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Approaches Adopted by Preschools to Foster Literary Skills among Preschoolers

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Abstract

Pre-school programs give children an edge in a competitive world and education climate. It teaches children the basic skills necessary to be successful in formal schooling. Pre-schools provide children a good foundation for continued learning, communication, higher self-esteem and enjoyment of the learning process. Pre-schools have the important task of giving children numerous and varied opportunities to promote children's development during the formative years including physical development, social development and literary competence. Literary competences open the door to academic learning and help ensure later success in school.

The present study was conducted to elicit information on the approaches adopted by pre-schools to foster literary skills among pre-schoolers in Bangalore city. A representative sample of 30 preschool centres were surveyed - 9 Montessori, 8 kindergarten, 8 play-way and 5 crèches. After an introductory session in the preschool centres, a self-developed questionnaire was distributed to the preschool teachers to elicit information on the approaches adopted by pre-schools to foster literary skills among pre-schoolers. Analysis of data obtained indicated that the preschools

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surveyed had no adequate approaches to foster literary skills in pre-schoolers. Also the preschools surveyed had no adequate library facilities.

Introduction

Preschool education is the foundation for a child's education. The skills and knowledge that the child develops in the preschool years will have a dramatic impact on his / her academic success when formal schooling begins as well as life success. There are many different types of preschools - all with their own curricula and schedule of activities. Each type addresses various areas of a child's development such as motor skills, social and emotional development, oral language, print knowledge, phonological skills and math concepts.

Preschools offer various programs for young children, but most important to the development of literary skills is to provide an environment rich in literary materials and activities. Focusing on this core content will ensure that instructional time is being used optimally to promote children's early literary skills, academic readiness and exposure to a variety of books. Book experiences are of significant importance to preschool children to develop early literary skills and good reading habits. Reading to children helps them learn the difference between written and oral language, that printed words have sounds and contains meaning, vocabulary growth and object recognition, creative thinking and sensory awareness. Research shows that children who start out slowly in literacy skill exposure often fail to catch up, and this trajectory of early failure continues throughout childhood and into the adult years (Celano and Neuman, 2001).

Preschools are in an excellent position to offer significant assistance in the development of early literary skills. Preschool libraries could provide young children with exposure to large quantities of books – including a variety of texts, story books, information books, poetry and numerous language materials. The literary support provided through a preschools' library story time programs, although available to all children, is extremely important to children from working class families and poorer sections who have less books at home, are read to less frequently during early years, and have fewer opportunities to engage in imaginative story-telling and discuss books with an enabling adult (Hart and Risley 1995). These pre-school programs are in a position to play a major role in the early literary development of young children and support later school achievement.

Objectives of the study

To elicit information on

- a typical day's program offered in the pre-school centres.
- parent - teacher meetings held in the pre-school centres.
- “story session practices” in pre-school centres.

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- the library facilities available in the pre-school centres.
- the approaches adopted to foster literary appreciation in the pre-school centres.

Hypothesis

- Preschool centres do not provide adequate literary awareness to the pre-schoolers.
- Preschool centres do not have adequate library facilities for the pre-schoolers.

Methodology

The research was conducted in the following Five phases:

Phase-1: Review of related literature and Interaction with the subject experts

Initially the researcher carried out an extensive review of literature to appraise herself on the role played by pre-schools towards fostering literary skills among pre-schoolers. The Researcher also consulted subject experts in the fields of Early Childhood Education, Psychology and Human Development on the questionnaire being developed to assess the approaches adopted by pre-schools to foster literary skills among Pre-Schoolers. The suggestions given by these experts were incorporated into the tool developed.

