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Competencies of early childhood educators according to their personal variables and type of school

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Abstract

The teacher in Early Childhood Educational Centre plays a significant role in planning and proper implementation of early childhood education programme. The teacher's personal qualities and her enthusiasm and passion for children are more important for quality programmes. The flexibility and facilities provided by school management are also important for the teacher to provide quality education to children. The present study was conducted to assess the competencies of early childhood educators according to their personal variables and type of school they are working. The study sample were 120 pre-school teachers (60 Government and 60 Private teachers), selected from six ICDS project areas of Bangalore, Karnataka state using stratified random sampling technique. Self-Evaluation Checklist developed specially for ECE educators was used. Results revealed that the pre-school teachers differed significantly in their competencies according to their age, marital status and type of family. The sample teachers also differed significantly in their competency scores according to type of school they are working.

Keywords: Early childhood educator's competencies, anganwadi centres, private pre-schools, teacher variables

Introduction

The early years of life are the most crucial periods in a child's life when the rate of development is very high and foundations are laid for cumulative lifelong learning. This is the period during which there are specific sensitive periods for optimal learning in particular areas. During this period of 3 to 6 years a child starts attending the pre-school. Pre-school, Nursery school, ECE center, ECCE center, etc., are the different names for the school attended by young children. The enriched experiences can be provided in an ECE center through a competent Early Childhood Educator.

Early childhood educator or the pre-school teacher, who works directly with young children plays an important role in maintaining the quality of ECE programmed. The vital relationships between early childhood educators and young children are formed in the daily routines and activities of infant/toddler and preschool settings.

It was reported that high quality early childhood education produces substantial long-term educational, social, and economic benefits with the largest benefits for children occurring when teachers are professionally prepared, implementing the practices and strategies they have learned, and adequately compensated (White book, 2003)^[3]. The Pre-school teacher or Early Childhood Educator plays a significant role in providing optimal learning to young children. The competencies needed to support, plan, and guide children's early learning and development are crucial.

The knowledge, skills, and practices of Early Childhood Educators are important factors in determining how much a young child learns and how prepared that child is for entry into school. Early Childhood Educators are expected to have a deeper understanding of child development and early education issues, so that they can provide richer educational experiences for all children, including those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, engage children of varying abilities and backgrounds connect with a diverse array of families.

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Review of research supported showed strong evidence that enriched stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy are fostered by better qualified staff and better quality pedagogy leads to better learning outcomes (Litjens and Taguma, 2010) [1]. But, in recent times Preschools are established like mushroom in every nook and corner of towns and cities and teachers are recruited without giving much importance to their personal and professional qualities. In order to assess Early Childhood Educators' competencies according to their personal variables and also to know the relation between type of management and teachers' competencies, the present study was conducted with the following objectives.

Objectives

- To find out whether the early childhood educators' competencies differ according to their age.
- To find out whether the early childhood educators' competencies differ according to their marital status.
- To find out whether the early childhood educators' competencies differ according to the type of family they belonged to.
- To find out whether the early childhood educators' competencies differ according to the type of school they are working.

Methodology

Sample

A Sample of 120 pre-school teachers were selected from both Government (Anganwadi Centers) and Private pre-schools in Bangalore, Karnataka state, using systematic stratified random sampling method. From the six Government ICDS

projects in Bangalore, 10 Anganwadi Centers were identified from each project randomly. Private pre-schools nearer to selected Anganwadi Centers were identified and thus, 120 pre-schools (60 Govt. and 60 Private) constituted the sample. One teacher from each school was selected and thus the sample included 120 pre-school teachers / ECE educators.

Tools

1. Self-Evaluation Checklist

To assess the competencies of Early Childhood Educators, Self-Evaluation Checklist was developed by the investigator. Self-Evaluation Checklist consisted of 44 main questions with sub questions. The responses were rated on a three-point scale. Depending on the type of answer scoring was given. The expected minimum score was 0 and maximum 219. Maximum score indicates that the ECE educator has highly efficient competencies and minimum score indicates poor efficiency. Reliability and validity were established for the checklist following standard procedures and the reliability was found to be 0.68 which was significant. Validity was established by giving the tool to five experts in relevant area and by incorporating their suggestions.

