

# The Contribution of Caregivers in Christian and Buddhist Preschools in Respect of Early Childhood Care in Sri Lanka

KV Sudarma Harischandra

Principal, Depanama Dharmapala Vidyalaya. Pannipitiya  
lsasudharma@gmail.com

**Abstract-** *Early childhood is considered as the most important and decisive period in forming the foundation of the holistic development of one's personal life. The type of ones future personality depends on how he or she brought up during this period. This study has been planned to be conducted under three objectives. They were 1. Investigating the need for early childhood care and factors that fluency such care. 2. investigating the contributors of in early childhood care development. 3. investigating the different among contribution of caregivers Buddhist, Christian Preschools in respect of strategies in early child care. The data was obtained through: Visits and observations , Interviews , Study of documents conducted 32 early childhood centers in Negombo and the Maharagama area. ( Negambo- Christian 16, Maharagama, Pannipitiya- Buddhist-16. (n=32). And they were analyzed qualitative methods. In Christian preschools, the guiding principle was that each child was a precious gift of God. This belief resulted in a play oriented curriculum that maximized the choices available to children. Teachers also attempted to encourage children's creativity and their ability to formulate thoughts and express them to others. The Buddhist schools were among the largest of any schools, some had over 600 pupils. If the present economic uncertainties continue, these schools will likely continue to be a very appealing method for parents interested in giving their children a head start in school. Yet, in spite of factors that work to blur the distinct philosophical contribution of the various religions, researcher has seen concrete ways in which the ideologies of Christianity and Buddhism continue to influence Sri Lankan preschools. In the past decade, researchers and policy experts have been grappling with the feasibility of a global definition of child care quality that could be applied across all institutions in any community across the country. The elements of "appropriate practice" have been articulated by the Policy of western province Pre School.*

**Key words** - curriculum, Activities, preschool, creativity

## I. INTRODUCTION

Children are the foundation of sustainable development. The early years of life are crucial not only for individual health and physical development, but also for cognitive and social –emotional development. (unesco)

In the first years of life, children establish the cognitive, emotional and social foundation upon which they can build their futures. Early childhood is the most significant developmental period of life. A baby who is visually stimulated, continuously engaged in interactive activities, hugged, cooed to and comforted is more likely to fully develop cognitive, language, emotional and social skills, all of which are vital for success in school, in the community and subsequently in life. (unesco) children develop given the natural way life but a certain proportion may experience delayed development. For instance if we take a group of children, not all of them will walk at the same age. About 25% will walk at 11 months and another 50% may walk at 15 months; the reason being that the developmental phase of each child is different across different domains. While one child's physical development may be manifested within the normal range, another may show delayed language development. What the developmental standards aim to identify are age ranges within which children should acquire a given skill.(Thalagala,2014)

In Sri Lanka, the attention was first focused on pre school education with the introduction of Kannangara's reforms in 1943. As a result of 1972 new educational reforms, pre school education spread widely as the age limit for school admission was declared as 6 years. The number of pre school in Sri Lanka 1920-05, 1940-08, 1950-09, 1960-30, 1969-35, 1970-55, 1971-98, 1972-89, 1973-61,

1974-63, 1975-162, 1976-271, 1977-266, 1978-380, 1979,264, (Survey of Pre school in Sri Lanka ,1979). and the number increased to 16342 in 2009(Children Secretarial,2009). The establishment and implementing of pre school different in Sri Lanka. eg -A Provincial ECCD committee, with representatives of the districts, zones, divisions, NGOO, specialists in the field and community representatives will assist the provincial ECCD Unit. (Abhayadeva,2014) As well as deferent according to religion. This paper focus that The contribution of caregivers in Christian and Buddhist Preschools in respect of early childhood care in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is one of the most religious countries in the world, with a majority of the population claiming affiliation with a religious group. Buddhism, spread widely in Sri Lanka after the Rev Mahinda Thero's visit to Sri Lanka in 247 B.C. Buddhism enriched the values, custom and rites, tradition as well as education. After a colonial period of relatively strict separation between church and state, religious values are again beginning to receive explicit recognition in some public educational settings. One focus has been on the manner in which the values inherent in the religious doctrine are embodied in the expectations for teachers, students, and parents, including such issues as student comportment in and out of school, teachers' discipline practices, and the nature of teachers' communication with parents. Research in pre schools suggests that children benefit when parents and staff communicate with each other and share such values as commitment to hard work and respectful behavior toward adults(Harischandra, 2009). The literature on home schooling has also begun to track the role of religious values in shaping curriculum and pedagogical practices.