Phase-2: Development of tools

Questionnaire to assess approaches adopted by pre-schools to foster literary skills among Pre-Schoolers

After extensive review of literature and discussions with subject experts in the field, a self-designed questionnaire was developed by the researcher to elicit information on the approaches adopted by preschools to foster literary appreciation in their pre-school centres. Initially, through review of related literature 102 questions that could be asked to elicit information on approaches adopted by pre-schools to foster literary skills among Pre-Schoolers were identified. These questions were given to the subject experts for scrutiny and review. The scrutiny and review checklist was designed as follows:

Sl.No	Statements	To Be Retained	To Be Modified	To Be Deleted

After the scrutiny and review, 25 questions were finally identified for the present study. The developed questionnaire had both open ended and closed end questions. The questionnaire was

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categorised into the following five sub groups to elicit the required information as indicated below.

#	Description	Statements
1	Background data of the preschool centre	4 Statements
2	Stories/story telling session.	4 Statements
3	Library facilities	6 Statements
4	General Parent teacher interaction	4 Statements
5	Parent teacher interactions for fostering literary development	5 Statements

Phase-3: Identification of preschool centres

Through a preliminary survey, 60 preschools were identified in and around Bangalore city from the four zones namely-North, South, East and West. Logistic convenience, whole hearted co-operation from administrators / management of the school and similarities in the type of schooling offered (socio demographics, medium of instruction etc) were the ground rules laid down by the researcher for selecting the preschools for the present study. From these 60 preschools identified initially, 30 preschools were randomly identified using the lottery method. Thus 9 Montessori's, 8 Kindergartens', 8 Play-way method preschools and 5 Crèches' were identified for the present study.

Phase-4: Collection of data

After identifying 30 pre-school centres in and around Bangalore city in Phase-3, the researcher approached the Principal in each pre-school centre to obtain consent to carry out the survey in their respective centres using the questionnaire developed in Phase 2. The Researcher also established rapport with each and every Preschool teacher in the pre-schools identified for the present study by informing them about the research program and the need for such data collection. The developed questionnaire to obtain information on approaches adopted by their pre-school to foster literary skills among pre-schoolers was distributed to the preschool teachers and collected back after a week's time. The researcher also observed a typical day's program and the criteria that the teachers set to foster literary practices in their respective pre - school centres.

Phase-5: Analysis of the Data

Data compiled was analysed and expressed as percentage. Fisher Exact test has been performed and P value obtained.

Results and Discussions

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Table-1: Basic Data of the preschools surveyed

Type of pre-school centres								
Pre-School Centre	Number of schools				%			
Montessori	9				30.0			
Kindergarten	8				26.7			
Play-way	8				26.7			
Crèche	5				16.7			
Total	30				100.0			
Year of establishment								
Year	Montessori (n=9)		Kindergarten (n=8)		Play way (n=8)		Crèche (n=5)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1992-1997	6	66.7	3	37.5	3	37.5	4	80.0
1997-2002	2	22.2	4	50.0	2	25.0	1	20.0
2002-2007	1	11.1	1	12.5	3	37.5	0	0.0
Medium of instruction								
Medium	Montessori (n=9)		Kindergarten (n=8)		Play way (n=8)		Crèche (n=5)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
English	9	100.0	8	100.0	7	87.5	5	100.0
Kannada	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0

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As its prefix suggests, preschool happens before a child starts his or her formal education. It lays the foundation for a child's entire academic learning career. Also known as nursery school, preschool is/ or should be a place where a child interacts with others his or her age in a structured environment.

Children typically begin preschool between three and five years. However, when the toddler is actually ready to attend preschool, has less to do with age and more to do with developmental maturity.

Ultimately, preschool is an opportunity for toddlers to learn invaluable social skills, which impact their personality and future success in various areas of life. It's here where they learn to socialize with others, wait their turn and listen; among other skills. But pre-school also lays the groundwork for future academic learning. Songs children sing here eventually help them understand phonetics and develop reading skills later on. Building blocks they play with or containers they fill with sand help them grasp math concepts down the road.

A child's socialization and academic preparedness are two fundamental qualities that define the preschool experience. However, there are different types of preschools, which can vary from one another in significant ways.

