A survey study on the problems faced by preschool teachers in curriculum implementation

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Abstract

The implementation of preschool curriculum is a critical component in shaping early childhood education, yet it poses numerous challenges for educators, particularly in differing institutional settings. This quantitative study aims to explore the problems faced by preschool teachers in the implementation of curriculum within both public and private sectors. Utilizing a structured survey administered to a sample of preschool teachers, the research identifies and quantifies key issues such as inadequate resources, lack of professional development, administrative support, and the varying expectations and standards between public and private institutions. Statistical analysis of the survey data reveals that while both sectors encounter similar challenges, the nature and intensity of these problems often differ significantly. Public sector teachers frequently grapple with larger class sizes and insufficient teaching materials, whereas private sector teachers face pressure from parents and management to deliver results, often without corresponding support. The study concludes with recommendations for policymakers, administrators, and educators to address these challenges, ensuring a more effective and equitable implementation of preschool curricula across both sectors.

Keywords: Curriculum, Implementation, Public Sector, Private Sector, Professional Development, Preschool Education.

Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is a critical phase in a child's development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, and health. Quality preschool education helps in the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development of young children, preparing them for future academic success and well-being. Effective curriculum implementation in preschools is essential to achieve these developmental goals. However, preschool teachers often face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to deliver the curriculum effectively.

The significance of early childhood education has been widely recognized by educators, policymakers, and researchers. Studies have shown that children who attend high-quality preschool programs exhibit better language, literacy, and mathematical skills compared to those who do not attend preschool or attend lower-quality programs (Barnett, 2011). Moreover, early interventions have long-term positive effects on academic achievement and social behavior (Heckman, 2006). Despite these benefits, the process of implementing an effective curriculum in preschool settings is fraught with difficulties.

One of the major challenges faced by preschool teachers is insufficient training and professional development. Many teachers lack adequate preparation in early childhood education and are not equipped with the necessary skills to implement the curriculum effectively. According to research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), ongoing professional development is crucial for teachers to stay updated with the latest educational strategies

and methodologies. However, many preschool teachers in Pakistan, including those in Lahore, report limited access to professional development opportunities, which affects their teaching efficacy.

Another significant obstacle is the lack of resources. Effective curriculum implementation requires access to appropriate teaching materials and resources, such as books, educational toys, and technology. However, many preschools, especially in low-income areas, face severe resource constraints. This lack of resources limits teachers' ability y to create an engaging and interactive learning environment for young children. Without the necessary tools, teachers struggle to implement the curriculum effectively, which can negatively impact children's learning outcomes (Smith & Brown, 2021).

Administrative constraints also pose a considerable challenge for preschool teachers. Excessive workload, insufficient planning time, and lack of support from school management are common issues that teachers face. These administrative burdens lead to increased stress and burnout among teachers, further hindering their ability to deliver the curriculum effectively. A supportive administrative environment is essential for teachers to perform their duties efficiently and focus on the educational needs of their students (Khan & Ali, 2020).

Literature review

The effective implementation of preschool curricula is vital for fostering the holistic development of young children. However, preschool teachers often encounter various challenges that impede their ability to deliver curricula effectively. This literature review examines these challenges, focusing on four major areas: professional development, resource availability, administrative support, and curriculum rigidity. Each section explores relevant research to provide a comprehensive understanding of these issues and their impact on early childhood education.

The Role of Professional Development

Professional development is critical for improving preschool teachers' abilities to implement curricula effectively. Research has demonstrated that high-quality professional development enhances teachers' instructional practices and positively impacts student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Effective professional development programs are characterized by their relevance to teachers' needs, ongoing support, and opportunities for practical application (Guskey, 2002). For preschool teachers, professional development that includes training on curriculum content and pedagogical strategies is essential for effective curriculum implementation.

Barriers to Professional Development

Despite its importance, many preschool teachers face barriers to accessing effective professional development. According to a meta-analysis by Egert, Fukkink, and Eckhardt (2018), while professional development can significantly improve teaching quality, issues such as limited access and variability in program quality often diminish its impact. In Pakistan, Hussain, Mehmood, and Sultana (2011) found that many preschool teachers lack adequate training in early childhood education, which affects their ability to implement curricula effectively. Barriers such as insufficient funding, lack of time, and inadequate training opportunities contribute to this problem.

