The failure of pre-school education in Sri Lanka

The Early Childhood stage lays a foundation for values, attitudes as well as social and personal habits. To ignore these aspects or to misinterpret them can be a retrograde step for developing countries such as Sri Lanka. The first six years of a child's life is universally recognized as the Early Childhood Education. It's as if the Montessori schools often charge high enrollment费 and monthly fees and can provide better childcare and educational services. Minimal standards may have been acted upon, and the funding granted by businesses and in order to turn a profit, many pre-schools have copied the format in use by high schools. Competition is fierce and appropriate training is now a prerequisite for a successful pre-school. Playing with blocks, sand, water and puzzles are not equated with “real” work that can be tested and seen in workshops. It will take more than the usual spate of seminars and political proclamations to bring the 14,000 pre-schools and the estimated 60,000 teachers up to a standard that reflects a degree of excellence or simply good pre-school practice. If the Ministry of Education, M.I.E. and institutes of higher education cannot get their act together, what hope for the thousands of pre-schools dotted around the towns and villages in the country. Playing more refined versions of the past, the future is not likely to be any happier since there seems to be so few in authority or with decision making positions who have real expertise in Early Childhood Education.

There are some excellent pre-schools through which one can be identified. It could be assumed that pre-schools attached to high schools in Colombo and Kandy would be among the best. However a visit to a large pre-school at a leading independent school in Kandy indicated standards that were far from satisfactory in spite of parents paying very high fees and enrolment charges. Little could be found that gave the impression of Early Childhood Education. Classrooms had only a few well worn books and play materials were confined to a large box and included broken toys and dolls. Most of the displays on walls had required a heavy dose of teacher skill rather than displaying the more primitive work of the child. A "real" Montessori school for 38 children in Colombo could only offer an outdoor play area equipped with swings, see-saws and sand pit. It is likely that pre-schools are not widely recognized as a Centre could be established since there are numerous competing interests in government which would lay claim to it. But if not already recognized, the pre-schools can only benefit by a visit to see materials, equipment and literature resources and participate in seminars and workshops. It is unlikely that such a Centre could be established since there are numerous competing interests in government which would lay claim to it.

douglasking1939@yahoo.com

To see good pre-school practice look at the pre-school videos on Youtube site also be a resource centre making full use of internet communication and a place for parents, teachers and the community to come together to discuss issues relating to young children. The site would not only demonstrate good practice and standards throughout the country. It will take more than the usual spate of seminars and political proclamations to bring the 14,000 pre-schools and the estimated 60,000 teachers up to a standard that reflects a degree of excellence or simply good pre-school practice.

In addition to this, it has been observed that many parents have a difficult time understanding the importance of pre-school education. This is evident from the limited number of parents who enrol their children in pre-schools. Furthermore, the lack of qualified teachers in pre-schools is another factor that hinders the progress of pre-school education. This is because the majority of teachers in pre-schools are not trained or certified in Early Childhood Education. As a result, they may not be able to provide the necessary guidance and support for the children.

The lack of qualified teachers and the limited number of parents who enrol their children in pre-schools are not the only factors that hinder pre-school education. Parents who do enrol their children in pre-schools often face challenges in finding high quality pre-schools. This is because there are not enough high quality pre-schools available in the country. As a result, parents may have to sacrifice quality for convenience or affordability.

In conclusion, pre-school education is crucial for the full and positive development of a child. It is important for parents to understand the importance of pre-school education and to ensure that their children receive the necessary guidance and support. Additionally, the government and society at large need to invest more in pre-school education by ensuring that there are enough qualified teachers and high quality pre-schools available. Only then can we hope to improve the quality of pre-school education in Sri Lanka and ensure that children receive the best possible start in life.