

## Socio-emotional Readiness of Pre-primary Students

Reetu Chandra\*

### Abstract

*Early childhood is a period that lays the foundation for later development. Studies indicate that children, who attend pre-primary education programme, are likely to have better learning ability at the age of six years than those who do not. Besides, they adjust better in the school set-up socially and emotionally, which in educational terms, is referred to as 'school readiness'. On the contrary, children, who do not attend a pre-primary education programme, may not be socially and emotionally ready to start formal school education, and eventually, drop out. Thus, ensuring a child's socio-emotional readiness is crucial. This paper tries to assess the socio-emotional readiness of pre-primary students, studying in eight Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) schools. One hundred and seventy-six pre-primary students were surveyed as part of the study. It was found that both experimental and control group students had low socio-emotional readiness in all five components — self-concept, self-control, controlling emotions, approach to learning and interactions with others. The study also tries to identify gaps in the socio-emotional readiness levels of the students and offer ways to address them.*

### INTRODUCTION

Pre-primary education is considered as an important element in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to foster physical, socio-emotional and cognitive maturity in children. Literature suggests that pre-primary education makes

the children ready for formal learning, improves their academic performance and checks early dropout. This, eventually, increases learning and educational attainment later in life [Council of Economic Advisers, 2016; Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and

---

\* Assistant Professor, Department of Elementary Education, NCERT, New Delhi.

Equality, 2010; Elliot, 2006). Therefore, quality pre-primary education programme aims to encourage thinking and problem solving skills in children in order to ensure that they have the required cognitive and socio-emotional capacity to optimise learning in successive formal education years. Thus, countries are committed to ensure that all children, irrespective of gender and social group, get access to quality pre-primary education that enables them to attain necessary skills, knowledge, values and attitude (Chandra, 2016).

The socio-emotional skills of children increase rapidly during the pre-primary years. Their school experience is more positive and productive when they have a sense of personal well-being established through constant compassionate associations in the early years of life. Most of their socio-emotional behaviour is influenced by observations. Their socio-emotional readiness is affected by how well they communicate with others. The ability to get along with other children contributes to all aspects of their development.

Studies suggest that children are more likely to have a better mental health, forge stronger relationships and be more successful at school and work, if they get opportunities to strengthen their socio-emotional competence. Participating in games and sports, and interactions and discussions with peers and adults enable them to enhance their learning activities, and thus, forge

better relationships. Learning readiness develops when children engage in multiple social experiences with competent peers and adults (Blaustein, 2005). Therefore, socio-emotional readiness is considered as an integral part of the pre-primary education system globally.

Students, who are aggressive, unable to maintain close relationships with other children and create a peer group, are, generally, disliked. Such students are considered 'at risk'. Researches suggest that children, who do not have basic social skills till the age of six years, may face difficulty with relationships when they grow up into adults. Moreover, children, who are unable to interact with others, may possess poor mental health, low academic achievement and other problems.

Studies indicate that there is a likelihood that children with low cognitive and socio-emotional readiness, entering early primary grades, have a higher absenteeism rate. Besides, there are chances of class repetition and early dropout. These children often face significant disadvantages in life like poverty and marginalisation. Further, most government pre-primary education centres do not provide adequate and systematic stimulation for the socio-emotional readiness of children. There is less focus on interaction and doing group activities (Chandra, et al., 2017). Hence, participation of children in educational activities is found to be low (Kaul, et al., 2014).

Pears, et al., (2014), in a study, pointed out that socio-emotional intervention improves understanding, reduces aggressive responses to peer provocation and increases self-regulation skills in children. Similarly, the results of Head Start REDI (Research-based, Developmentally Informed) program revealed significant differences favouring children in enriched intervention classrooms on measures of emotional understanding, social problem solving and social behavior (Bierman, et al., 2008). Therefore, socio-emotional intervention, at the pre-primary stage, helps ensure the socio-emotional readiness of children.

## OBJECTIVES

- To identify gaps in the level of socio-emotional readiness of pre-primary students
- To implement the intervention to improve the socio-emotional readiness of pre-primary stage students
- To evaluate the effect of the intervention on the socio-emotional readiness of pre-primary students

## SAMPLE AND METHOD

A total of 176 students from pre-primary classes of eight MCD schools (one pre-primary class from each school) in South district of Delhi were selected as sample. The sample, consisting of students from eight pre-primary classes, was

randomly divided into two groups — experimental and control group (four classes in each group).

