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Research Article

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IN PRIVATE FRANCHISE PRESCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

It has been well established through many researches that ninety percent of brain develops by the age of six years. The foundation for further learning is formed in early years of life. This makes the provision of safe and stimulating learning environment, a highly significant input in cognitive development of early childhood. The increasing awareness of importance of learning in early childhood years among parents has lead to increase demand of preschools. To fulfill this demand, many private players have been entering into the preschool education market and they are spreading in the form of Franchise. In the absence of any regulatory body, the quality of these franchise (based on business model) are diluting the quality of preschool education. To find out the quality of these franchise preschools and its impact on cognitive development of children, present study was taken. The data was collected from 80 preschool children from 4 franchise preschools with the help of Hema Pandey's tool for cognitive development. The quality of franchise preschool was assessed with a tool developed by CECED department of Ambedkar University. A positive correlation was found between quality of preschool and cognitive development of preschool children. The children of international franchise preschool was found to perform better than the children of national franchise preschools.

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive development is "the psychology of learning which emphasizes human cognition or intelligence as a special endowment enabling man to form hypotheses and develop intellectually". The underlying concepts of cognitive development involve how we think and gain knowledge. It involves examining learning, memory, problem solving skills, and intelligence. Cognitive theorists may want to understand how problem solving changes throughout childhood, how cultural differences affect the way we view our own academic achievements, language development, and much more. (Feldman (2010), Cognitive (2011) Jean Piaget theorized that there are four stages of Cognitive Development. The first is a sensory-motor stage. This stage typically lasts until a child is about two years old. During the sensory-motor stage, a child explores the world through his senses: taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell. A child develops an awareness that things and people exist even when the child is not there. For example, at the completion of this stage, a child is aware that his toys are still in the living room, even when he is in his room and cannot see them. A child also develops some motor skills during this time. However, children typically have no understanding of symbolic representation.

The final three stages are operational stages. The preoperational stage occurs when a child begins and continues to develop language and thinking skills, and typically lasts from age two until age seven. The child also becomes focused on himself and how the world relates to him.

The concrete operational stage usually occurs between the ages of seven and twelve. During the concrete operational stage, a child begins to see the world in relation to others, not just himself. Children also begin to develop logical thinking; they begin to understand that the way objects are set up has nothing to do with the amount of an object. The final stage of Piaget's theory is known as the formal operational stage. The formal operational stage begins around age twelve and lasts throughout our adult lives. During this stage both logical and abstract thinking develops. During each stage the child gain life experiences and increase their knowledge through them. Piaget also believed that a child who hadn't completed certain developmental stages could not learn things from higher developmental stages. For example, a child who has not learned language could not think logically.

Lev Vygotsky had another view on cognitive development. He believed that learning was passed down from generation to generation; that it was a result of guided social interactions in which children worked with their peers and a mentor to solve problems and that cognitive development could only be

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understood if cultural and social context are taken into account. He believed that children are unable to think until they know and understand language. Vygotsky came up with the Zone of Proximal Development, which he defined as the difference between the developmental level of a child and the developmental level a child could reach with the right amount of guidance. He called this guidance scaffolding and believed that teachers should foster learning, independence, and growth among students. (Blessing 92011), Cherry (2011), Cognitive (2011), Feldman (2010))

Piaget and Vygotsky presented opposing beliefs influencing the practice of educators. On the one hand, Piaget believed that children have the freedom to explore and construct knowledge through their own participation in their learning; and on the other hand, Vygotsky believed that adult guidance and support was necessary in assisting children to reach higher conceptual understanding (Piaget, 1971; Tzuo, 2007; Vygotsky, 1962). Dewey (1990/1902) advocated that children's freedom should be nurtured with teacher guidance within a democratic learning environment (Tzuo, 2007). For Dewey (1963/1938) teacher insight is an important attribute in organizing the conditions of the experiences of the immature. Thoughtful decisions regarding children's learning involves the educator having deep understanding of content, knowledge of children as learners, and the disposition to apply these insights in ways that determine how best to initiate and sustain interaction with students. Contemporary research avoids the false dichotomy of child-centred or teacher-directed approaches to one that explores the nature of the dynamic relationship between children, teachers and content.

