

# Beliefs and Practices of Pre-School Teachers Towards Emergent Literacy - A Review

USHA RANI. M<sup>1</sup>, PROF. ANURADHA. K<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Home Science, Sri Venkateshwara University, Tirupati.

<sup>2</sup> Professor in Human Development, Department of Home Science, Sri Venkateshwara University, Tirupati.

**Abstract-** Emergent literacy skills are critical 'getting ready to read skills' that children need to develop before they can learn to read. These early literacy skills begin early as young children learn to use verbal and non-verbal communication patterns, including speech and sign language, to express themselves. The aim of this review was to examine previous studies which were conducted on association between beliefs and practices of teachers on emergent literacy between the periods of 1990-2021. The systematic review was conducted using the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and Meta -Analysis guidelines (2020). The Google Scholar database was used to search the studies conducted between 1990 and 2021 using a combination of key words related to teacher's beliefs and practices. Among 100 articles retrieved from Google Scholar databases, 20 met the criteria for present review. Among the most relevant studies 7 were conducted in America ,3 in Australia,2 in China, and each in India, Portugal, UK, Spain, Norway and southern countries. From the review there was correlation between teacher's beliefs and classroom practices. It is evident from the review that classroom practices have subsequent benefits on language and literacy skills of pre-school children especially from poverty backgrounds.

**Indexed Terms-** Emergent literacy, Teachers' Beliefs, Teachers' Practices, Developmentally Appropriate Practices, Child Centered Beliefs, Child Centered Practices.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Emergent literacy is a term used to explain a child's knowledge of reading and writing skills before they begin to take formal instructions in reading and

writing words. If emergent literacy couldn't be developed in early years of the child, then the child will take further more time in the readiness for reading and writing. At this stage parents, teachers, caretakers and significant others, play an important role in helping their children grow to be successful readers and writers by helping them to develop the skills necessary for reading and writing. Parents can develop emergent literacy by home activities like story and rhyme telling, listening, scribbling etc.

Pre-school teacher's beliefs about emergent literacy are largely influenced by culture. Most research on emergent literacy has been conducted in English speaking countries and very few were reported in Indian context. Examining Pre-school teacher's beliefs and the way they manifest in practice is important to understand the development of children's interest towards literacy and literacy practices. Through National Education Policy (NEP) (2020), Government has introduced a revised pre-school curriculum, with emergent literacy as a requisite goal which drawn more attention of educationists towards the concept of emergent literacy. Teachers' beliefs were strongly underpinned by their beliefs about the specific role of the pre-school teacher and by their beliefs about practices.

*According to National Education Policy (NEP), (2020), the ability to read and write, and perform basic operations with numbers, is a necessary foundation and an indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning. It was reported by NEP (2020) that various governmental, as well as non-governmental surveys, indicated that there is currently a learning crisis: a large proportion of students currently in elementary school-estimated to be over 5 crore number -have not attained foundational literacy*

*and numeracy, i.e., the ability to read and comprehend basic text and the ability to carry out basic addition and subtraction with Indian numerals. Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children will thus become an urgent national mission, with immediate measure to be taken on many fronts and with clear goals that will be attained in the short term(including that every student will attain foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3).The highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025.Accordingly ,all state/UT governments will immediately prepare an implementation plan for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools, identifying stage -wise targets and goals to be achieved by 2025,and closely tracking and monitoring progress of the same.(NEP,2020,paragraph 2.1 and 2.2).*

## II. SEARCH STRATEGY

A list of combinations of keywords was prepared for searching the studies on the Google Scholar database. The keywords included for search are as follows:

- Beliefs of pre-school teachers towards emergent literacy.
- Practices of pre-school teachers towards emergent literacy.
- Beliefs and practices of pre-school teachers towards emergent literacy.
- Perceptions of teachers towards emergent literacy among pre-school children.
- Child centered beliefs on emergent literacy among pre-school children.
- Child centered practices on emergent literacy among pre-school children.
- Developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices towards emergent literacy.

The search covered research conducted between 1990 and 2021 and available on Google Scholar database.

- **Inclusion criteria**  
Studies were included in the systematic review if they were conducted on beliefs and practices related to pre-school children literacy including Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) and those were published in a peer reviewed journals between 1990-2022 and were written in English only.

- **Exclusion criteria**  
All case studies, books, policy briefs, thesis/dissertations and non-peer reviewed articles were excluded for the current systematic review.

- **Data extraction**  
Data extraction was conducted in three phases. In the first phase among the studies identified by the search on Google Scholar about 100 studies were retrieved and 30 duplicates were removed before screening in first phase. In the second phase all the studies were screened by reading the articles and 20 studies which focus on older children about literacy were excluded. In third phase 50 studies consisted of full-length text articles were identified. From them thirty-one non-peer reviewed articles, reports, case studies, thesis/dissertations, books and policy briefs, etc. were excluded for the present review. One study (Daniel&David,2015) was found to be on beliefs and practices of primary school teachers and it was deleted. Thus, remaining 19 articles were taken for this systematic review.