The data were collected using the observation schedule and rating scale. The study was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, i.e., pre-test, all 176 students were assessed to identify gaps in the level of their socio-emotional readiness. In the second stage, a socio-emotional readiness intervention was designed and implemented in the experimental group for two months to address the gaps. In the third stage, i.e., post-test, the socio-emotional readiness levels of both experimental and control group students were reassessed to ascertain the effect of the intervention.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Gaps in socio-emotional readiness

Gaps were identified based on 33 aspects under five components of the socio-emotional domain — self-concept, self-control, controlling emotions, approach to learning and interactions with others. The results, in terms of component wise difference in percentage expected and obtained by the students, are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 demonstrates gaps in the socio-emotional readiness level of the students in all five components. However, the magnitude of gaps varied component wise, ranging from 36.3 to 42.7 per cent. The results indicate that the maximum gap was identified under self-concept

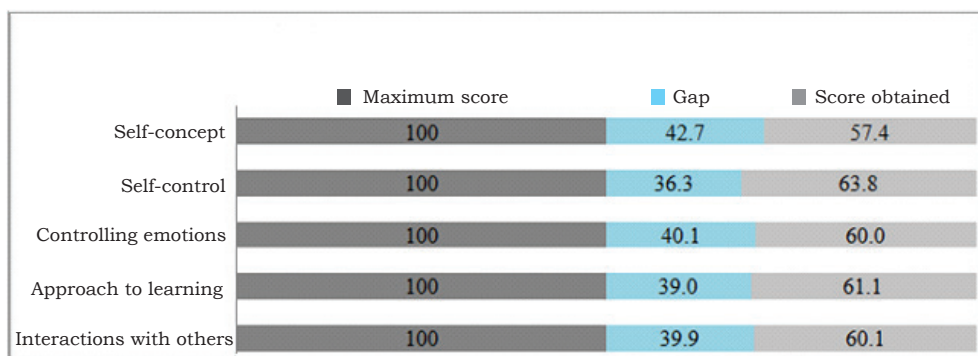


Figure 1: Gaps in the level of socio-emotional readiness of students (in %)

(42.7 per cent), followed by controlling emotions (40.1 per cent), interactions with others (39.9 per cent), approach to learning (39 per cent) and self-control (36.3 per cent).

These results, further, suggest that the level of socio-emotional readiness of the students, both in the experimental and control groups, was low in all five components. The gaps are indicative of the fact that the students were unaware of self-concept, weak in controlling emotions and expressing their feelings. They interacted less with others. Besides, their approach to learning was inappropriate and they did not have much ability to exercise self-control in diverse situations.

The results, therefore, are in harmony with other studies conducted in this area. Kaul, et al., (2014) and the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (2006) discuss the rare occurrence of socio-emotional

development activities, especially, self-expression in the country.

According to Bhise (2016), opportunity for expression, helping children frame sentences and patience to listen to their explanations were also missing in pre-primary centres of Maharashtra.

Kaul, et al., (2014) also found that pre-primary classes followed a restrictive approach, where children were made to sit on one place without doing anything much, except rote learning. This situation confirms the need for socio-emotional readiness stimulation in students of pre-primary classes in all 33 aspects under the five components. Hence, the intervention was designed and implemented in the experimental group classes for two months and its effects were analysed.

### Effects of the intervention

The socio-emotional readiness levels of the students, both in the experimental and control groups, on pre-test (before intervention) and post-test

