the time when children are prepared with basic skills for later education. Education in early years is very different from education in upper classes. This age is more challenging for us. (Interview, HT-B May 3, 2021).

It appears that headteachers are well aware of their role to impart effective education and learning environment for young kids at the nursery level.

Joyful Teacher - Joyful Learning

All the headteachers strongly believed that Nursery class children need a competent and joyful teacher. They thought that children in this age are vulnerable and emotionally instable. Headteachers said that children are fearful when they come to school first time because for them leaving home and coming to school and adjusting in a new environment was already a big transition and discomfit. Headteachers expressed their views as follows:

I have dedicated the most qualified, trained, and young energetic teacher to KG class. Because at this level, teacher needs to have a lot of motivation and energy to work with young kids and keep them motivated for learning. (Interview, HT-B May 3, 2021).

I have nominated the most competent and Joyful

teacher for ECE section. She is such a happy teacher and makes all children happy. She is an M.Ed degree holder and knows how to make learning fun for her students. Parents like her so much and children come to school very happily. (Interview HT-A March 17, 2021).

However, the interviews also revealed that a joyful learning environment was possible if there were active and energetic teachers available. For example, in one case, the situation was a bit different. The headteacher said she is facing a hard time motivating teachers to be more active and joyful with children. She said, it is hard to change teacher's mindset to be more creative in Nursery class. She said that there is lack of focused ECE training from the department.

My teachers scold children for making noise in the classroom. I tell them to allow them to make noise, they are children and making noise means they are not fearful (Interview HT D, May 27, 2021).

Generally, there is perception that the most incompetent teacher is dedicated to Nursery class and nursery class is the most neglected one. However, in this case, the situation was the opposite. All the headteachers had a clear understanding of the importance of having a good teacher for nursery class.

Child Positive Attachment and Sense of Security

Some headteachers strongly believed that children need a sense of security most importantly. They thought that children are vulnerable and they need attachments and security at school to be happy and learn happily. A headteacher said:

We focus more on child attachment with the teacher and make sure than the child is happy and well settled in classroom. This takes at least two months for the child to get settled in school environment. I tell my teachers to check the heartbeat of the child as she/he enters into the school building. The child is frightened and insecure. The teacher has the responsibility of making the child at comfort and give him/her the love and care she/she desires (Interview, HT-B

May 3, 2021).

A teacher interviewed complimented the views of headteacher as well. She said, *“I think children in this age need care and attention of teachers and parents. I think they need our love (Interview Teacher B-April 21, 2021)”*.

Positive Discipline, Grooming and Social Skills

Headteacher believed that children should be taught positive habits and social skills in early years.

We spend a lot of time on training children on daily routines. Our focus is to teach them norms, discipline and social skills. We focus on their grooming because you cannot groom children later as adults, you can groom them now. Hum bachoon ki tarbiat per zoor detey hen (Interview HT B, May 17, 2021).

I talk to children. For example, Aj ki Achi baat I ask children to talk about good deeds as children. For example, sharing of food with friends if they do not have anything in lunch. Some children do not bring food...I think that if the children are provided with good supportive environment, they can be very successful and they give good results later. Social skills are also important for children to be successful (Interview teacher B, April 21, 2021).

Headteachers' ECE Practices

Headteachers views were presented in the above section. Its also important to know how headteachers translate their vision into reality. The following section articulates the overall all practices of ECE in schools regarding how they conduct ECE programmes.

Early Literacy and Numeracy Challenges

Teaching literacy and numeracy skills to children and prepare them for grade one, is a challenging task:

Children come to school with no basic skills and they do not even know how to hold the pencil. Within one year, we have to build their understanding in all the subjects. Our main focus is on writing. Children speak different languages as some speak Punjabi, some Pashto. It is very challenging to build their understanding in beginning. These children come from poor

families mostly (Interview HT-C May 3, 2021).

Teachers of nursery class were also interviewed to compliment the interviews of Headteachers. One teacher reflected:

Some children learn fast and some children learn slow. Children are educated parents already come with good learning skills where as children of poor and uneducated parents come with no skills and learning. They do not even know how to hold a pencil. We have to bring them to the level that they can cope up with their class level children. But the end of the term, children even write sentences (showed some writing tasks done by kids). I think that parents play a key role in their children learning. They should be involved from the beginning. All the parents and principal trust me that I can make children learn with care , that is why have been in the same class for 6 years now. (Interview Teacher C, April 21, 2021).