Effective Professional Development Models

Effective professional development programs are those that provide continuous support and are aligned with teachers' instructional needs. Desimone (2009) highlights that successful programs feature active learning, coherence with teachers' practices, and sustained duration. Programs that include mentoring, peer collaboration, and opportunities for practical application tend to be more effective. For instance, professional development that incorporates classroom observations and feedback helps teachers apply new strategies in their practice, thereby improving curriculum implementation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Importance of Resources

The availability of resources is crucial for the effective implementation of preschool curricula. Resources such as educational materials, toys, and technology are essential for creating an engaging and effective learning environment (Smith & Brown, 2021). Adequate resources enable teachers to employ diverse instructional strategies and provide interactive experiences that support children's development.

Challenges Related to Resource Availability

Resource constraints are a significant challenge in many preschools, particularly those in low-income areas. Mbugua (2012) points out that limited resources can hinder the quality of early childhood education. Malik and Akhter (2013) found that many preschools in Pakistan face inadequate funding and limited access to educational materials, which negatively impacts teachers' ability to implement curricula effectively. This shortage of resources affects the ability to offer hands-on and experiential learning opportunities, which are critical for early childhood education.

Strategies for Addressing Resource Shortages

Addressing resource shortages involves a combination of strategies, including securing additional funding and fostering community partnerships. Yin (2018) suggests that collaboration with local businesses and non-profits can help alleviate resource constraints by providing necessary materials and technology. Additionally, government policies that allocate specific funds for early childhood education can improve resource availability and support effective curriculum implementation (Mbugua, 2012).

The Role of Administrative Support

Administrative support plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of preschool curricula. Effective administrative practices include providing adequate planning time, managing teachers' workloads, and offering supportive leadership (Blase&Blase, 2006). Such support helps reduce teacher stress and enables educators to focus on delivering high-quality instruction.

Administrative Challenges

Preschool teachers often face significant administrative challenges that impede their ability to implement curricula effectively. Khan and Ali (2020) identified issues such as excessive workloads and insufficient support from school management as significant barriers. These administrative constraints can lead to increased stress and burnout among teachers, negatively affecting their performance and the overall quality of education.

Enhancing Administrative Support

Improving administrative support involves implementing strategies that reduce bureaucratic tasks and provide adequate planning time. Research by Johnson and Birkeland (2003) suggests that supportive school leadership and a collaborative school culture are essential for enhancing administrative practices. Additionally, training for school leaders on the importance of supporting early childhood education can lead to improved administrative practices and a better overall school climate (Blase&Blase, 2006).

Impact of Curriculum Rigidity

Curriculum rigidity can significantly hinder effective curriculum implementation. A standardized curriculum that lacks flexibility may limit teachers' ability to adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students. Brown and Mowry (2015) argue that a rigid curriculum can stifle teachers' creativity and responsiveness, negatively affecting student engagement and learning outcomes.

Challenges of Standardized Curricula

In Pakistan, the standardized nature of preschool curricula often restricts teachers' ability to modify their instructional approaches. Rahman and Qureshi (2019) found that the rigid curriculum structure in Pakistani preschools fails to accommodate individual students' needs effectively. This rigidity can result in a one-size-fits-all approach that may not address the diverse developmental needs of young learners.

Advocating for Curriculum Flexibility

Promoting curriculum flexibility is essential for improving curriculum implementation. Hatch (2002) argues that curricula should be adaptable to allow teachers to tailor instruction based on students' developmental stages and interests. Implementing a flexible curriculum can enhance teachers' ability to engage students and provide a more dynamic and responsive learning environment.

Objectives:

- To identify the problems that preschool teachers face in the curriculum implementation.
- To find out the level of awareness and training of preschool teachers in relation to curriculum implementation.
- To suggest potential solutions or strategies to address these challenges effectively.