Table-1: Summary of Selected Studies Reviewed on Beliefs and Practices of Pre-School Teachers towards Emergent Literacy.

S.no	Author	Year	Tool	Sample	Place	Results
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1.	Donna. M ,Bryant ,R.M Clifford , E.S Peirner	1991	Two observational measures, Two questionnaires	103 Kindergarten classrooms.	America	Quality of the classes was predicated by teachers and principals scores on a measure of knowledge and belief in developmentally appropriate practices. Quality was not related to geographic location, school size, per pupil expenditure, or teacher or principal education or experience.
2.	Charlesworth. R	1991	27 item Checklist for rating Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)	113 Kindergarten teachers from 4 southern states	Southern countries (Texas, South Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia)	Psychometric properties of the measure were encouraging; they revealed positive correlations between developmentally appropriate beliefs and activities and between developmentally inappropriate beliefs and activities.
3.	Frank. M	1992	Not Available	Teachers	USA	The articles argues that teachers beliefs can and should become an important focus of educational inquiry but that this will require clear conceptualizations.
4.	Guimaraes. A.S., Youngman, M.	1995	Questionnaire Survey	Teachers	Portugal	Teachers regard pre-school education as important for future literacy acquisition, but majority do not think that early literacy activities should always be part of the pre-school curriculum
5.	Mc Mullen. B	1999	DAP practices	20 early childhood educators of children ages birth through 8	America	DAP beliefs overall were strongly correlated with practices.

6.	Vartuli . S	1999	Early childhood survey of beliefs & practices (Macron,1988)	Early Childhood teachers	America	Beliefs were significantly more appropriate than practice at every grade level. As the grade level increased the level of self-reported developmentally appropriate beliefs & practices decreased.
7.	Ure. C and Raban . B	2001	PLP (Pre-school Literacy Project)	38 Sessional pre-schools & 2 long day child care centers.	Australia	Pre-school professionals were found to be uncertain about their role with respect to young children’s early literacy development. suggested that it is the starting priority for experiences by beliefs and there is a need for review of pre-school practices to meet the goal of children’s experiences of literacy..
8.	Craig H.Hurt , Diane. C ,Burts. R & Thomasson. H	2006	Analysis Questionnaire	204 kindergarten teachers in 20 kindergarten classrooms.	America	Strongest belief factor could be used to identify teachers who use more developmentally appropriate than inappropriate practices.
9.	Craig H. Hurt , Diane C. Burts & Hernandez .S	2006	The teachers’ beliefs scale and the instructional activities scale	113 kindergarten teachers from southern states	America	There is positive correlations were found between developmentally appropriate beliefs and activities. The teachers with higher ratings on developmentally appropriate beliefs felt more in control of planning and implementation of instruction than did the teachers with lower ratings.
10.	Jacksonn.B, Larzelere.R,St.Clair, Fitcher.C & Harriet. E	2006	Intervention Strategies	230 pre-school children.	Spain	Early childhood educator participation can enhance the effectiveness of classroom literacy practices and has subsequent benefits on

						language and literacy skills of pre-school children from poverty backgrounds.
11.	Donna.B	2007	Interview method	21 female child care workers.	Australia	Greater emphasis in professional training for in child care settings should be placed on exploring the expectations and beliefs that child care workers hold about their role in teaching young children and how that role is instrumental in supporting early learning.
12.	Wang.J , E.James	2008	296 Chinese teachers & 146 American teachers	Teachers beliefs scales& Teachers background information Questionnaire.	America &China	Chinese teachers' general education, professional training ,location of school and class sizes were all significantly associated with their beliefs .For American teachers only the general education level was related to curriculum beliefs.
13.	Donna. M Kagan	2010	Academic materials.	Child care workers	Australia	After summarizing the heterogenous research on teacher belief. I point out that we lack direct evidence concerning the processes that effect change in teacher belief. This leads to a discussion of research on conceptual change and its relevance to teacher education.
14.	Jenny.et.al	2013	PLS (Pre-school literacy survey)	90 Pre-schools	Norway	Beliefs were strongly supported by practices.
15.	Iliana.A , Belinola. &B .Flores	2013	Interview method, Oral reflections.	A group of bilingual early childhood teachers	USA	The teachers used reflection and ongoing dialogue that bridged theory and practice as they raised questions about their daily practices in relation to theoretical perspectives.