Early Childhood Education Provision in India

At present preschool education has been provided through three distinct channels – public, private and non-governmental organization. Of the country's 158.7 million children aged below six years, 75.7 million i.e. 56 percent are reported to be covered under the Central government's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme (CREATE, 2011), which is comprised of six services including non-formal preschool education to children of 3 to 6 years of age. By January 2013, a total of 7,025 projects and 13.31 lakh Anganwadies centers (AWCs) were operational (Ministry of Women and Child development, 2013-14). In addition, another 10 million 0-6 age group children are provided ECCE by the country's estimated 300,000 private sector preschools and NGOs. The acute dearth of reliable data makes it difficult to make any break-up of number of children attending preschool education under different delivery of services. Another largest provider of preschool education is private preschools which are expanding at a very fast rate not only in urban area but in rural area also. According to the National Focus Group (2005), the estimated number of children enrolled in private sector initiatives is about one crore. Private preschools are the fee charging/profit making ECCE centers. Mostly children from the economically disadvantaged backgrounds attend the Government funded ICDS programs which provide free education and nutritional supplements and children from socioeconomically better family are generally enrolled in private preschools which are reputed to be of higher quality than government ones. The awareness of parents about the importance of early childhood education, increasing household income, increasing trend of nuclear family and working women are some of the factors contributing to the proliferation of private preschools. Besides this absence of legal requirements such as registration, licensing, easy way to exit, recession proof industry are other reasons which attracts the entrepreneurs to invest in preschool education market.

According to preschool market research in India (2009), Indian preschool sector is a highly under penetrated market. Only one percent of preschool going aged children are enrolled which provides a great opportunity for entrepreneurs to tap the potential market.

To tap this market most of the preschools are following franchise model. Franchise is a business system where an education institution enters into a continuing contractual agreement with another institution from the same or other country to give it the authorization to open and use its brand name and educational services in exchange for a fee. The education institution which gives its brand name and services to be used by another institution or person is called as franchisor and the person or institution taking this authorization is called as franchisee. They sign an agreement which include elements, such as location, advertising, owner and staff training, trademark and copyright obligations, renewal opportunities and termination. To ensure consistency among the franchisees and to maintain the quality of the brand name franchisor gives some guidelines and the franchisees have to operate under those guidelines. The system of franchise has its own pro and cons. At one end, there is a mutual advantage of both franchisor and franchisee in the sense that, the established and successfully running preschool brands get the opportunity to set up their branch in a new location without taking the risk of putting initial heavy investment and effort. Along with this, franchisor also get a sum of money in the form of franchisee fee or license fee. The franchisee on the other hand gets escaped from putting very hard to establish a new preschool that starts from a scratch. Through getting into the franchise system, the franchisee gets the opportunity to benefit from the already established brand name and good-will of the franchisor. But the other side of his franchise system is a great amount of risk to both parties associated with it. Franchisor runs the risk of having the reputation of their brand ruined by incompetent franchisees whereas the franchisees has to be content with having to operate within the franchiser's guidelines, as well as the fixed cost of license fees and royalty fee for using the franchiser's trademarks. It restricts the franchisee to be creative with their own innovative ideas. From last two decades, the preschool franchise model has become the most favored and lucrative business opportunity for entrepreneurs who want to invest in education market. However, the dearth of standardized guidelines and regulations for the administration of preschool education has made it easier for individuals without the necessary qualifications to start the pre-schools for children in privately-owned spaces.

The absence of affiliation from any regulatory body and the limited initial expenditure, high financial return etc is expected to provide an impetus to the rapid expansion of franchise pre-schools in India. The review of literature revealed that most of the study on cognitive development of children in early childhood care and education centre is conducted on ICDS run aganwadi's because of availability of data. In the absence of

any relevant data on the exact number of franchise preschools in India as well as the number of children enrolled in it, there is negligible number of studies conducted on franchise preschools in India. As we know that there is no regulatory body for monitoring the quality of those preschools and outcome of children. At the backdrop of this the present study would have significance in knowing the cognitive development of children enrolled in these franchise preschools.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CECED, Ambedkar University (2013) conducted a study on Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education, in three states -Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Assam. It was disconcerting to find that almost 80 percent of the sampled ECE centres did not organize any activity for development of cognitive skills related to thinking, reasoning and problem solving across the three states; the emphasis appears to be very much on rote memorization only. Again, it is the 'known practice' centres in Rajasthan that stand out as the good practice with all centres demonstrating some activities in support of this domain and 65 percent ensuring participation of most children. 1 percent of the centres across the three states, no activity was observed being conducted for supporting children in concept formation.