A studies of child care quality have included religious affiliation as a variable, and so far the findings have been rather contradictory. Work to date has not closely investigated the goals and expectations of staff at church-based schools, nor have studies assessed aspects of children's learning and development that may be most relevant to the goals of the schools. More research, particularly in the form of qualitative investigations, is needed to understand better, the ways in which the "rules for living" espoused within various organizations are instantiated in preschool organizations.

In the study reported here, a qualitative approach was utilized to understand the goals, values, and expectations of Sri Lanka early childhood education programs affiliated with Christianity and Buddhism. By talking at length with teachers of these programs, researcher sought to understand how their values were embodied in the practices and curricula of the schools. These data underscore the importance of understanding how collectively held belief systems inform educational practice.

The system of early childhood education in Sri Lanka is quite extensive. Over 90% of Sri Lankan children attend at least 1 year of a licensed preschool or child care center.(*Harischandra,2009*) Public preschools are funded by private, organization and state. but approximately 80% of children attend private preschools, some of which are affiliated with a religious organization (*Harischandra, 2009*). Like that Temple and church. All preschools and child care centers are subject to oversight by the nine provincials , which develops regulations pertaining to such issues as the dimensions and basic facilities available and the level of required teacher preparation. However, preschool teachers have considerable latitude in formulating their own programs, resulting in more diversity in the areas of materials, activities, and curriculum than is seen at any other stage in the Sri Lankan educational system. Buddhism, and Christianity, which have been intertwined with each other for since 1972 in Sri Lanka, create a rich tapestry of spiritual and philosophical thought that has had a profound impact on the nature of preschools (*Harischandra,2009*).

The theoretical basis of this study is located in the literature at the intersection of anthropology and psychology. In this literature, individuals involved in the socialization and education of young children are presumed to hold cultural models that guide their actions.

Cultural models are "presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared by members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in frame experience, supplying interpretations of that experience and inferences about it, and goals for action" (Quinn & Holland, 1987, p. 10). Cultural models include beliefs or conceptual schemas (e.g., "children should be seen and not heard") as well as behavioral scripts (e.g.,

steps to take when a child acts in an aggressive manner toward a peer) (D'Andrade, 1992; Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). However, cultural models are not necessarily associated with broad social categories like nation or ethnicity (Kondo, 1990); they can be generated within smaller social units as well. Furthermore, for important topics like rearing and educating children, a number of cultural models are available in a given community. This cultural "pool" of beliefs and practices may contain elements that are in tension, or even in fundamental conflict, with each other (Kojima, 1986, 1988). Within Sri Lanka preschools affiliated with religious organizations, there may therefore be sharply divergent models as to how human relations should be organized and socialized in young children.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The contribution of caregivers in Christian and Buddhist Preschools in respect of early childhood care in Sri Lanka. This study has been planned to be conducted under **three objectives**. They were 1. Investigating the need for early childhood care and factors that fluency such care. 2. Investigating the contributors in early childhood care development. 3. Investigating the difference among contribution of caregivers Buddhist, Christian Preschools in respect of strategies in early child care.

### A. Population and the Sample Method

Two areas located in the Western province were considered as the total population. The two areas which use Negombo and Maharagama were considered as the target population. The Negombo - Christian Pre schools and Maharagama, Pannipitiya- Buddhist pre schools were selected for the study using purposive sampling method. The total sample included the teachers and children in Negombo- Christian pre schools - 16, Maharagama, Pannipitiya- Buddhist pre schools -16. (n=32).

### B. Data collection methods and instruments

The data was obtained through Visits and observations, Interviews, Study of documents. conducted 32 early childhood centers. The visit to each setting included an observation of approximately 1 hour in a classroom serving early child and an interview with the teacher and one or more teachers. The open-ended interview, which lasted from 1 to 3 hours, was designed to probe cultural models regarding goals of the preschool

experience, theories about the role of the teacher in facilitating learning, views about discipline and control, details of the curriculum and activities, and perceptions about the family and its relationship with early childhood education.

The observations were used as a source of examples to deepen these extended conversations. All interviews were tape recorded; in addition, detailed notes were kept during the interview.

Subsequent to the first round of data collection, a deductive process of preliminary data analysis occurred. Field notes and interview notes were reviewed and analyzed using a preliminary coding framework. Initial data displays were developed—within-case displays were created to highlight the key cultural models in each preschool, and cross-case displays were used to highlight differences and similarities across preschools. In the second round of data collection, 4 pre schools were selected from the pool of 32 preschools. The researcher spent at least 5 days in each setting, observing in a pre school and conducting further interviews with staff. A running record was kept during the observations, with the focus being a description of the teacher's activities and utterances. And their were analysis. A coding system was developed that permitted sections of narrative to be tagged with global categories such as goals, activities, teacher-child relations, discipline, role of the parent, and issues of individualism and group orientation.