Teachers Training on ECE New Curriculum

The ECE educators knowledge, skills, and practices are important factors in determining the level of learning for a young child. Therefore, early childhood educators are required to have deeper understanding of both ECE curriculum areas and methodology to ensure optimal learning for each child through providing need-based learning experiences for all children, including children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Susan, et.al, 2009). However, in the study, headteachers said that teachers and headteacher, did not have any formal training in ECE new curriculum. The teachers usually get one day or two-day workshops conducted by the department which mostly focus on teaching in early grades and focus more on practical aspect of teaching in real environment. However, it was also shared by headteachers that there is no specific training in early years such as diploma or certificate in Montessori or ECE. When asked from HT about ECE curriculum, if they have document of new curriculum, they said they follow the textbooks which include Urdu Qaida, English, Maths and General Knowledge.

COVID -19, Online Learning and Learning Crisis

All the headteachers and teachers interviewed shared that children have missed learning during Covid – 19. It was shared that most of the parents did not have smart phones and if anyone has smart phone, internet data access was an issues. For example,

60% children are coming from families who are working on daily wages and who are mostly illiterate. If there was one smart phone with father, he would go to work in the morning when children were asleep and would come back late at night when children were asleep again. They missed out given tasks during Covid-19 lock down (Interview HT-D, May 27, 2021).

The teachers interviewed also mentioned the same that most of the parents were literate and they cannot help children for home work at home. A teacher expressed, “it is hard to connect with parents as they do not have any cell phones (Interview Teacher D, June 10, 2021)”.

The interviews with teachers revealed that most of the children who comes from poor families have missed out their learning due to Covid lockdown. They thought that online learning was irrelevant to these children.

Children’s Health and Nutrition Issues

Although many headteachers appreciated the importance of good health for learning, they commented that there were particular health concerns in children at school and this had potential to impact learning and health. Todd et al. (2015) also claim that poor health of children can have a negative impact on child learning. A participant expressed:

Child health is very important for us but we do not have any formal system for regular checkups of children. But we do focus on health and hygiene of children. We make them practice handwashing and cleanliness. We train parents on the same (Interview HT-B- May 27, 2021).

For children nutrition, we ensure that children bring home made food. We do not have school canteen and we do discourage children from buying bazar food. I have closed down school canteen because children were eating unhealthy stuff. Some children are very poor and they cannot afford lunch box. Teachers contribute to

provide them some food during break (Interview Headteacher D, May 17, 2021).

There is a lack of formal arrangements for children for their health screening and access to health services since health and nutrition of children is not a priority area for schools. Headteachers still make an effort to identify health problems in children and inform parents timely.

From the interviews both from headteachers and teachers, it is reflected that children lack proper nutrition due to parental poverty. It also reflected from the data that schools are not providing any health and nutritional support to poor children. According to UNICEF Nutrition survey (2018), 40.2% children under five years of age are suffering from stunting and are not reaching to their optimal development. Therefore, health and nutrition need to be considered as a priority area for schools specially for pre-school children.

Parents Role in Optimal Development of their Children

Headteachers were asked how parents are being involved in their children’s learning and development. All the headteachers said that most of the parents are illiterate and their involvement in their children education and development is minima which can have a negative impact of child development. Headteachers expressed their concerns in the following ways:

Sometimes parents even say “hum mazdoori pe ja rahey, hamrey aney taka p bachey ko apney pas rakh ley.”. kuch walidain key liye hamara school darool aman hey. (We are going to earn our livelihood. Please keep our children with you till we come back). For some parents, our school is Safe Home (Interview HT-C May 3, 2021).

At the time of admission, we call parents to school and we interview both child and parents. Our teacher takes a month in the beginning to educate parents. She meets them daily as she greets the children at the school gate and receive both kids and parents. The bonding with both teacher and parents continues throughout the

year then. Most parents are poor and they need a lot of training (Interview HT-B, May 3, 2021).

Most of the parents are labors and mothers usually work as domestic workers in others homes. They cannot understand the importance of education. It is quite challenging to make them realize about being serious for their children education (Interview HT- C, May 3, 2021).

We call parent-teacher meetings and share progress with them. Parents are very happy with our ECE teachers (Interview HT-A, March 17, 2021).

We use to conduct regular parents teachers, meeting but now due to Covid, we are not inviting them. But as a practice we keep having meetings with parents regularly and keep parents informed about children's progress (Interview, Teacher-B, April 21, 2021).