Childcare centres like crèches are generally an option for working parents who need their children to be taken care of during the day; centres accept babies as well as toddlers and are full-time, full-year programs. Preschool refers to an early-childhood educational class for 3- and 4-year-olds. Many offer a part-time schedule (for example, a few hours a day, and two to five times a week) as well as full-day care. Yet the terms are often used interchangeably. A childcare centre with experienced, well-trained teachers and stimulating activities offers kids similar advantages to a preschool. "In fact, many preschools are part of childcare programs," says Linda Smith (2011), executive director of the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies.

In addition to strengthening socialization skills, how to compromise, be respectful of others, and acquire problem-solving skills preschool also provides a place where the child can gain a sense of self, explore, play with peers, and build confidence. "Children in preschool discover that they are capable and can do things for themselves - from small tasks like pouring their own juice and helping set snack tables to tackling bigger issues like making decisions about how to spend their free time," says Angela Capone, (2011), senior program manager at Southwest Human Development's Arizona Institute for Child Development, in Phoenix." Plus, 4- and 5-year-olds have begun asking some wonderful questions about the world around them - what happens to the water after the rain? Do birds play? Quality preschools help children find answers through exploration, experimentation, and conversation."

Bangalore city offers different types of pre-school programs. For the present study 30 preschools were randomly selected. Data presented in Table- 1 indicates that Montessori, Kindergarten, play-way and crèche were the programs that were randomly selected for the present study.

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The preschools selected for the study were established between the years 1992 and 2007 and all but one were English medium schools.

Table 2: Typical day's program offered in the pre-schools surveyed:

Type of pre-school								
Program	Montessori (n=9)		Kindergarten (n=8)		Play way (n=8)		Crèche (n=5)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Greetings	8	88.9	7	87.5	6	75.0	2	40.0
Prayer	5	55.6	5	62.5	6	75.0	4	80.0
Activity Time	9	100.0	6	75.0	5	62.5	3	60.0
Story Time	7	77.8	5	62.5	4	50.0	2	40.0
Snack Time	9	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0	5	100.0
Rhymes and Dance	6	66.7	5	62.5	5	62.5	3	60.0
Learning Concepts	5	55.6	5	62.5	4	50.0	3	60.0
Outdoor Activity	9	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0	5	100.0

"There's increasing evidence that children gain a lot from going to preschool," says *Parents* advisor Kathleen McCartney (2011), dean of Harvard Graduate School of Education, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "At preschool, they become exposed to numbers, letters, and shapes. And, more important, they learn how to socialize - get along with other children, share, and contribute to circle time."

Statistics show that a majority of children attend at least one year of preschool: "Children who attend high-quality preschool enter school with better pre-reading skills, richer vocabularies, and stronger basic math skills than those who do not," says NIEER director W. Steven Barnett (2011).

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"Every child should have some sort of group experience before he starts school," says Amy Flynn (2011), director of New York City's Bank Street Family Centre. Music and gymnastics classes are great, but what preschools do is that their less formal classes don't teach children how to be students.

"Young children can certainly learn letters and numbers, but to sit kids down and 'teach' them is the wrong way to do it," says Smith (2011). "They learn best through doing the kinds of activities they find interesting - story time, talking to their teachers about stars, playing with blocks." To help kids learn language and strengthen pre-reading skills, for instance, teachers might play rhyming games and let kids tell stories. It must be kept in mind that for small children, school is all about having fun and acquiring social skills -- not achieving academic milestones. "Kids need to be imaginative and to socialize -- that's what fosters creative, well-rounded people. It's not whether they can read by age 4 or multiply by 5," says Flynn (2011).

An ideal curriculum could be parading around in dress-up clothes, building forts, and being read to. Pre-school is *not* a formal academic program, but a time to allow the child to learn by exploring, playing, and experimenting with objects. Children at this age learn through direct sensory activity. It is important to understand the goals and philosophy behind the different types of preschool programs. The goal of preschool is to develop readiness skills so that the child will succeed when entering formal school. Programs for pre-school aged children often have a stronger focus on different areas of children's development, such as physical skills (large as small muscles), language and literacy skills, personal and interpersonal skills, creativity and the expressive arts, problem solving, thinking and mathematical abilities.