						We provide a glimpse of these teachers' ongoing transformative journeys and provide suggestions for early childhood teachers to engage in sustained professional development.
16.	E. Hur, Cynthia .K & Jeon. L	2015	Path analysis, Woodcock Johnson-III	444 Pre-school children,103 teachers.	USA	Child centered beliefs were not directly associated with children's behavioral self- regulation. Future studies need to investigate how teachers with child centered beliefs, may promote children's self-regulation . Teacher professional development programs may need to target teachers' belief system as a way to improve teacher quality.
17.	Daniel. M, David. R	2015	Achievement tests, classroom observations, Questionnaires	103 Primary school teachers,2148 students	UK	Strongest direct effect while more distal factors (e.g teacher beliefs) influencing student achievement indirectly.
18.	Anjana & Prema	2019	Survey with 20 questionnaires.	48 female pre-school teachers from 10 CBSE school	Kerala (India)	Education nor experiences have impact on teachers' knowledge and belief
19.	Bi Ying .H	2021	Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CASS)	656 (4 years old pre-school children),59 head teachers	China	Structural equation modeling indicated that the effects of teachers' child centered beliefs on children's literacy development were fully mediated by responsive teaching.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The articles reviewed were thoroughly analyzed and the information about authors, sample, tools were

used, location, results were tabulated and presented in table-1.

The thoroughly analyzing of studies reported in table-1 shows that 20% of the studies (5) reported that there is correlation between beliefs and practices of pre-school teachers on Emergent Literacy. In one of the studies conducted at China it was reported that Chinese teachers general education, professional training, location of school and class sizes were all significantly associated with their beliefs but among American teachers only the general education level was related to their curriculum beliefs (Wang&James,2008).

Vartuli (2006) found that there was close link between beliefs and practices and it was reported that beliefs were significantly more appropriate than practice. In one of the studies conducted at Norway results showed that beliefs were strongly supported by practices (Jenny et al.,2013). In one study conducted at Australia, it was reported that teachers' professional training influences their expectations and beliefs about their role in teaching young children's early learning (Donna ,2007).

As the scope of search also included beliefs and practices related to Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), about 20% of the studies (4) showed that there was positive correlation between developmentally appropriate practice and teachers' beliefs (Charlesworth,1991; McMullen ,1999; Criag et al.,2006). Among the studies on DAP the study by McMullen ,(1999) clearly revealed that Developmentally Appropriate beliefs overall were strongly correlated with practices.

Fifteen percent of studies (3) focused that there was a need to investigate the relationship between teachers' child centered beliefs and children's self-regulation and also the possibility to target teachers' belief system as a way to improve teacher quality (Hur et al.,2015). In one of the studies conducted at China (Bi Yung,H,2021), teachers' child centered beliefs effects on children's literacy development were fully mediated by responsive teaching.

The above mentioned studies focused on both beliefs and practices and the below studies focused either on beliefs or on practices.

Among the 19 articles reviewed 25% studies (5) which focused on beliefs showed that teacher's beliefs play a major role in the development of Emergent Literacy (Guimaraes et al., (1995); Jackson et al.,(2006); Ure & Raban, (2001); Frank,(1992); Iliana et al.,(2013)). In one study the results revealed that teachers' beliefs can become an important focus of education as important for future literacy acquisition, but the majority do not think that early literacy activities should always be part of the pre-school curriculum (Guimaraes et al.,1995). In one study which focused on practices showed that classroom practices has subsequent benefits on language and literacy skills of pre-school children from poverty backgrounds (Jackson et al., 2006.In one Australian study (Ure & Raban.2001) suggested that it is the starting priority for experiences by beliefs and there is a need for review of pre-school practices to meet the goal of children's experiences of literacy.

Contradictory to the discussed studies on the beliefs and practices a small percent (10 percent) reported that there was no correlation between teachers' beliefs and practices. (Donna and Kagan ,2010), Anjana & Prema 2019).

In the available one Indian study it was reported that neither education nor experiences have impact on teachers' knowledge and beliefs. (Anjana & Prema 2019).

In this context there is a need to train pre-school teachers in aspects of emergent literacy and numeracy. If the teachers have positive beliefs about this need and importance of early literacy, they will implement in their classroom practices. Hence, a need was felt to identify the beliefs of pre-school teachers towards emergent literacy and its association with their practices. With this background the present review was planned to examine the reported studies on beliefs and practices of pre-school teachers for the past two decades.

## CONCLUSION

From the above discussions the following conclusions can be drawn

1. Nearly one fourth of studies was showed that there was correlation between beliefs and practices among pre-school teachers on emergent literacy.
2. Teachers' professional training influences their expectations and beliefs about their role in teaching young children's early learning.
3. There is possibility of getting no correlation between beliefs and practices (Donna and Kagan, (2010), Anjana & Prema (2019).
4. Classroom practices has subsequent benefits on language and literacy skills of pre-school children from poverty backgrounds (Jackson et al.,2006).

#### IMPLICATIONS

1. As teacher's beliefs and practices were found to have impact on young children's literacy skills, there is a need to train pre-school teachers to develop positive beliefs and Developmentally Appropriate Practices.
2. As the reported studies revealed that the practices of pre-school teachers have more benefit for children from poverty backgrounds, and training of Anganwadi teachers on these aspects helps to benefit children who attend *Anganwadi Centers* (Pre-schools run by Government) and who were mostly from socially disadvantaged background.

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