

## Investigating the strengths and future opportunities for fulfillment of objectives and growth expectations in pre- elementary school

Mahboobe mohammad shafie\*<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Sayed Ebrahim Mirshah Jafari<sup>3</sup>, Mohammadreza Neyestani<sup>3</sup>

1. M.A. Department of Education Planning, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

2. Associate Professor, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

3. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan,

Iran

\* E-mail of the corresponding author: mmsh.6368@yahoo.com

### Abstract

The aim of present study is to determine the strengths and future opportunities for fulfillment of objectives pre- elementary school. The study method is descriptive- traverse. The statistical society includes all principals and trainers in pre- school centers of Esfahan city in school year of 2012-2013. The total number of them has been 1550 individuals. The statistical sample was assessed as 280 individuals among this number by using sample volume formula. The above sample was selected using cluster random sampling method in proportion to sample volume. The two tools of questionnaire and interview were used to gather information. Descriptive and inference statistics were used to analyze data resulting from study.

The resulting findings in this study showed that the objectives in preschool period confront with different strengths and opportunities. In sum principals and trainers noted the harmony between principals and trainers and also supervising on trainers' function by the principals of preschool trainer as the most important strengths. Also they considered holding in-service trainings for the trainers and the cooperation of parents with principals and trainers as the most important opportunities.

**Key words:** objectives, pre- school period, strengths, opportunities.

### 1. Introduction

Education history in fact is the history if social changes in childhood periods. It means that childhood conditions and attitudes towards children have been influenced by emergence of social and political conditions in human life. Therefore educational leaders such as Dewey in USA, Claparde in Belgium, Montessori in Italy, Decroly in Belgium, Cousin in France and Kerschensteiner in Germany criticized traditional education severely and all agreed with each other regarding new system of education based on childhood period. They believed that children must not be treated as young adults but they must be considered as individuals with different development abilities and properties comparing to adults. They always compared children with plants and flowers namely treated them as living organisms that need special care and support so that they can flourish and turn in to complete and free individuals.

Preschool education is the first step in official education which has its own objectives, programs, methods and special tools and it is an important basis for general educational period. Preschool education usually refers to experiences of children in nursery schools; kindergarten and preparedness periods started from birth and continue to first school years. This kind of education undertakes children normal development from birth to 6 years old in aspects such as mental, spiritual, social, cognitive and motor development. (Soltani, 2011). Attempts and plentiful studies of famous scientists such as Russo, Pestalozzi, Monte Sari, Froebel, Piaget, Dewey and other scientists confirm the above issue that initial experiences of any child and the obtained successes in this period is effective in formation of personality and children's final perfection. What a child learns in early six years of age is the basis for all of his learning in future.

It is essential to consider any education development and innovation in early years of childhood and plan strongly for childhood period and after that. Successful planning is that kind of planning which considers maximum number of factors and apply its abilities for training most of the existence dimensions of human being. That kind of planning which ponders development of entire human personality with maximum use of facilities and status quo and considers future prospects of human society whether at present and the past. (Bazargan 2007).

Pre- school level because it is a special period for any child and because of the strengths and critical opportunities which are present in this sensitive period, is of special priority in education system. This step of education can be divided into two periods, the first of which is related to toddlers ( from early months of life to 4 years old) that in Iran just nursery schools are mainly under supervision of state's health organization which undertakes the official development of children in these years. Second period which is related to 5-6 year old children is called preparedness period for entering primary school (which is called pre-school period) which is basically under supervision of ministry of education (Azati and Mardani, 3008). The necessity for formation of pre- school centers and the presence of different scientific and education reasons which necessitates that pre- school centers be productive for the children, crosses in to mind specified

objectives. Pre- School educational objectives are based on development and reinforcement of cognitive, mental, social and motor physical skills and it is expected that after passing this training course children have learned the above skills very well and all intended development objectives and expectations have been fulfilled (Zare and Ghoshoni 2008). The problem of pre-school centers is that they cannot reach the intended objectives very well and after passing this training course development expectations are not met in these students favorably. While the studies conducted in recent years shows the relation between objectives fulfillment in this training course and students educational progress in next year's (Zarin, 2001). In the course of getting objectives we will face methodological factors which can affect the fulfillment of objectives positively. In fact proper using of these factors can facilitate getting the objectives. Therefore it is favorable that factors which can affect the fulfillment of objectives positively are identified and investigated, and we should consider what factors can assist us in getting the objectives.