The benefits of preschool are well-documented. Research and reports have shown that preschool can have an impact on whether kids turn to crime and how long they stay in school, according to Public School Review, a free online tool for finding schools in a particular area.

James Heckman (2006), an economist at the University of Chicago, says there's an enormous cost-benefit advantage in decreased jail time for those who were low-income children and attended preschool. He asserts that, in general, preschool attendance can lead to fewer behavioural issues, better self-esteem and a higher IQ. It even has been shown to increase literacy among families, as parents become more involved in their children's education.

W. Steven Barnett (2011), works with the National Institute for Early Education Research and is a proponent of universal preschool for all children. He cites other benefits of preschool: higher test scores; superior social skills; better graduation rates; fewer incidents of teen pregnancy, abortion and smoking; and less need for special education and grade repetition.

Table-2 indicates that the pre-schools surveyed for the present study had activity time, snack time and out-door activities in their typical day's program. Larger percentage of crèche's (80.0%) had prayer in their typical day's program. All the pre-school's surveyed in the present study had almost similar proportion of time allocation for story time, learning concepts, rhymes and dance in their typical day's program. Interestingly there were no art and craft activities, literature activity and importantly circle time in their typical day's program. Circle time refers to

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any time that a group of children are sitting together for an activity involving everyone. Circle time promotes oral communication and learning new concepts and skills. It is the time for

	Montessori	Kindergarten	Playway	Creche	P value
Parent teacher Interaction	(n=9)	(n=8)	(n=8)	(n=5)	

auditory, memory, sensory experiences and socialisation.

Table 3: Parent teacher interactions:

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	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
	9	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0	5	100.0	1.000
Parent teacher meetings									
Frequency of parent teacher interactions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
i). Once a Week	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ii). Once a Fortnight	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
iii). Once a Month	2	22.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.234
iv). Once in Three Months	2	22.2	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	20.0	1.000
v). Once in Six Months	5	55.6	7	87.5	7	87.5	4	50.0	0.462
vi). Once a Year	3	33.3	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0.0	0.575
Parents Work as Volunteers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Role played by parents	1	11.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.000
i). Participate in special Events	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ii). Story Reading	1	11.1	1	12.5	2	25.0	2	40.0	0.561
iii).School's Cultural programmes									

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Parent involvement in children's out of home experiences has long been heralded as positive for both the parent and child. Research suggests that parent participation in a child's preschool program is positively associated with social adjustment and school performance.

With the increase of families where employment and other commitments reduce both the time and the common experiences a child and parent share, parent involvement may be more important than ever. Parent involvement in the pre-school encourages dialogue between the parent and early childhood educator that focuses on the child. The on-going, simultaneous interaction of parent, child and early childhood educator has something to offer each member of the triad. The parent is exposed to knowledge about how children develop, problem prevention and discipline strategies, and age appropriate behaviour expectations that encourage more effective parenting. The parent has the opportunity to see how these principles and strategies are implemented by observing the early childhood educator. The arrangement allows parents to ask questions and to 'try out' new strategies in a supportive environment. The early childhood educator benefits in the cooperative because she is able to see the practical elements of her own education and develop 'hands on' approaches to sharing this knowledge and experience. She is also able to more fully know the child and his or her individual needs by sharing information with the parent. At the centre of the triad is the child who benefits from the supportive linkages of home and preschool and shares important life experiences with his/her parent. The involvement of parents in preschool programs varies depending on the type of program.

Table-3 indicates data concerning parent teacher interactions. It can be observed that all pre-schools had parent teacher interactions. Majority of the preschools held parent teacher interactions once in six months, in the schools surveyed.