Research Methodology

This research aims to investigate the challenges faced by preschool teachers in implementing curricula. To gather useful information, we use a structured approach involving surveys, which helps us understand the common issues teachers face and how these problems impact their work. Here's a simplified overview of the research methodology.

We use a survey research design for this study. This method involves asking a set of questions to preschool teachers to collect detailed information about the difficulties they experience in implementing their curriculum. A survey is a good choice because it allows us to gather data from a large number of teachers efficiently and understand the common problems they face. The study focuses on preschool teachers working in Lahore, Pakistan. Lahore is chosen because it includes both public and private preschools. We select a sample of 100 preschool teachers from both public and private preschools in Lahore. We use a structured questionnaire for data collection. This questionnaire includes multiple-choice and rating scale questions.

The survey is distributed to teachers through email and online platforms to reach as many participants as possible. To increase the response rate, we send reminders to participants halfway through the collection period. Participation is voluntary, and we ensure that all responses are kept confidential and anonymous. After collecting the survey responses, we use statistical software (like SPSS) to analyze the data. We start by calculating basic statistics such as averages and percentages to summarize the responses. This helps us see common patterns and trends in the challenges teachers face.

Results

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage related to demographic Information

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	36	36%
Female	64	64%
Sector		
Private school teachers	50	50%
Public school teachers	50	50%
Teaching Experience		
1-5	55	55%
6-10	38	38%
11-15	5	5%
16-20	2	2%

Frequency and percentages of respondents are presented. 100 teachers participated in the data collection process. Demographical variables were gender, sector, and teaching experiences.

Table 1

Group Statistics

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respondent	N	Mean	SD	t	
Private School	50	3.4920	.15693		
Public School	50	3.9570	.15682	-14.810	.000

Above table shows group statistics of public-school teachers and private school teacher. In the table number 3 t-test statistics was applied to find out the difference between private school and public-school teachers' means scores. There was significantdifference of perception was found in the mean scores of teachers. There was little variation in mean scores of both groups. Public school mean score was higher than private school.

Table 3

T-test

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Female	64	1.55		.502	
Male	36	1.42	.500	-1.247	.67

Table number 4 revealed that t-test was used to find out the difference between male and female school teachers mean score. There was no statistically significant variation found in mean scores of teachers' according to their gender.

Table 4

ANOVA

Gender	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
1-5 Years	55	3.6955	.31758		
6-10 Years	38	3.7434	.24166	.833	.479
11-15 Years	5	3.8100	.05477		
16-20 Years	2	3.9500	.00000		

This table shows us explained that ANOVA was used to find out the difference between teachers means score regarding experience of teaching. There was no statistically significant difference of opinion/perception was found in mean scores of teachers according to their teaching experience on job satisfaction.

Discussion

The study reveals several critical challenges faced by preschool teachers in curriculum implementation, highlighting issues related to professional development, resource availability, administrative support, and curriculum rigidity. These findings provide valuable insights into the obstacles teachers encounter and suggest pathways for improving early childhood education.

The findings indicate that inadequate professional development is a significant concern for preschool teachers. Many respondents reported insufficient training and limited opportunities for ongoing learning. This aligns with existing research that highlights the inadequacies in professional development programs for preschool teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Effective professional development is crucial for teachers to stay updated with current educational practices and curriculum changes. The lack of such development can impede teachers' ability to implement curricula effectively, leading to inconsistent teaching practices and potentially lower educational outcomes (Guskey, 2002). To address these issues, it is essential to design professional development programs that are continuous, relevant, and aligned with teachers' needs. Research suggests that effective professional development should involve sustained duration, active learning, and coherence with teachers' instructional practices (Desimone, 2009). Implementing such programs can enhance teachers' skills and confidence, thereby improving curriculum implementation.