Generally the factors which can affect the fulfillment of objectives positively in pre- school period can be divided in to two categories. The first category consists of those factors which are related to internal environment of pre- school centers. If these factors have positive indices such as ability, capacity and skill, they are presented and considered as strength. The second category consists of those factors which are related to external environment of educational organizations. In these categories of factors, educational issues correlate with affairs such as social, cultural and political attitudes. Researchers try to identify influential external factors via studying external environment because external environment always interact with internal environment and has many effects on the course of fulfillment of objectives (Khalili 2003). Mehlish (2001) by conducting studies in this respect showed that high quality pre- school training can have short and long term cognitive, social and mental advantages. Parker (2005) in a study with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of pre- school training in children's learning concluded that if pre- school training is done by trained, qualified and experienced teachers will result in children's educational progress. Nelson et al. also noted that taking part in high quality educational programs and attaining the objectives in this course cause positive effect on speaking and listening skills in following steps that was investigated in a five- year project consisting of 3000 children aged 3-7 years old. Taggart studied different problems of pre- schools and reached some conclusions regarding behavioral- social and lingual development in children aged 3-5 years old. Galiani & Berlinski (2007) showed that providing pre- school facilities and provisions has direct relationship with mothers' occupation. In fact granting subsidies for caring the children increases the occupation of women. Women are more confident in asking those centers to keep their children and use this opportunity to spend their time on producing and social activities and thus add to economical and social development. Ljubica Marjanovic Umck (2006) in a study proceeded to investigate the effect of pre-school course and parent's quality of literacy on child's language development. The results of this study regarding 162 children showed that those children who have entered nursery school have better lingual skill in storytelling than those children who have entered pre- school on 3 years old. Also this study showed that a high quality pre- school center can have a remarkable effect on children's lingual skills whose parents have lower literacy.

Michelle in a dissertation under the title of "evaluating the quality of education on pre- school training: the role of curriculum and the results of trainer's interaction with child" found that pre- school training has positive effect on children, family and society. The results show that long-term advantages of such training is the result of high quality educational courses.

Houes (1988) showed in a research that pre- school children who go to improper nursery schools irrespective of their socio-economic situation attain lower grade in cognitive evaluation and social skills.

Glazer in a research under the title of "pre-school training, issues and subjects" concluded that those activities which had been planned and done for creative thinking, problem solving, development of speaking and lingual capacities and development of social relationships were very near to standards and expected level and little attention has been paid to feeling and spiritual dimensions.

Morgan et. al (2012) showed in a study about the effect of advanced dietary training of school garden on fruit and vegetables by children, priorities of vegetables and fruits and school life quality that school garden can be effective positively on children's tendency to taste vegetables and the rate of tasting of the vegetables, and equipping pre- school centers and nursery schools with vegetables garden can be a good opportunity to change children's taste to facilitate different dimensions of growth and development.

Zarin (2001) in a study under the title of the amount of fulfillment of educational objectives in preparedness classes in Esfahan city concluded that educational activities of preparedness centers result in development of skills and motor sensational, spiritual, and cognitive capacities of children and learners and these educational activities and learning opportunities have been provided favorably and performed and as a result expected educational objectives and purposes in this 1- year course have been fulfilled.

Mohammadi Bolbolan (2006) in a study under the title of "investigating the educational needs of pre- school centers of Sanandaj" measured the required knowledge and skills of pre- school trainers to do educational planning for promoting their knowledge, skills and abilities and results showed in any three levels of knowledge, skills and attitude, the mean

values have been more than intermediate level and it can be concluded that trainers have knowledge, skills and attitude required for training job.

Zare and Ghoshoni(2008) in an study under the title of “ pre-school education ( status que , deficiencies , recommendations and compiling the polices) to investigate qualitative and quantitative active eats of pre- school educational centers compared these centers physically and man power status , equipment and 17 different functions.The results showing the difference between pre-school educational centers, health organization and education department. The most important obtained results are as follows:

1- Physical space of pre- school educational centers from primary school has been under supervision of health organization.

2- Specialized personnel of education department’s training centers are mainly from health organization.3- Physical space of pre- school educational centers are not mainly suitable for educational personnel, most of these centers have not been made for pre- school educational centers, this subject is true for both two centers.4- it can be said that all pre- school educational centers confront with man power problem.5- supervision is very weak on pre- school educational centers especially in those centers which are under the supervision of health organization. 6- In those centers which are under the supervision of health organization there is no job security.

Kamalvandi (2010) in his MS dissertation by the title of “the effect of pre- school education based on multi- dimensional planning on students’ creativity in first grade of primary school in Tehran” concluded taper- school education based on multi- dimensional planning has been effective on the amount of creativity, fluidity and flexibility and thought expansion.