Harvard Graduate School of Education (2010), states that Parent–teacher conferences are an important component of the on-going home–school communication and family involvement in the children's education. Even with technological advances that allow parents to track their child's academic progress remotely, and more transparency in student data (such as test scores and attendance rates), face-to-face interaction between parents and teachers is still the cornerstone of school family engagement efforts.

Table-4: Details of story sessions:

Frequency of story telling									
Frequency of story telling	Montessori (n=9)		Kindergarten (n=8)		Playway (n=8)		Creche (n=5)		P value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Weekly Once	3	33.3	1	12.5	3	37.5	2	40.0	0.709

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Two Times in a Week	1	11.1	2	25.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	0.811
Three times in a Week	2	22.2	2	25.0	3	37.5	2	40.0	1.000
Daily	3	33.3	3	37.5	2	25.0	1	20.0	1.000
Pattern of narration									
Pattern of narration	Montessori (n=9)		Kindergarten (n=8)		Playway (n=8)		Creche (n=5)		P value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Reading with voice modulation	5	55.6	4	50.0	3	37.5	2	40.0	0.958
Enacting	2	22.2	4	50.0	2	25.0	1	20.0	0.656
Puppets	1	11.1	2	25.0	1	12.5	1,	20.0	0.919
Flash Cards	4	44.4	2	25.0	2	25.0	1	20.0	0.744
Sand tray Technique	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	-
Roller Technique	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	-
Flannel O-Graphs	0	0.0	1	12.5	2	25.0	1	20.0	0.467
Duration of storytelling sessions									
Duration of telling sessions	Montessori (n=9)		Kindergarten (n=8)		Playway (n=8)		Creche (n=5)		P value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Two – Five	5	55.6	6	75.0	4	50.0	3	60.0	0.848

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Minutes									
Five – Ten Minutes	4	44.4	4	50.0	3	37.5	2	40.0	1.000
Ten – Fifteen Minutes	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.700

Storytelling is clearly a social experience with oral narrative, incorporating linguistic features that display a "sophistication that goes beyond the level of conversation" (Mallan, 1991). And for this reason storytelling acts as an effective building block easing the journey from oral language to literacy.

Young children naturally enjoy stories. Children involved in education programs that utilize storytelling, exhibit many positive behaviours related to increased literacy (Speaker, 2000; Allison and Watson, 1994). Improved listening skills, vocabulary development and an increased ability to organize narrative thought are all behaviours exhibited by young children who have been exposed to a variety of stories on a consistent basis.

Nor Hasni Mokhtar & Michi Farida (2011) attempted to identify the effects the extent of storytelling on students' language and communication skills. The findings show that storytelling has beneficial effects on reading skills by students being able to associate meanings and emotions with words. Students also develop their vocabulary and learn when and where to use certain words and phrases.

Effective story telling is a beautiful art. A well developed and presented story will hold the interest of any age group of children. There are different story telling methods that could be adopted to capture the interest of the children. These are narration, visual aids, dramatization, puppets, flannel graph, flash cards, sand and roller technique. Any method can be adopted in story telling sessions with prior planning and preparation. The most important techniques to follow while telling stories are: to identify the child's interest, stories appropriate to age groups and special circumstances, environment when presenting stories, practice before narrating the story, and making story tools exciting and fun.

Table-4 indicates that almost 55 – 60% of the pre-schools had story telling sessions daily or three times a week. The rest had a story telling frequency of once or twice a week. Reading with voice modulation, enacting and flashcards were more popular patterns of narration in all pre-schools. But flannel o graphs, Sand tray techniques and puppets were very not popular story telling techniques in pre-schools although these are colourful and attractive techniques to capture the interest of the children during story telling sessions. Most of the pre-schools had 2-5 minutes or 5-10 minutes duration of story-telling sessions.

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Story telling sessions should be introduced daily in all pre-school centres. Many pre-school educators are unaware of the importance of story-telling but the truth is that it directly influences the way a child thinks, a child talks, and the way a child behaves. The actions and words of a child are also controlled by the morals and values delivered by stories apart from literary development.