The final stage of analysis involved a number of activities. First, all passages associated with each of the key codes were examined to obtain a sense of the variation that existed within each code. Next, the entire corpus of transcripts and field notes were reviewed to learn how the categories fit together at each school. A matrix was generated listing the central findings pertaining to each category for each preschool. Reactions and commentary from these informants as well as field notes and written material provided by the pre schools ( curriculum guides, parent newsletters, and promotional materials) were used to understand and contextualize the interview data.

### C. Limitations of the Study

This study is based upon a Negombo and Maharagama. As well as there were Sinhala and English medium. Not only that medium but also religion. There were Christian and Buddhist. This

limitation, however, is somewhat mitigated by the extensive analysis conducted by numerous researchers to identify differences between the two groups.

### III. ANALYSIS

#### A. Christian Preschools

Teachers in each type of school articulated cultural models that guided their school's curriculum and vision of appropriate practice. Although these schools belonged a variety of denominations, both Catholic and Protestant, they shared a number of cultural models that informed their programs. The amount of time devoted specifically to learn about Christianity varied among the schools. Most schools included a daily morning prayer and a prayer before and after meals. Attending a church service of some kind once a week was common. In more religion based schools, there was a considerable time for listening to Bible stories. At Christmas, they engaged in a number of activities. The Christian teachers built their programs around of the view the God's love is the primary message of Christianity.

According to this central cultural model, children are thought to be gifts of God, and each one should therefore be highly appreciated.

This cultural model had two direct implications for the daily routine at Christian preschools. One way of respecting the individual was to allow the children considerable freedom in deciding what they wanted to do. Accordingly, free play formed the basis of the curriculum in all the Christian schools. For instance, as he came to realize the fundamental importance of individual self-determination which is prominent in Western religious thought, more preschool, became more and more convinced that it was essential to avoid teacher-centered activities:

A second implication was that the teachers placed a priority on encouraging children to articulate their own ideas and to integrate their views with those of their classmates. teachers at pre schools held a class discussion after every art period to elicit children's opinions and ideas about the morning activities.

Teachers in Christian preschools were particularly concerned with the of children with disabilities

because they felt it was valuable for the normal children to encounter someone who had characteristics that differ quite saliently from their own. Through daily interactions with children who were different from them in some ways, the students were taught to gain an appreciation for each individual but also to learn how to form relationships in spite of those differences. Perhaps because of the connection that their religious beliefs provided through Western thoughts and values. this appropriation process results in an orientation toward strengthening the individual's powers of self-expression, fostering self-knowledge, teachers expect children to use these skills to build relationships and form the ability to function well in group settings.

#### B. Buddhist Preschools

From the front, the Jeeko Buddhist Preschool (Pannipitiya-Paramadhamma) building looks more like an insurance company than a preschool. The imposing modern structure is three storey high, with many windows building with darkened glass prevents outsiders from seeing in. Yet, when one moves through the entryway and passes through the hall to the play area, tile roof of a traditional Buddhist temple looms into view.

They felt that kindness and consideration should be extended to all living things, including plant life as well as humans. They emphasized this message in the weekly sermon service at the temple, and they provided practical experiences, like caring for the plants of the preschool.

The emphasis on showing consideration for others is consistent with Buddhist teachings on compassion.

For Buddhists, both wisdom and compassion are needed to help relieve the pain and suffering of the mankind. The Buddhist teachers tried to be gentle in their exhortations about prayer as the means for developing a mind of appreciation. However, they were also quick to point out that Buddhism called for strength and determination as well as kindness: One of the least desirable characteristics of the unsocial zed person, according to the teachers , was a tendency to act in a selfish, egocentric manner. Therefore, the staff members at the Buddhist preschools were careful to enforce desired behavior firmly.

Opinions of the Christians, who emphasized the idea that children are "precious gifts" from God. It is interesting that Sri Lankan Christian early childhood educators hold this benign view, while the Buddhists articulate a more negative view of human nature, one that is similar to that of conservative Christian educators in the United States. The view of many evangelical American Christians is that adults must be vigilant to prevent children being victimized of to the wickedness that is the legacy of the original sin (Cleverly & Phillips, 1986).

Another strategy for avoiding individualism was to feature large group activities as much as possible. In a pamphlet for parents, the teacher makes an argument for large class sizes: teachers believe that most of mothers think that small class sizes, such as 5 or 10 children per teacher, are better for children. teacher do not think so. Among 20 or 30 peers in a class, the children are more motivated to learn by competing with each other. Therefore, class sizes of 5 or 10 students are not good at all. Of course, parental over too much interference is not favorable is not good. Children aged 4 to 5 need a group.(teacher's idea)

Another component of the group orientation is developing the child's weak points rather than allowing him or her to focus on strengths, again illustrated in the parent brochure: "Young children need balanced care that focuses on various aspects of development such as music, intelligence, creativity, and health (physical ability). In Pannipitiya there are future artists and future scholars. There are also future athletes, and yet it is not a good idea to develop only their athletic abilities. If you improve only the musical ability of a child who is good at music, this child will have unbalanced overall ability".(teachers idea)

Buddhists have traditionally focused on wisdom and faith as the key to salvation, in contrast to the Christian doctrine of love. Buddhism holds that ignorance, in combination with desire, are the forces that prevent people from moving beyond the pain of life on earth. A primary strategy for attaining knowledge is to study sacred texts.