Fatahi(2012) concluded in a research that in pre- school centers of the country most of the trainers don’t have university education and welfare facilities are very few in private centers resulting in trainers’ lack of motivation and government helps little with regard to invest for meeting these centers’ costs. The obtained successes and positive effects in later steps result from objectives fulfillment in pre- school period. Objectives fulfillment in pre- school period not only has considerable results for parents and children but also makes the society powerful. Training children in early years of life and investigation and using those factors which result in objectives fulfillment in this period is a very suitable situation for preventing and reducing learning problems and provide society individuals permanent interests.(Sammons and et al , 2005).

Consideration and more identification of training suitable for pre- school children is a symbol of strength and cultural wealth and education system of any society. Therefore attempts to teach necessary concepts and planning and provide necessary facilities for pre – school children is a step for the society to benefit from physical health and psychological health because the value and survival of any society depends on trained, aware and competent individuals of that society(Sabzeh 2008).

## **2. Research questions**

In this vein present study tries to answer the following questions to obtain successes and pre- school period objectives in such domains as cognitive, mental, physical- motor and social:

1. What are the strengths for fulfillment of pre- school objectives in Esfahan city?
2. To what extent are the strengths for fulfillment of pre- school objectives in Esfahan city?
3. What are the opportunities for fulfillment of pre- school objectives in Esfahan city?
4. To what extent are the opportunities for fulfillment of pre- school objectives in Esfahan city?

## **3. Study method**

Study method is of descriptive – Traverse and of applied type. The statistical society in this study included all managers and trainers in pre- school centers in Esfahan city who have been busy working in school year of 2012- 2013. Their population has been (311 managers and 1244 trainers). Among this number by using sample volume formula, statistical sample for two groups has been selected as 56 managers and 224 trainers respectively. Two tools namely interview and questionnaires were used to gather information. The basis for planning questionnaire was analyzing those interviews that were done with managers and pre- school centers’ trainers.

Questionnaire was composed of two strength factors (14 items) and opportunities (9 item) and scored on Likert5- ranges from very low (1) to very high (5). Stability coefficient of questionnaire was calculated via Crunbach alpha coefficient as 0.82. To analyze data, mean and standard deviation was used in descriptive statistics level and uni –variable t test and Friedman test was applied in inference statistics level.

## **4. Results**

1- What are the strengths for fulfillment of pre- school objectives and development expectation in Esfahan city?

Table 1: Mean standard deviation, t value and ranking mean related to strengths.

Ranking average	Significance level	freedom degree	t value	Standard deviation	mean	how do you assess the following cases with regard to the status que of preschool education	item
5/35	0/001	276	6/979	0/74	3/31	How much are trainers interested in training Job?	1
7/60	0/001	276	22/853	0/55	3/76	How much do trainers consider students' individual differences in learning?	2
9/75	0/001	276	26/341	0/74	4/17	How much do managers supervise on trainers function?	3
7/47	0/001	276	17/435	0/71	3/75	How much do trainers apply different and favorable educational methods?	4
5/13	0/005	276	2/855	0/88	3/15	How much learners have previous backgrounds and readiness?	5
7/85	0/001	276	18/346	0/68	3/75	How much trainers are able to deal effectively with learners ?	6
8/52	0/001	276	29/539	0/51	3/92	How much do trainers use suitable evaluation methods for learners?	7
9/20	0/001	276	23/795	0/73	4/05	How much do trainers select suitable educational contents to reach their objectives for learners?	8
5/78	0/001	276	6/954	0/87	3/36	How much do trainers use each other's experience?	9
8/85	0/001	276	25/215	0/66	4	How much do the principal and trainers are in harmony with each other?	10
7/86	0/001	276	15/605	0/85	3/80	How much do the principals proceed to do research for promotion of educational unit qualitative level?	11
7/83	0/001	276	24/067	0/54	3/78	How much do the centers do use educational various programs for learners and to provide learning opportunity for them?	12
7/35	0/001	276	18/131	0/65	3/71	How much the situation of pre-school centers are suitable in terms of cooling' heating and safety facilities?	13
6/47	0/001	276	10/703	0/76	3/49	How much the organization of space in pre-school centers are don favorably?	14

The findings of table 1 show that in questionnaire related to strengths in Esfahan city item 3 “supervision on trainers function by pre-school centers “with mean value of 9.75, item 8”selection of suitable educational contents to reach the objectives for learners “with mean value of 9.20 and item 10 “the principal and trainers coordination with each other “with mean value of 8.85 have devoted themselves the highest ranks to each other respectively and they can be regarded as the most important strength by the responders.