Quality of support from the parents to their pre-school children for their intellectual development and learning is more important than the occupation and level of education of the parents (Iram Siraj-Blatchford & Laura Manni, 2007).

Focus Group Discussion with Parents

Focus group discussions were held with small group of parents at the two selected schools. revealed that those parents who were little bit literate, they were aware about school attendance and child their children's learning. They were more regular in contacting teachers and having follow up with class teachers. Also, literate parents were able to download homework from WhatsApp during Covid lockdown and they submitted home work to teachers. During focus group discussion it was also found that educated elder siblings of ECE children, were taking greater responsibility for supporting their younger siblings in homework and studies.

On the other hand, the illiterate parents mostly those mothers working and domestic workers, were not much aware of their children education. They were relying more on teachers. During focus group discussion it was also found that the perceptions of parents about ECE class and

teacher were different from each other. In three cases there was positive perception about school and teachers. However, in one case, the parents were not happy with teacher. This implies that an effective ECE means an effective teacher. In one case, the parent said, these teachers are there to just take salary they do not care about children's learning.

Research reveals that literate parents are more inclined towards ECE (Hussain and Sultan, 2010) as compared to illiterate parents. This finding confirmed it in this case as well. Most of the parents were not giving importance to the education of their young children in nursery class. In this case as well, the mothers were not aware of the basic needs for example, providing them with lunch, or providing notebooks, stationery etc. however, it was found that it was not only a lack of awareness but also a lack of affordability and lack of resources as well. For example, one mother said, that sometimes there is a lack of time to provide lunch and sometimes there is nothing ready to give children as well. This was a lady working as domestic worker and her husband was selling vegetables, but was unable to work most of the time due to his broken knee problem.

ECE Intersectoral Collaboration and Networking

The ECE programmes require an intersectoral approach where other service sectors complement the ECE programmes for effective services to support, child health, nutrition, learning and wellbeing (The Lancet, 2016, & UNICEF, 2020) . However, the interviews will all headteachers revealed that the headteacher lacked any policies, guidelines and mechanisms to connect with other services sectors such as health departments, social welfare departments and nutrition related service sectors. Also, it was found that the department of education had not introduced any such initiatives. All the headteachers interviewed, were unsatisfied with the support from the department. They said that there was a lack of funding for supporting ECE activities at school. There was a lack of training for teachers.

Generally, ECE it is given least priority by of the

government, the budget for ECE is insignificant little funds allocated for ECE activities under education reforms as compared to the needs of children population (Ahmad, 2011). Although pre-primary education (katchi classes) as ECE has been recognized by the government and policy has been developed, however, there is lack of opportunities for teachers professional

development and lack of resources for schools to facilitate ECE effectively.

Linking Findings with Conceptual Framework

The following table compiles and links findings against key dimensions from the conceptual framework:

Table 1

Linking Findings with Conceptual Framework

ECE Leadership Dimensions	Findings
A Vision and Passion for ECE - <i>Focusing on Holistic Child Development</i> - <i>Building Warm and Nurturing Relationships and Child Protection</i>	All headteachers viewed ECE through a Nurturing Approach and lens which is aligned with best practices in ECE. They believed in developing warm relationships among students and teachers and were practicing the same to provide a safe and secure environment for children. Good teachers were placed in ECE classrooms to ensure a supportive environment in pre-school.
Staff Professional Development - <i>Developing a Culture of ethical inquiry and creating learning communities</i>	Findings revealed that headteachers had high teaching qualifications. However, their exposure and training in ECE specifics programme approaches and curriculum was limited. There were limited opportunities for learning on ECE to create a cultural of reflective practice and inquiry at school level. Department of Education might focus on this important factor to support effective ECE in schools.
Building Partnerships with Parents and Community	Headteachers involved parents through ongoing need-based meetings specially in the beginning when children were enrolled in school for the first time. Limitations in parental involvement were noted, as a number of parents were coming from low-socio economic background and were daily wage workers/domestic workers who were not actively involved in education of their children.
Effective Management of Resources	Headteachers were limited by resources. Dedicated funds for ECE were not available to support needy children for stationery and school meals etc. However, the headteachers and teachers mobilized and managed the limited resources to facilitate children most in need, sometimes by paying from their pockets to support the children.
Developing Collaboration and Networking	The findings revealed that there were limited networking and partnerships with concerned sectors including health, social welfare and child rights-based organizations which can play a key role in supporting needy children, if mobilized effectively.