2. General Information Schedule

A General Information Schedule was used to collect sample pre-school teacher's personal and professional information.

Results and Discussion

The data collected was pooled and tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis. The distribution of sample pre-school teachers according to their personal variables across type of schools is given in Table-1.

Table 1: Distribution of sample according to their Personal Variables (Percentage in parenthesis) across type of ECE Centre.

| Sr. No | Personal Variables | | Type of ECE Centre | | |
|--------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
| | | | Govt. (AWC) | Private | Total |
| 1 | Age (years) | 25-35 Yrs. | 12 (20.0) | 60 (100.0) | 72 (60.0) |
| | | 36-45 Yrs. | 26 (43.3) | 0 (0.0) | 26 (21.7) |
| | | 46-55 Yrs. | 22 (36.7) | 0 (0.0) | 22 (18.3) |
| 2 | Marital Status | Married | 60 (100.0) | 48 (80.0) | 108 (90.0) |
| | | Unmarried | 0 (0.0) | 12 (20.0) | 12 (10.0) |
| 3 | Type of Family | Nuclear | 48 (80.0) | 60 (100.0) | 108 (90.0) |
| | | Joint | 8 (13.0) | 0 (0.0) | 8 (6.7) |
| | | Extended | 4 (7.0) | 0 (0.0) | 4 (3.3) |

From table 1 it is evident that out of the sample teachers, 60 per cent were between 25-35 years of age group, 22 per cent were between 36-45 years and 18 per cent were between 46-55 years. With regard to marital status, majority (90 %) of the teachers were married. In terms of type of family 90 percent belonged to nuclear families very few belonged to joint and extended families (8 and 4 percent respectively).

The results are discussed according to the objectives framed. The first objective framed was "To find out whether the early childhood educators' competencies differ according to their age". Table 2 shows the mean scores of early childhood educators' competency scores according to their age and f-value.

Table 2: Mean scores of Early Childhood Educators' Competency scores According to their Age and f-value

| S. No | Age (years) | ECE Educator's Competency Score | | | |
|-------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------|----------------|--------|
| | | Govt. (AWC) (n=60) | | Private (n=60) | |
| | | Mean | S.D | Mean | S.D |
| 1 | 25-35 | 130.5 | 5.745 | 110.9 | 19.152 |
| 2 | 36-45 | 119.62 | 8.227 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 46-55 | 118.27 | 8.691 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Total | 121.3 | 9.143 | 110.9 | 19.152 |
| | f- value | 10.105** (P<0.000) | | - | |

**significant at 0.01 level; @-Not significant.

From table 2 it is known that the sample ECE educators working in Anganwadis (Government sector) differed significantly in competency score according to their age. The f-value was 10.105 which was significant at 0.01 level. As the age increased the competency scores decreased.

With regard to Private pre-schools all sample teachers were in the age group of 25-35 years. As there were no teachers in age group of 36 and above category, no tests could be done for private ECE educators' competency score according to their age.

Second objective framed was "To find out whether the early childhood educators' competencies differ according to their marital status." Table 3 shows mean scores of early childhood educators' competency score according to their marital status and t-value.

Table 3: Mean scores of Early Childhood Educators' Competency Score According to their Marital Status and t-value

| Sr. No | Marital Status | ECE Educator's Competencies Score | | | |
|--------|----------------|-----------------------------------|-------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Govt. (AWC) (n=60) | | Private (n=60) | |
| | | Mean | S.D | Mean | S.D |
| 1 | Married | 121.3 | 9.143 | 107.13 | 19.527 |
| 2 | Unmarried | 0 | 0 | 126 | 5.222 |
| 3 | Total | 121.3 | 9.143 | 110.9 | 19.152 |
| | t- value | - | | 3.229** (P<0.01) | |

* Significant at 0.05 level.