Rebekah Levine Coley(1993) conducted a study on "Early education and care experiences and cognitive skills development". This research uses nationally representative longitudinal birth cohort studies from Australia and the US to find out the impact of early education and care on cognitive development and school success of children. The finding of the study shows that EEC experiences promote the cognitive skills essential for children's success at school. It helps in promoting children's readiness for school by supporting growth in core early cognitive skills, such as language comprehension and production, and nascent reading and maths skills. These skills, in turn, help children to successfully transition into and flourish in formal school settings.

Create (2010), conducted a study on "PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA". This Research suggests that pre-primary education is very important for the development of children before they enter formal school. It helps in cognitive development of children at the early grades of primary education and it has strong bearing on attendance and participation of children once they enter primary school. The main purpose of pre-primary education is to prepare children physically, emotionally, socially and mentally for formal schooling and to prevent poor performance.

Baird Ross (2009), conducted a study on "Private Schools for the Poor Development, Provision, and Choice in India". The finding of this study is that private schooling in the developing world is demand-driven. Private schools exist because parents believe that they provide better quality of early childhood education than the government schools. It was also found that in large the factors related to parents' choice and government schools availability have greater effect on variation in private school enrollment than factors related to private provision.

Jeanne L. Reid and Sharon Lynn Kagan (2015), conducted a study on "A Better Start Why Classroom Diversity Matters in Early Education". Early childhood development and education has got so much attention in the last decade. With the advent of neuro-imaging, brain plasticity has become evident— as has the importance of capturing and advancing the potential inherent in the earliest years of life. In the short term, such diversity supports the development of important cognitive skills in young children; in the long run, it can foster far greater social understanding and social equity. In the short term, such diversity supports the development of important cognitive skills in young children; in the long run, it can foster far greater social understanding and social equity.

Tassew Woldehanna and Liyousew Gebremedhin (2012) conducted study on "The Effects of Pre-school Attendance on the Cognitive Development of Urban Children aged 5 and 8 Years". the effects of pre-school attendance on the cognitive development of urban children at the ages of 5 and 8 the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the Cognitive Development Assessment. The results show that pre-school attendance has a statistically significant positive impact on the cognitive development of children at the ages of both 5 and 8 years, with the bigger impact at the latter age. Moreover, pre-school attendance has also a positive and statistically significant effect on primary school enrolment and progression through grades. Despite the fact that early childhood education has immense importance for children's cognitive development, public investment in pre-school education is currently limited, with the private sector taking the key role, which may exacerbate the inequality that exists between rich and poor.

Elliot A.(2006), in a review paper titled, Early Childhood Education- Pathways to quality and equity for all children discussed the complexity of the early childhood care and education sector,. Early childhood education has been a rapidly growing part of the education sector for the past two decades and, while complex and often controversial, has, until very recently, generated limited discussion in mainstream educational policy arenas and relatively little investment in research and development. Most sector growth and investment has been in services and fee subsidies to provide care for young children while their parents work. There has been less focus on developmental issues and outcomes for children, little emphasis on strengthening early development and education components in child care, and a widening gulf between preschool and kindergarten programs and childcare programs for children in the year or so before school. Furthermore, despite seemingly bipartisan political and social commitment to the benefits of strong early childhood development and education programs, there are diverse administrative and legislative arrangements for early childhood services, limited intergovernmental agreement on policy and little concerted or coordinated effort to assure quality programs and outcomes or to close the achievement gap in the early years. Given the high costs of early childhood education and care services and with little public early childhood provision, families have come to accept that early education is essentially a fee- for-service commodity. Most early childhood services are independently operated by commercial providers and not-for-profit groups. Families ineligible for child care subsidies and/or whose children attend non-government preschools or kindergartens usually pay substantial fees for these childhood services.