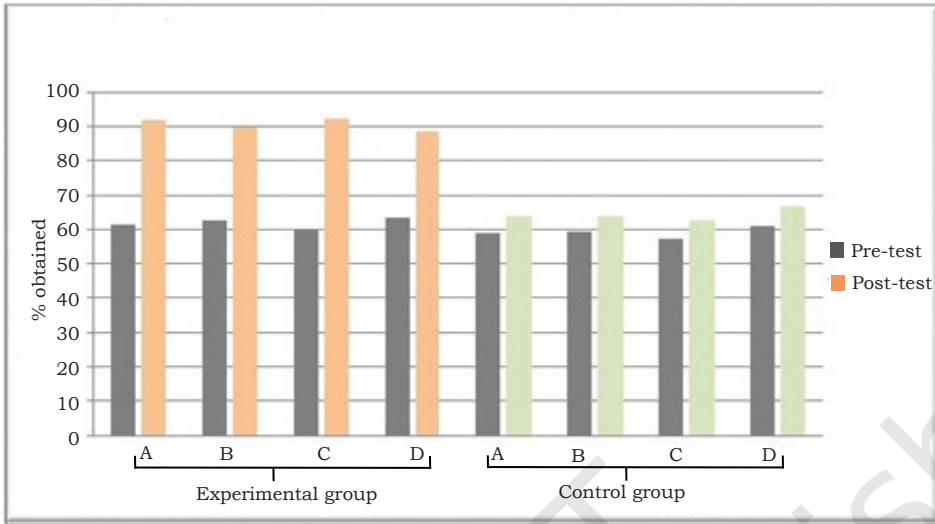


Figure 2: Pre- and post-test comparison of experimental and control group students in their socio-emotional readiness levels

(after intervention) were compared. The results are illustrated in Figure 2.

The pre- and post-test results, as illustrated in Figure 2, confirm that initially, the socio-emotional readiness level of both the experimental and control group students was more or less the same, whereas, after receiving the intervention, it improved. In the beginning, the performance of all experimental group students was below 65 per cent. After receiving the intervention, it improved to more than 90 per cent. In case of control group students, the level improved but not considerably, i.e., less than 65 per cent at the time of pre-test to less than 70 per cent after post-test.

## CONCLUSION

The results revealed that initially, there were huge gaps in the socio-emotional readiness levels of the students. So, an intervention to provide socio-emotional stimulation was needed. A comparison of pre- and post-test socio-emotional readiness levels of the students shows that after the intervention, the performance of the experimental group students had improved. Hence, it may be inferred that there was a positive effect of the intervention on the socio-emotional readiness level of experimental group students. Hence, short-term and domain specific interventions may be administered to improve the socio-emotional readiness of students at the pre-primary stage, as and when required.

## REFERENCES

- BHISE, C. D. 2016. 'Effectiveness of innovative strategies in ICDS centers for quality enhancement' (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). SNDT Women's University, Maharashtra, India.
- BIERMAN, K. L., ET AL. 2008. 'Promoting Academic and Social-emotional School Readiness: The HEAD Start REDI program'. *Child Development*. Vol. 79. No. 6, pp. 1802–1817.
- BLAUSTEIN, M. 2005. 'See, Hear, Touch! The basic of learning readiness, developmentally appropriate practice'. *Beyond the Journal — Young Children on the Web*. NAEYC.
- CHANDRA, R. 2016. 'India! On the Way to Global Movement on Quality Early Childhood Care and Education'. *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol. 3. No. 1, pp. 13–18.
- . ET AL. 2017. 'Quality early childhood care and education in India: Initiatives, practice, challenges and enablers'. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*. Vol. 11. No. 1, pp. 41–67.
- CONSORTIUM FOR RESEARCH ON EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, TRANSITIONS AND EQUALITY. 2010. 'Pre-primary education in India'. Create India Policy Brief.
- ELLIOT, A. 2006. 'Early childhood education: Pathways to quality and equity for all children'. *Australian Education Review*. Australian Council for Educational Research. Victoria, Australia.
- KAUL, V., ET AL. 2014. Indian Early Childhood Education (IECEI) Impact Study-1. 'Quality and Diversity in Early Childhood Education — A View from Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Rajasthan'. Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development. Ambedkar University. New Delhi, India.
- NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC COOPERATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT. 2006. 'Three decades of ICDS — An Appraisal'. NIPCCD. New Delhi, India.
- PEARS, K. C., P. A. FISHER, H. K. KIM, J. BRUCE, C. V. HEALEY AND K. YOERGER. 2013. 'Immediate effects of a school readiness intervention for children in foster care'. *Early Education and Development*. Vol. 24. No. 6, pp. 771–791.
- PEARS, K. C., C. V. HEALEY, P. A. FISHER, D. BRAUN, C. H. M. CONTE, J. NEWMAN AND S. TIGER. 2014. 'Immediate effects of a program to promote school readiness in low-income children: Results of a pilot study'. *Education and Treatment of Children*. Vol. 37. No. 3, pp. 431–460.