** Significant at 0.01 level.

It is observed from table 3 that the sample ECE educators working in private pre-schools differed significantly in their competency score according to their marital status. The t-value (3.229) was significant at 0.01 level. Comparatively unmarried teachers scored more than married teachers. In Government sector there were no teachers in the unmarried category. Hence no tests could be done for Govt. teachers.

Third objective framed was "To find out whether the early childhood educators' competencies differ according to their type of family". Table 4 shows mean scores of early childhood educators' competency scores according to their type of family and t-value.

Table 4: Mean scores of Early Childhood Educators' Competency scores According to their Type of Family and t-value

| Sr. No | Type of Family | ECE Educator's Competency Score | | | |
|--------|----------------|---------------------------------|-------|----------------|--------|
| | | Govt. (AWC) (n=60) | | Private (n=60) | |
| | | Mean | S.D | Mean | S.D |
| 1 | Nuclear | 119.75 | 9.597 | 110.9 | 19.152 |
| 2 | Joint | 127.5 | 1.567 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Total | 121.3 | 9.143 | 110.9 | 19.152 |
| | t- value | 2.771 (P<0.008) | | - | |

*significant at 0.01 level.

As there were few sample from joint and extended type of families in Govt. sector, for analysis purpose the joint and extended were clubbed under Joint family category.

It is evident from the table 4 that the sample of ECE educators from Govt. schools differed significantly in their competencies according to their type of family. The t-value (2.771) was significant at 0.008 level. Comparatively, teachers from joint and extended families scored more than teachers from nuclear families. As there were no sample in private sector from joint families, no test was performed.

Forth objective framed was "To find out whether the early childhood educators' competencies differ according to the

type of school they are working". Table 5 shows Mean and SD values of early childhood educators' competency score and t- value.

Table 5: Mean and SD values of Early Childhood Educators' Competency score and t- value

| Sr. No | Type of ECE Centre | ECE Educators' Competencies | | t-test | Sig. |
|--------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|---------|-------|
| | | Mean | SD | | |
| 1 | Government (AWC) (n=60) | 121.300 | 9.143 | 3.796** | 0.000 |
| 2 | Private (n=60) | 110.900 | 19.152 | | |
| 3 | Total (N=120) | 116.100 | 15.830 | | |

Note: **significant at 0.01 level; (p<0.01)

From table 5, it is known that the ECE educators significantly differed in their competencies when type of ECE centre was considered. The t-value was 3.796 which was significant at 0.001 level. Comparatively, teachers working in Government sector i.e. Anganwadi teachers have more competency score than private teachers. As, experience and training also plays an important role in competencies scores, assessment of professional variables helps to know more about the relationship between type of school and teachers' competency scores.

From the above discussion the following conclusions were drawn.

Conclusions

- The sample ECE educators working in Anganwadis (Government sector) differed significantly in competency score according to their age.
 - As the age increased the competency scores decreased.
- The sample ECE educators working in private pre-schools differed significantly in their competency score according to their marital status.
 - Comparatively unmarried teachers scored more than married teachers.
- The sample of ECE educators from Govt. schools differed significantly in their competencies according to their type of family.
 - Comparatively, teachers from joint and extended families scored more than teachers from nuclear families.
- The ECE educators significantly differed in their competencies when type of ECE centre was considered.
 - Comparatively, teachers working in Government sector i.e. Anganwadi teachers have more competency score than private teachers.

Implications

The results of the present study revealed that early childhood educator's competencies differed significantly according to their personal variables. Teachers below age 35 years who are married scored more competencies score. Comparatively teachers from Government sector scored good competency score than teachers from private sector. Hence, while appointment of pre-school teachers, taking care of teachers' personal qualities also helps not only to provide optimal learning opportunities to young children, but also to improve the quality of pre-school programmed.

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