Elliot A. (2004(a), conducted a study on "Building capacity and strengthening early childhood provision". Given these

experiences and concerns, parents have become knowing consumers of educational services as they actively select an early childhood service that meets their needs. The practice of choosing and paying for early education based on perceived reputation and alignment with family values is then continued to schooling selection. This forced reliance on early childhood services that are fee-paying and provided by privately educational institutions may help explain the growing shift to independent schools.

Objectives

1. To find out the cognitive development of children of International and national franchise preschool
2. To find out the difference in different domains of cognitive development of children of International and national franchise preschool
3. To find out the cognitive development of children of International and national franchise preschool with respect to gender
4. To find out the correlation in quality of preschool and cognitive development of children of International and national franchise preschool

Hypothesis

1. There is no significance difference the cognitive development of children of International and national preschool franchise.
2. There is no significant difference in different domains of cognitive development of children of International and national preschool franchise.
3. There is no significance difference in cognitive developments of children of International and national preschool franchise with respect to gender.
4. There is no significance relationship between quality of franchise preschool and cognitive development of children of International and national preschool franchise.

METHODOLOGY

Locale of the study: The locale of the study was Jaipur city.

Sample & sampling technique: The sampling technique for the present study was stratified random sampling. A total of 80 children of 3-5 years was selected from 4 preschool franchises. Out of these 4 preschool franchises two preschools branches were of some international brand such as Kangroo Kids and Treehouse, where as another two franchise preschools were of national brand such as Eurokids, Shamrock etc. From each school 30 children was included in the sample. Out of those 20 children 10 were boys and 10 were girls from each preschools.

Tools

For assessing the cognitive development of children the tool of Prof. Hema Pandey was used. To know the quality of preschool a standardized tool developed by CECED department of Ambedkar University, New Delhi was used.

Methods of data collection*:* The researcher visited the franchise preschools and administered the tool to children one by one for assessing the cognitive development. First the questions were explained in simple words to children and then they were asked to do it. All the answers given by the child was noted down by the researcher.

Statistical Analysis:-The data was tabulated analyzed with the help of SPSS version. Mean, standard deviation and t test was calculated.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Mean SD & t value of cognitive development in International & National Franchise preschool

Types of Preschool	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value
International Franchise Preschool	40	113.72	14.05	2.19*
National Franchise preschool	40	106.60	14.94	

The above Table No:1 shows the significant difference (t value is significant at 0.05 level of significance) in quality of international preschools and national preschools. So the Ho.1 which states that "There is no significance difference the cognitive development of children of International and national preschool franchise" is rejected. The mean value shows that quality of international preschools (Mean=113.72) are on higher side than quality of national preschools (Mean=106.60).

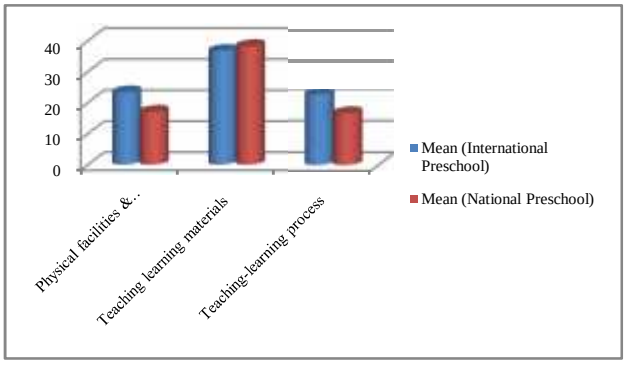

Figure 1 Mean Value of various domains of quality of International & National Franchise preschool

The above figure (1) indicates the difference in mean value of various criteria undertaken in the present study to measure the quality of franchise preschools. It shows that, International brands of preschools are leading ahead the national franchise preschools in terms of physical facilities (M_{int} =23.3, M_{nat} = 17) and teaching learning process (M_{int} =22.33, M_{nat} = 16.3). The teachers of international franchise preschools have been observed to use innovative technologies such as power point presentations, project methods of teaching, live examples for concept to be given to children and the whole approach was child centered. Whereas in Nation preschool franchise it was found to be more or less similar to formal teaching in the classrooms where few children were participating in the discussion and few were listening passively. However in terms of teaching learning materials national franchise preschools are little better than international franchise preschools (M_{int} =36.6, M_{nat} = 38.2). It may be because in national franchise preschool teachers make many teaching materials using indigenous materials whereas as reported by the teachers of International franchise preschools, they have to be dependent on readymade materials given to them by the management.