Conclusion

Early Childhood Development and Education has become an important field of study these days due to the neuroscience research on early brain development which suggests that a positive nurturing environment in early years specially from pre-natal to age five, even to age eight, lays strong foundations for the optimal growth of the children's social, emotional,

cognitive and physical development. Research further suggests that an investment in the early years has greater social, educational and economic outcomes for the children as adults in later life (Heckman, 2012). Therefore, developed countries invest in early childhood development programmes as an integral part of policy and practice.

Pre-school is a stage where ECE is introduced

formally in Pakistan. Research on the role of school leaders in ECE setting is recent and there is a lack of literature on this topic to guide ECE policies and practices in ECE settings. This study explored the beliefs and practices of headteachers about ECE in Federal Government Elementary Schools in Islamabad using a qualitative case study approach. The study findings revealed that headteachers believed in a nurturing approach for early years education. Joyful learning, strong learning foundations, emotional development and positive relationships with teachers; and ensuring physical wellbeing of the children, were found to be positive beliefs of headteachers. On probing, it was revealed that female headteachers drew upon their personal experiences of childhood and were convinced that what they had learnt in childhood still stays with them. The findings are aligned with literature supporting ECE nurturing approaches (UNICEF, 2020) and effective leadership (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni 2006). However, at the same time, the headteachers were limited by various factors to implement positive beliefs into practice. For example, none of the schools had implemented National ECE Curriculum. Limiting factors were included; a lack of structured programmes and resources to implement comprehensive ECE programmes at schools and a lack of headteachers' and teachers' personal training on ECE to take initiatives at a personal level. Also, a lack of parental affordability to meet the appropriate health and nutritional needs of the children and to provide appropriate support for their learning and care was another key hindering factor. For example, most of the children came to school without lunch boxes, and the schools did not have any resources to provide food/ snacks for these children. Further, during COVID-19 lockdown, children were supposed to attend online classes through what's app and other means, however, most of the children missed learning because they did not have smartphones.

The study recommends that for effective implementation of ECE programmes in pre-school settings, headteachers and teachers need to have ECE knowledge, skills and capacities to

effectively facilitate ECE in schools. The study also recommends that the government of Pakistan and specially the department of education to put supportive policies and structures in place which include intersectoral coordination mechanisms to ensure that the headteachers can have access to needed resources specially for supporting poor children and their families for their health, nutrition and learning. It was found that children in these schools come from low-income families who not only lacked basic educational resources but also had health and nutrition issues due to parental poverty. Finally, the study recommends that similar research to be conducted at wider scale to explore and documents a range of ECE practices in schools to support government policies and programmes for promoting ECE at scale.

Recommendations

- Female headteachers in four case studies, had positive beliefs about importance of nurturing approach in pre-school. However, headteachers are also required to gain professional competence in ECE which is a new field. Headteachers need to be lead learners, instructional and pedagogical leaders to create a learning environment for teachers and students (Sergiovanni, 1998) for new learning to facilitate implementation of ECE curriculum for holistic development and optimal learning of children. By being pedagogical leaders, headteachers will also be supporting school-based staff development activities for ECE teachers to build their pedagogical capacities to implement ECE curriculum.
- The case studies reflected that there is need for school based ECE interventions, to provide impetus to headteachers for ECE implementation, aligned with global good practices and standards in ECE as outlined in national curriculum. The government department of education can introduce structured ECE programmes in these schools in line with SDG 4.2. The department might also introduce programmes for headteachers on ECE

Management Leadership, 41 (1) 5-29. Retrieved from:

- <http://ecadmin.wdfiles.com/local-files/leadership-administration/How%20do%20they%20manage%20-%20EC%20Leadership.pdf>

ASER, Pakistan (2014). Annual Status of Education Report, ASER, Pakistan. Retrieved from http://www.aserpakistan.org/document/aser/2014/reports/national/ASER_National_Report_2014.pdf

Baxter, P & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers: *The Qualitative Report Volume 13 Number 4 December 2008* 544-559 ; Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/baxter.pdf>

Blackmore, J. (1995) Policy as dialogue: feminist administrators working for educational change. *Gender and education*. Vol, 7 no 3. Centre on Developing Child, University of Harvard (2015) In Brief: *The Science of*

Aubrey, C., Godfrey, R. and Harris, A. (2013). How Do they Manage? A Review of the Research on Leadership in Early Childhood, *Educational*