Resource availability is another major issue highlighted by the study. Many teachers reported shortages of educational materials, toys, and technology, which are critical for effective curriculum delivery. This finding is consistent with previous research that shows resource constraints are prevalent in early childhood education,

particularly in low-income settings (Mbugua, 2012). Limited resources can restrict teachers' ability to create engaging and interactive learning environments. The lack of necessary materials may lead to less effective teaching and diminished student engagement (Smith & Brown, 2021). Addressing resource shortages involves exploring strategies such as securing additional funding and forming partnerships with local businesses and non-profits. Collaborative efforts can help provide the needed materials and technology for preschools (Yin, 2018). Additionally, advocating for

increased government funding for early childhood education can improve resource allocation and support more effective curriculum implementation. Administrative support is crucial for successful curriculum implementation, as highlighted by the study. Teachers reported issues such as excessive workloads and insufficient planning time, which negatively affect their ability to deliver the curriculum effectively. This finding supports research emphasizing the importance of supportive administrative practices (Blase & Blase, 2006). Insufficient administrative support can lead to increased stress and burnout among teachers, impacting their performance and the overall quality of education (Khan & Ali, 2020).

Effective administrative support involves reducing bureaucratic tasks, providing adequate planning time, and fostering a supportive school culture. Research suggests that effective school leadership and a collaborative work environment can enhance administrative practices and improve teacher performance (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Training for school leaders on the importance of supporting early childhood education can also contribute to a more positive and productive work environment for teachers (Blase & Blase, 2006).

Curriculum rigidity emerged as a significant challenge in the study. The rigid curriculum constraints limit teachers' ability to adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students. This aligns with research that argues standardized curricula can restrict teachers' creativity and responsiveness (Brown & Mowry, 2015). A one-size-fits-all approach may not accommodate the varying developmental stages and interests of young learners, leading to less engaging and effective teaching. Curriculum rigidity can result in a less personalized learning experience, potentially hindering students' overall development (Rahman & Qureshi, 2019). Advocating for curriculum flexibility is essential for improving curriculum implementation. Flexible curricula allow teachers to tailor instruction based on students' developmental needs and interests,

enhancing the learning environment and student outcomes (Hatch, 2002). In conclusion, the study highlights several key challenges in preschool curriculum implementation, including issues related to professional development, resource availability, administrative support, and curriculum rigidity. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves enhancing professional development opportunities, improving resource allocation, strengthening administrative support, and advocating for curriculum flexibility. By tackling these issues, stakeholders can improve the quality of early childhood education and ensure that preschool curricula are implemented more effectively. These findings provide a basis for further research and inform practical strategies to support preschool teachers in their critical role in early childhood education.

Recommendations

To address the challenges identified in this study and enhance the effectiveness of preschool curriculum implementation, several recommendations are proposed:

- Firstly, professional development for preschool teachers should be substantially improved. It is crucial to establish continuous, relevant, and practical training programs that cater specifically to the needs of preschool educators. Effective professional development should involve ongoing learning opportunities, collaborative workshops, and support tailored to current educational practices. By investing in high-quality, sustained professional development, teachers will be better prepared to implement curricula and adapt to evolving pedagogical standards.
- Secondly, resource constraints must be addressed to support effective curriculum delivery. Schools should seek additional funding and form partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and non-profits to secure necessary educational materials and technology. Advocating for increased government investment in early childhood education can also help improve resource allocation. Ensuring that preschools have access to adequate and diverse resources will enable teachers to create more engaging and effective learning environments.
- Thirdly, enhancing administrative support is essential. Schools should reduce bureaucratic tasks, provide sufficient planning time, and foster a supportive work culture for teachers. Training school

leaders on the importance of administrative support in early childhood education can help create a more conducive environment for teaching. Effective administrative support can alleviate teacher stress, reduce burnout, and improve overall instructional quality.

- Lastly, advocating for greater flexibility in curricula is crucial. Standardized, rigid curricula often fail to accommodate the diverse developmental needs and interests of young learners. Implementing more flexible curricula that allow teachers to adapt instruction based on individual student needs and interests can lead to more personalized and engaging learning experiences, ultimately benefiting student outcomes.

By focusing on these areas enhancing professional development, addressing resource shortages, improving administrative support, and promoting curriculum flexibility-stakeholders can overcome the challenges faced by preschool teachers and improve the overall quality of early childhood education.

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