Table 2 Mean SD & t value of cognitive development in International & National Franchise preschool with respect to gender

Types of preschool	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value
International	**Boys**	20	113.20	12.86	0.233^{NS}
	Girls	20	114.25	15.47	
National	**Boys**	20	106.35	7.707	0.951^{NS}
	Girls	20	109.10	10.387	

The table no. 2 shows that there is no significant difference in cognitive development in international school and national school with respect to gender. That means the cognitive development of boys and girls in both types of preschools are more or less equal. Therefore the Ho.2 which states that "There is no significance difference in cognitive developments of children of International and national preschool franchise with respect to gender" is accepted.

Table3 Mean SD & r value of cognitive development and quality of franchise preschool

	N	R	P
Quality of franchise preschool Cognitive development	80	0.79^{NS}	0.021

The above table indicates that the correlation between quality of franchise preschool and cognitive development are highly significant (r= 0.79). That means, if the quality of preschool is enhanced, it has positive impact on cognitive development of children. Therefore, the Ho 1 which states that that "There is no significance relationship between quality of franchise preschool and cognitive development of children of International and national preschool franchise" is rejected. There are many research evidence suggesting the same result but the best current evidence suggests that the impact of quality preschool per unit of money spent on cognitive and achievement outcomes is larger than the average impact of other well-known educational interventions per unit of money spent, such as class-size reductions in elementary schools (Bartik, T., Gormley, W.T., & Adelstein, S, 2012).

Table 4 Mean SD & t value of different domains of cognitive development in International & National Franchise preschool

Domains of Cognitive development	Types of Preschool	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value
Conceptual skills	International Preschool	20.93	3.198	2.5*
	National Franchise preschool	19.08	2.795	
Information	International Preschool	4.90	1.194	0.273^{NS}
	National Franchise preschool	4.98	1.441	
Comprehension	International Preschool	3.83	.813	0.264^{NS}
	National Franchise preschool	3.88	.883	
Visual perception	International Preschool	3.95	1.413	0.435^{NS}
	National Franchise preschool	4.08	1.141	
Memory	International Preschool	5.05	1.395	0.212^{NS}
	National Franchise preschool	4.98	1.747	
Object vocabulary	International Preschool	4.85	.770	1.96*
	National Franchise preschool	4.43	1.130	

The consistent finding of benefits that substantially exceed preschool program costs indicates that high-quality early childhood education programs are among the most cost-effective educational interventions and are likely to be profitable investments for society as a whole.

The table no. 4 shows the difference in domains of cognitive development of children in national and international preschool. It can be seen from the table that t value for conceptual skills (t=2.5) and object vocabulary (t=1.96) was found significant. In other domains like information, comprehension, visual perception, memory (t= 0.273, 0.264, 0,435, 0.212) respectively, no significant difference was found in the children of national and international franchise preschools.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study is to examine the cognitive development of children in private franchise pre-school. The result reveals that there is a positive correlation between quality of preschool and cognitive development of pre-school children. Based on the criteria undertaken to measure quality of pre-schools in (Teaching learning material, Teaching learning method, Physical facility) the present study reveals that the international pre-school have better quality and facilities provided to the children but on the other hand we see that the national school having poor infrastructure facility and teaching learning methods as compared to international preschools. The output of the quality of preschools is reflected in cognitive development of their children. The cognitive development of children of international preschool was found to be better than the children of national preschools.

In the absence of regulatory body, and high demand of preschool education, a large number of private franchise preschools are opening up without having the minimum facilities such as proper infrastructure, teaching learning equipments and materials and qualified and experienced teachers. A person from any educational and professional background take the franchise of a well established brand of preschool but can-not put the personal effort in improving the quality of education in the absence of skills and knowledge of early childhood education. There is a strong requirement of a regulatory body to fix up the minimum criteria for opening up a preschool.

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