Table 5: Library Facilities at the Schools Surveyed

Types of preschools									
Library Facilities at School	Montessori (n=9)		Kindergarten (n=8)		Playway (n=8)		Creche (n=5)		P value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Fund allocation									
Allocate	5	55.6	2	25.0	3	37.5	2	40.0	0.710
Do not Allocate	4	44.4	6	75.0	5	62.5	3	60.0	
Amount of Fund Allocated per annum (Rs)									
500 – 1000	6	66.7	4	50.0	5	62.5	3	60.0	0.944
1000 – 5000	2	22.2	2	25.0	2	25.0	1	20.0	
5000- 10,000	1	11.1	2	25.0	1	12.5	1	20.0	
Personnel involved in purchase of books									
Principal	6	66.7	7	87.5	6	75.0	4	80.0	0.931
Teachers	3	33.3	1	12.5	2	25.0	1	20.0	0.931
Parents	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	-
Librarian	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	-

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Children	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	-
Criteria to Select the Books for Library									
Age	9	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0	4	80.0	0.167
Interest	5	55.6	4	50.0	5	62.5	2	40.0	1.000
Culture	5	55.6	3	37.5	3	37.5	2	40.0	0.883
Durability	9	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0	5	100.0	1.000
Novelty	6	66.7	5	62.5	4	50.0	3	60.0	0.954
Hard Cover	9	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0	5	100.0	1.000

Research has shown that book experiences are of significant importance to infant, preschool children in the establishment of preliminary literacy skills and good reading habits (Kupetz, 1993).

This early literacy skill is important to later development for many reasons. It functions to help children understand how narratives work, encourages children to read independently, and provides “shared social-bonding” experiences (Sheldrick, et al. 2006). Children who are exposed to language and literacy skills in the infant, toddler, and preschool years are much better prepared to succeed in school, and those who are not suffer the consequences throughout their entire lives. These experiences can be provided to children in a good pre-school environment-setting which encourages literary competence through better library facilities. The shared experiences of library story times are important to the development of a sense of social acceptance and belonging and improved self-esteem (Kupetz, 1993). Story time sessions provided in the library foster early reading in children.

Table-5 shows that fund allocation for libraries is frequently done in Montessori’s but not in other types of preschools. Most of them spend about Rs. 500 – 1000 per annum on library books

It was interesting to observe that only the Principal and Teachers were responsible for purchase of books for their libraries. Parents, Librarians and children’s were not involved in these purchase decisions. Age, durability and hard cover were the main criteria in selection of books for all pre-school libraries.

Table 6: Techniques adopted to Foster Literary Appreciation in Children

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Type of pre-school									
Fostering Literary Appreciation in Children	Montessori (n=9)		Kindergarten (n=8)		Playway (n=8)		Creche (n=5)		P value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Encourage children to borrow books for reading in class	4	44.4	3	37.5	2	25.0	1	20.0	0.831
Lend books for taking home	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	-
Recommend Parents to Buy Selected Books for their children	2	22.2	2	25.0	1	12.5	1	20.0	1.000
Recommend parents to read to their children at home	2	22.2	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0.0	0.895
Suggest Parents to maintain a reading log	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	-
Have writing materials to foster writing skills to children	9	100.0	8	100.0	8	100.0	4	80.0	0.167
Promote children's vocabulary, comprehension and literary development in your school program	3	33.3	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0.0	0.575

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Techniques to Promote Literary Development in Preschool Children			
Montessori	Kindergarten	Play Way	Creche
Conversation	Sight Word	Play Methods	Audio Cassettes Video
Phonic Books	Picture Association	Singing	Memory Game
Storytelling Sessions	Memory Game	Drawing	Singing
Play Methods	Board Games	Enacting	Learning Activities
Picture Association	Alphabet and Numbers	Learning Activities	Conversation

Early literary skills become the building blocks for later reading and writing. Research indicates that children who enter school with more of these skills are better able to benefit from the reading instruction they receive when they arrive at school. Some of the literary practise and activities that are important to lay a good foundation for literary development in pre-school years are: language and vocabulary skills, print motivation, letter knowledge, phonological awareness (understanding of the sounds and the meaning of spoken language), as well as book awareness and shared reading.