The texts themselves are considered authoritative, so the believer is a "hearer of the word." Expression of Buddhist faith has traditionally focused on "pious copying out of scripture," a practice that is still considered meritorious (Dumoulin, 1994, p. 55).

In the Buddhist pre schools, students were strongly encouraged to orient themselves toward external sources of knowledge, including both texts and the teacher. At Maharagama this approach was partly illustrated by the children's memorization of sacred chants. In addition, they spend most of their day sitting at desks receiving instruction from the teacher. Literacy is a major focus of the curriculum, including in reading and writing action. Children engage in poetry reading and writing. They are involved in activities for the purpose of "developing their intelligence" in which a wide range of materials are used to stimulate basic cognitive skills such as visual perception and memory, as well as such Piagetian principles and class inclusion. In addition, children attend classes in art, dance, English, instrumental music, and singing.

At Pannipitiya preschool, a more radical curriculum emphasizes cognitive stimulation. Children are exposed to complex visual and auditory patterns, which they memorize, with no exploration of the meaning of the stimuli. For example, in one exercise, teachers clap out a complicated rhythm for children to repeat. Children are shown flash cards representing the flags of nations around the world and call out the name of the appropriate country.

What is common in the Buddhist preschools, then, is an emphasis on the ultimate authority of text and teacher as the source of knowledge. This view contrasts with the Christian emphasis that knowledge results from children's individual exploration in combination with teacher-guided social interaction among peers. By relieving oneself of physical discomfort, emotions, and thoughts, one achieves unity of mind and body and detachment from the self. Analysis of the moral implications of the physical state is commonplace in Sri Lanka, in Buddhist as well as secular contexts. In many of the preschools, not just those that were Buddhist, the children were constantly reminded to sit up straight and keep their feet together. In the Buddhist preschools, posture was just one of the concerns teachers expressed about the knowledge development of the children.

Because much of the day was occupied with academic classes and music instruction, the children at strict Buddhist preschools had little opportunity to engage in language activity. When it did occur, language exertion was reutilized and teacher

structured. language activities at Buddhist preschools were sometimes designed to provide a challenge that would help toughen the children.

The teachers in the Buddhist preschools were also concerned about the spiritual and language physical effects of receiving proper nutrition and exercise. A notation on the brochure for Maharagama preschool sums up the connection between nutrition, group orientation, and spiritual awareness. Some Buddhist schools were among the largest of all schools ; some had over 600 pupils. If the present economic uncertainties continue, these schools will likely continue to be a very appealing method for parents interested in giving their children a head start in school.

The demands for obedience are at odds with a powerful cultural model that sees children under 7 as little treasures that should be treated indulgently a model that may have become even stronger in recent times.

### III. CONCLUSION

Sri Lankan society appear more willing to mix and match religions. Buddhism when faced with death. Yet, in spite of factors that work to blur the distinct philosophical contribution of the various religions, researcher has seen concrete ways in which the ideologies of Christianity and Buddhism continue to influence Sri Lankan preschools. The clear effects of religious beliefs on the curricula and practices in these preschools suggest that similar analyses of western province pre schools are warranted. In the past decade, researchers and policy experts have been grappling with the feasibility of a global definition of child care quality that could be applied across all institutions in any community across the country. The elements of "appropriate practice" have been articulated by charter of western province in Sri Lanka. This viewpoint tends to privilege the "scientific" approach of raising children, with little explicit recognition of the fact that collectively based ideologies—including religious beliefs—may proscribe values and practices that conflict with the approach favored by many researchers. currently, there is so little information available about the philosophical bases, and favored practices, of church-based schools that it is impossible to speculate on the nature of possible tensions. As early childhood educators increasingly advocate moving toward

"partnerships" and "dialogues" between early childhood educators and parents (Holloway & Fuller, 1999)—with each contributing their perspectives and knowledge to the conversation—the exploration of the role of religious beliefs will be increasingly imperative.

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## BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR

K.V.Sudarma Harischandra

Senior Lecturer

Department of Teacher Education

National Institute of Education

Maharagama

Qualification

M.Ed - University of Peradeniya

M.Phil -(Education) University of Colombo