2-How much are the strengths of fulfillment of pre-school period objectives in Esfahan city.

Table 2-mean value of the role of strengths for fulfillment of pre-school period objectives with hypothesized mean value of 3

Significance level	Freedom degree	T	Deviation from mean	Standard deviation	mean	group
0/001	275	41/348	0/017	0/28	3/71	Esfahan

Based on findings of table 2, the mean value of the role of strengths for fulfillment of pre-school period objectives in Esfahan city is 3.71 which is higher than the hypothesized value of 3. Significance level value is equal to 0.001 and since this value is lower than 0.01 therefore the observed difference is statistically significant in the level of 99 percent, therefore the objectives in pre- school period is face to face with announced strengths.

3- What are the existing opportunities for fulfillment of objectives and development expectations of pre-school education in Esfahan and Najafabad?

Table3 .mean, standard deviation, t value, and ranking mean value related to opportunities

Ranking mean	Significance level	Freedom degree	T value	Standard deviation	Mean	group	To what extent do the following factors as opportunities result in the fulfillment the objectives and development expectations in pre-school period?	Item
5/80	0/001	276	14/535	0/72	3/63	Esfahan	To what extent do the organizations responsible for supervising on pre- school centers' functions?	1
3/12	0/001	276	-6/238	0/98	2/63	Esfahan	To what extent capacities of parents are welcomed in pre- school centers?	2
5/22	0/001	276	8/481	0/80	3/40	Esfahan	To what extent do the parents cooperate with principals and trainers?	3
4/87	0/001	276	7/639	0/79	1/49	Esfahan	To what extent do the ratifications of planning and supervision council are enforced on pre-school period?	4
4/75	0/001	276	5/377	0/91	3/29	Esfahan	To what extent do the parents attend children's learning?	5
4/67	0/001	276	6/042	0/77	3/28	Esfahan	To what extent do the families spend for children's learning?	6
6/25	0/001	276	21/013	0/64	3/81	Esfahan	To what extent do the in- service courses are held to promote the skills of trainers?	7
5/16	0/001	276	7/609	0/92	3/42	Esfahan	To what extent do the parents attend children's nutrition?	8
5 /17	0/001	276	10/101	0/74	3/45	Esfahan	To what extent do the educational, behavioral and moral situations are investigated and reported to the families?	9

The findings of table 3 show that in questionnaire related to opportunities in Esfahan city item 7 "holding in- service courses to promote trainers skill "with mean value of 6.25, item 1"supervision of in charge organizations on function of pre- school centers "with mean value of 5.80 and item 3 "parents' cooperation with principals and trainers" with mean value of 5.22 have devoted themselves the highest ranks respectively and they can be regarded as the most important opportunity by the responders.

4- To what extent are opportunities for fulfillment of objectives in pre- school training in Esfahan?



Table4: mean score of the role of opportunities for fulfillment of objectives in pre- school training with hypothesized mean value of 3.

Significance level	Freedom degree	T	Deviation from mean	Standard deviation	mean	group
0/001	275	19/352	0/018	0/31	3/36	Esfahan

Based on findings of table 4, the mean value of the role of opportunities for fulfillment of objectives in pre- school training in Esfahan city is 3.36 which is equal to Significance level value as 0.001 and since this value is lower than 0.01 therefore the observed difference is statistically significant in the level of 99 percent, therefore the objectives in pre- school period is face to face with announced opportunities.

### 5. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of present study has been to investigate the strengths and opportunities for fulfillment of pre-school objectives in Esfahan city. The obtained results from study data analysis showed that the fulfillment of the objectives in pre- school period is face to face with announced strengths and opportunities. The mean scores of strengths and opportunities are higher than hypothesized value of three. This result shows that principals and trainers in present situation of pre- school education have assessed these items situations higher than medium indicating the strength and opportunity.

The most important strengths from the points of view of pre – school principals and trainers are evaluation of trainers’ function by pre- school principals, selection of suitable educational content for fulfillment of objectives and coordination of principals and trainers with each other. Also the results showing that from the points of view of pre – school principals and trainers, the most important opportunities are to hold in- service courses for developing skills in trainers, supervision of in charge organization on the function of pre- school centers and cooperation of parents with principals and trainers.

In determining the results of the study it can be noted that the strengths can be represented in presence of different educational factors in educational organizations. The skills and capacities of trainers and principals, children, financial assets and physical sources are among those factors which are represented as strengths if they are superior and of merit and have positive effect on educational quality.