- Early Childhood Development. Retrieved from <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of-eecd/>
- Coleman, M. (1994). Women in educational management. In T. Bush & J. West-Burnham (Eds.), *The Principles of Educational Management* (pp. 55-77). London: Longman.
- Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Fourth Edition, Pearson.
- Day, C., Sammons, P., Hopkins, D., Harris, A., Leithwood, K., Gu, Q & Brown, E. (2010). *10 Strong Claims about Successful Leadership*. Nottingham, National College for School Leadership. Retrieved from: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2082/1/10-strong-claims-about-successful-school-leadership.pdf>
- Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health World Health Organization (2012-13), *Pakistan Neonatal and Child Health Profile*. Retrieved from: http://apps.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/epidemiology/profiles/neonatal_child/pak.pdf
- Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to Qualitative Research*. Fourth Edition Sage.
- Groenewald, T., (2004). *A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated*. University of South Africa Florida, South Africa. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/160940690400300104>
- Garvis, S., Fluckiger, B. & Twigg, D. (2011). *Exploring the Beliefs of Commencing Early Childhood Education Graduate Students: Providing Insights to Improve Teacher Education Programs*. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ969513.pdf>
- Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2008). Distributed leadership: democracy or delivery? *Journal of Educational Administration* 46, (2), 229-240
- Harris, A. (2003). The changing context of leadership: Research theory and practice.
- In Harris, C. Day, D. Hopkins, M. Hadfield, A. Hargreaves & C. Chapman (Eds.), *Effective leadership for school improvement*. Routledge Falmer: New York.
- Harris, A. (2008). Distributed leadership: according to the evidence. *Journal of Educational Administration* 46,(2),172-188
- Harris, A. (2011) Distributed leadership: evidence and implications. In T.Bush, L. Bell., & D. Middlewood (Eds.), *The Principles of Educational Leadership and management, second edition* (pp.55- 69). London, SAGE Publications.
- Hallet, E. (2013) 'We all share a common vision and passion': Early years professionals reflect upon their leadership of practice role, *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 11 (3) 312-325. Retrieved from: <http://ecr.sagepub.com/content/11/3/312.abstract>
- Heckman, J.J. (2012). Retrieved from: *Invest in early Childhood Development, Reduce Deficit and Strengthen economy*. Retrieved from: <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/invest-in-early-childhood-development-reduce-deficits-strengthen-the-economy/>
- Hitchcock, G., & Hughes, D. (1995). *Research and the teacher: A qualitative introduction to school-based research* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hussain, I., & Sultan, S. (2010). *Parent's literacy and pre-school education: a study of practices and problems of early*

- childhood education in Pakista. Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248607208>
- Johanna Heikka, H. Pitkäniemi, T. Kettukangas & T. Hyttinen (2021) Distributed pedagogical leadership and teacher leadership in early childhood education contexts, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 24:3, 333-348, DOI: Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1623923>
- Khan, W., Ahmad. S.M, & Iqbal. M. (2014). School Excellence: Principals' Perceptions and Students' Expectations. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, Winter 2014, Vol. 8, No.2, 15-25. Retrieved from: <http://sbbwu.edu.pk/journal/FWUJournal,Winter>
- Khaki & Q. Safdar (Eds.), *Educational Leadership in Pakistan: Ideals and Realities* (pp.169 - 192). Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press.
- Khaki, J.A. (2013). Effective school leadership practices: Case studies from Pakistan. In J.A. Khaki & Q. Safdar (Eds.), *Educational Leadership in Pakistan, Ideals and Realities*. (pp. 104-128). Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press.
- Kunwar, F. A. (2000). *Secondary school headteachers' leadership styles and the implications for school improvement*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, American University in London, United Kingdom.
- Kivunja, C. (2015). Leadership in Early Childhood Education Contexts: Looks, Roles, and Functions. *Creative Education*, 6, 1710-1717. Retrieved from: https://file.scirp.org/pdf/CE_2015091611423350.pdf
- Klevering, N., & McNae, R. (2019). Making sense of leadership in early childhood education: Tensions and complexities between concepts and practices. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, 33(1), 5-17. <https://doi.org/10.21307/jelpp-2018-002>
- <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/13721>
- Leithwood, K, & Steinbach, R. (2002). Successful leadership for especially challenging schools. *Journal of Leadership in Education*, 79(2), 757-789.
- Leithwood, K Doris, J., & Steinbach, R. (1999). *Changing leadership for changing times*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Lewis, & Hill, (2012). *What does leadership look like in Early Childhood Setting?* Retrieved from: <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/every-child-magazine/every-child-index/every-child-vol-18-4-2012/leadership-look-like-early-childhood-settings/>
- Memon, M., & Bana. Z. (2005). Transforming schools into learning communities. In J. Retallick, & I. Farrah, (Eds.) *Transforming schools in Pakistan: Towards the learning community*: Karachi: Oxford.
- Memon, M., Nazirali, R. N., Simkins, T., & Garret, V. (2000) Understanding the headteachers' role in Pakistan: Emerging roles, demands, constraints and choices. *International National Studies in Educational Administration*, 28 (2), 48-55.
- Mitchell, C. & Sackney, L. (2000). *Profound improvement: Building capacity for a learning community*. Lisse: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Mistry, M. & Sood, K. (2012). Challenges of Early Years leadership preparation: A comparison between early and experienced Early Years practitioners in