Majority of pre-schools surveyed fostered literary skills in children by providing writing materials (to foster writing skills) and lending of books for reading in class. Some of the important literary practices that should be encouraged for parents to implement at home to foster literary interest in children are: recommending that parents read to their children at home and borrow books from libraries.

The above mentioned pre-schools had a different approach for promoting literary development in their centres. The common practices were play methods, memory games, singing, conversation and learning activities. But most of the significant literary skills that need to be fostered in pre-school centres are language development, print awareness, alphabet awareness, phonological development, and fostering reading readiness skills.

It is important to give a strong literary foundation from early pre-school years. Michele D. Poe, Margaret R. Burehinal, Joanne E Roberts (2004) also indicate that both language & phonological

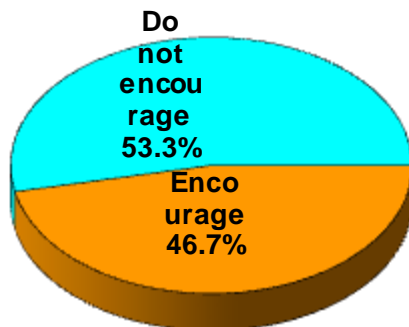
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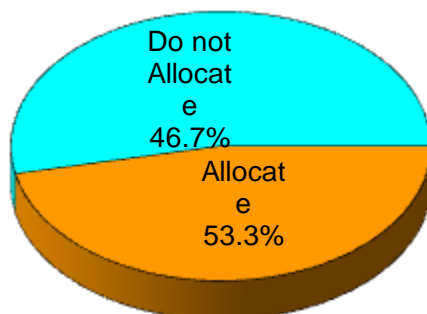
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skills play an important role in children becoming successful readers, and that experiences at home and in childcare during early childhood play an important role.

The above graph shows that flip books and colouring books were more common in pre-school centres. But the pre-schools did not provide different variety of books in their library like wordless picture books, predictable books and picture dictionaries to motivate the children into the world of books.



Graph 4: Encourage Children to Borrow Books at School for Reading



Graph3: Annual Allocation of Funds

The above graphs shows that almost half of pre-schools surveyed allocate funds to buy books for their library. About half of them do not encourage children to borrow books at school for reading. And 60% of pre-schools do not have exclusive libraries which is one of the significant practices to foster literary development from early years.

Hypothesis Testing

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- Preschool centres do not provide adequate literary awareness to the pre-schoolers .This hypothesis is accepted due to the evidence found in the data presented in table 4 and table 6.
- Preschool centres do not have adequate library facilities for the pre-schoolers. Analysis of the data obtained from the table 5 and graph 5 indicates acceptance of the hypothesis.

Conclusion

Preschool years are the fundamental learning years that should be nurtured and systematically programmed by teachers in pre-school centres. The pre-school environment should create a supportive literary awareness, express positive attitude for literary development and encourage rich literature exposure to pre-school children. So that these children will develop positive attitude towards books, increase vocabulary, stimulates imagination, enhance listening skills and lastly lifelong love of reading.

Research shows that it is particularly crucial to develop literary skills during the early childhood and elementary school years. High quality pre-school experiences successfully foster early language and literary skills that lay a critical foundation for children’s successful future. These pre-schools encourage congruence between home, school reading and writing activities and thereby expose children to great quantities such as print, meaningful language opportunities, wide variety of high quality books of various topics, genres and perspectives in order to acquire literary skills. High quality pre-schools can ensure that all children are prepared for formal schooling and have a solid literary foundation.

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