

COMPLETION REPORT

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Early Childhood Education in Japan and India:

A Comparative and Comprehensive Evaluation Using Total Quality Management Approach

Early childhood education (ECE) is a stage where quality of education and its pedagogy needs to be ensured with continuous improvement as the importance of early childhood education for the cognitive and social/behaviour development of children is widely recognized. Discrete studies on early childhood education (ECE) have overlooked the importance of a comprehensive evaluation of its quality. This study attempted to understand ECE from the theoretical lens of TQM and has developed a preliminary model to evaluate the holistic performance of ECE with TQM principles. ECE in India (Kerala) and Japan (Tokyo) were studied for a multi-country evaluation. The study was conducted among selected preschools in Kerala and Tokyo. Data was collected through discussions with school teachers / Preschool managers / coordinators / Principals. The parents of the students from the schools in Kerala also served as respondents. The major objective of the study was to identify and prioritize the critical factors of Total Quality Management system in early childhood education and also present them through a model, based on EFQM. By referring to existing literature and discussion with experts the main ECE quality led factors are identified. The five selected factors are Teacher's quality, Administration quality, Parent's involvement, Physical environment and Academic results. AHP is used to prioritize the critical factors in ECE. The priority levels of critical factors of stakeholders are tabulated. Results are presented through the EFQM framework. This model is divided into two parts, Enablers and results. Enablers are the critical factors that are identified from the AHP analysis. Results are the outcome of the adoption of continuous improvement practices based on the critical factors identified in this study. Thus, in ECE, children should be exposed to a real-world phase where they can play, learn and live in a peaceful environment. Equipments should be arranged considering the age and preference of children to facilitate independent and exploratory experience. For example, toddlers need to interact with their environment in a physical way, experiencing everything with their primary senses, more acts and less talk, therefore the environment they are exposed to should be appealing to their characteristics. In primary school setting, parents are considered to be more important than teachers. The children up to 8 years depend upon their parents for almost everything. Parents are the first teachers of every child and they know what their children really need. Study finds that the most widely and effectively used instrument for assessing ECE quality is The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale –Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford and Cryer, 1998) for both research and educational settings (Sakai, Whitebook, Wishard and Howes, 2003). However, it is not used in the ECE settings where the study was carried out. Hence a suggestion is to make use of such evaluation tools to examine both structural and process quality of ECE. Also, parental involvement, child-teacher interaction, teacher quality and the physical environment needs more emphasis to ensure continuous improvement and quality in ECE.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

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Research article titled “A Preliminary Model for Quality Management in Early Childhood Education” is under review in the journal “Voice of Teachers”, published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), India.

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