- England; *Management in Education* 26(1) 28–37, *British Educational Leadership, Management & Administration Society (BELMAS)*. Retrieved from: http://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/24241/1/217998_PubSub1185_Sood.pdf
- Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan. (2017). National Education Policy 2017. Retrieved from: <http://www.mofept.gov.pk/SiteImage/Policy/Draft%20National%20Education%20Policy%202017.pdf>
- NSW (2020). [Early Education Matters](#). Retrieved from (nsw.gov.au)
- Obaki, S. O. (2017). Impact of Classroom Environment On Children's Social Behavior *International Journal of Education and Practice*: Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 1-7. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1209957>
- Red River College, University of Toronto, Aga Khan Development Network. *Ecology of Early Childhood*: Retrieved from <https://www.scienceofecd.com/pages/about-us>
- Retallick, J., Cocklin, B. and Coombe, K, eds. (1999). *Learning communities in education*. London: Routledge.
- Rodd, J. (n.d). *A Discussion Paper, Leadership: an essential ingredient or an optional extra for quality early childhood provision?* Retrieved from: <http://tactyc.org.uk/pdfs/Reflection-rodd.pdf>
- Sherman, A. (2000). Women managing /managing women. The marginalization of female leadership in rural schools. *Educational Management and Administration* 28, (2) 133- 143.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I & Manni. M., (2006), *Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector (ELEYS) Study*, Institute of Education, University of London.
- Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267839273>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Technique* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Safdar, Q. (n.d). *Exploring Effective Leadership in Early Years Education: Two Case Studies from Pakistan. Ideals and realities in Pakistan*, Edited by Jan-e-Alam Khaki and Qamar Safdar. Oxford (2013).
- Susan M. Sheridan, Carolyn Pope Edwards, Christine A. Marvin & Lisa L. Knoche (2009). Professional Development in Early Childhood Programs: Process Issues and Research Needs, *EARLY EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT*, 20:3, 377-401, DOI: Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280802582795>
- Tajik, M. A. (2013). Leaders as agents of change and their change strategies. In J.A. Khaki & Q. Safdar (Eds.), *Educational Leadership in Pakistan, Ideals and Realities*. (pp. 104-128). Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press.
- Trochim, W. M.K. (2006). Web Centre for social research methods. Retrieved from: <https://socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualapp.php>
- Todd, C., Christian, D., Davies, H., Rance, J., Stratton, G., Rapport, F., & Brophy, S. (2015). Headteachers' prior beliefs on child health and their engagement in school based health interventions: a qualitative study. *BMC Research Notes*, 8(1). Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-015-1091-2>
- UNICEF (2013), *Promoting Care for Child Development in Community Health*

Services A Summary of the Pakistan Early Child Development Scale-up (PEDS) Trial, Main findings, delivery strengths and delivery path forward. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/3_PEDS_Trial_Summary_Report.pdf

UNICEF *Stop Stunting, Progress Report Pakistan* (2013-2015). Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/StopStunting.pdf>

UNICEF (2001) *State of the World's Children*, UNICEF NEW York, 2001. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/dprk/ecd.pdf>

World Health Organization (2016). *Early Childhood Development*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/topics/early-child-development/en/>

Zaidi, T. (2003). *Pakistan Integrated Community Based ECD parenting programme: ECD Noteworthy Practices by ARNEC*. Retrieved from : <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB11ParentInvolvement08.pdf>