If strengths have higher weight qualitatively and quantitatively and are richer, they can overcome present weaknesses of pre- school centers and they result in reduction of negative effects inside organizations. Since strengths are parts of inside organizational factors, they can become under control. Identifying the strengths results in being informed of present capacities so that we can rely on them to reach to our objectives.

Fortunately, the strengths and positive factors which have been present in pre- school centers in Esfahan is so that they could be represented more salient in front of shortages and insufficiencies in the extent that according to Zarrin(2001) , programs of this course have resulted in development of skills and motor sensory, mental, social and cognitive capacities in children and therefore educational purposes and objectives expected from one- year course have been fulfilled considerably.

But this does not necessarily means that the present strengths in these centers are according to international standards. The mean value of strengths in this city shows that the amount is not at the optimum and standard level namely score of 5.

The results of this study are consistent with studies conducted by MohammadiBolbolan(2006), shahniYeylagh (2008), Kamalvandi (2010), Tayloet al (2002), Brandatagart(2003), Nilson et al(2003) , Silva and Puch (2004) , Lobika Marjonovic (2006) Galiani and Berlineski ( 2007) Michel (2008), Morgan et al(2010), Class and Susan karee(1986) and Rabinson (1979).

In determining this question it can be said that a set of external environment factors influence on educational internal process of pre- school centers. If these factors facilitate the objectives fulfillment in pre- school course, they provide opportunities for this course and better fulfillment of objectives while educational system can hardly have interactional effects on them. Attitudes, rules, procedures, and movement’s policies and the parents are among factors for fulfillment of objectives in pre- school course. Forces and external environmental factors are so dynamic and high ranking that the effect of each individual factor cannot be separated from other factors completely.

Opportunities are present in different forms in external environment. Opportunities are favorable situations in the environment and if the principals and trainers are aware they can benefit from them in favor of their educational centers and convert them from potential situation in to practice and benefit from them to reach to their objectives. Although opportunities are related to external environment and are out of control of educational centers but if they are correctly used they can fulfill the objectives like strengths at the same level. The results of this study showed that the most important opportunities from the points of view of principals and trainers are related to health organization attitude

towards children, their protection and supervision on pre- school educational centers and also the activities of children's parents who can influence positively on the functional process of pre- school centers in different ways and also holding in service training courses are beneficial for promotion of managers. From identifying external opportunities we can access the strategies and guidelines of improvement and promotion of organization activities.

**According to results of present study, following recommendations are raised:**

1- Functions of educational organization depend on the quality of educational factors especially quality of manpower. Therefore considering development of manpower as the most fundamental factor among other factors is an unavoidable necessity and since pre- school trainers form the fundamental elements of education and they are considered as the main axis for educational activities in pre-school educational centers, fundamental attention to them is of special importance and necessity. Trainer is one of the educational system chains and is the most effective element. Therefore it is necessary that trainers have enough expertise and skill with regard to career duties and will be informed of transformations occurring in this aspect continuously which is not possible unless education authorities proceed to plan and finally implement suitable educational courses especially short – term in service educations in different pre- school educational organizations.

2- Since pre- school course in state's educational system have not been recognized formally and is not regarded as one of the educational formal steps and some different organizations such as health and education departments participate to provide children with educational services, it is necessary that a center is developed to supervise on the functions of these organizations and to direct and control their activities and suitable mechanisms are predicted for their activities , gathering information and relatively exact statistics about manpower situation , space, and equipment and other educational factors so that a proper bed is provided for reaching to objectives .

3- Necessary motivations must be provided for participants through familiarizing them with the importance and necessity of education and orienting them and by salary rise, job special benefit, career rank and group promotion so that they participate effectively in service training and to facilitate education and make its results fruitful.

4- Training and employing advisor trainers to guide principals and trainers participating in educational courses and help them in their career through visiting educational centers and observing their activities and functions and lead them whenever it is necessary.

5- Publishing journals and educational pamphlets specific for trainers and principals of pre- school courses so that there is possibility to enhance their knowledge and besides these publications contribute to find its main standing in society educational system.

6- It is suggested that the relative conformance of manpower number to children number in nursery school is done. Increasing the number of trainers to children can be obtained through encouraging them via salary rise and welfare facilities and granting them a series of facilities.

7- It is possible to hold training courses to promote trainers in terms of education and career and it is possible to hire university students engaging in learning the relevant major. Also annual conformation of the quality of their jobs by parents and principals can be useful.

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