



Women And Nursery Rhymes In Early Childhood Care And Education

¹ Prof. Nikme S. C. Momin, ² Dilchi Riksmmit M. Sangma

¹Professor, Department of Education, NEHU, Tura,

²Research Scholar, Department of Education, NEHU, Tura

Abstract: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is one of the key components of the New Education Policy, (NEP, 2020) in alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNESCO affirms it as the “holistic development of a child’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing.” ECCE promotes 85% of brain development, contributing a positive difference in the lives of young children. Age-appropriate use of learning and play materials like Nursery Rhymes which can enhance learning through building varied vocabulary, increasing phonological awareness, encouraging story comprehension skills, and levelled literacy intervention like Reading Comprehension entails not only understanding the words but also the content as a whole, increasing its literacy skill.

Poetry in rhymes or the Nursery rhymes are designed for children. They have rhyming words in every line or on alternate lines with simple usage of common words making the entire piece easy to grasp by kids. They do not show intense human emotions but are enjoyable by children, teachers, mothers, and grandmothers. Nursery Rhymes in its versatility, effects multiple domains of child development like physical health and well-being, language and cognitive development, communication skills and general knowledge, social competence, and emotional maturity, leads to understanding of voice modulation, correct pronunciation, using the right volume in speech making them appreciate listening, reading, speaking, and writing. It was affirmed that introducing children to nursery rhymes in early childhood can have a beneficial influence on foundation of literacy-related abilities. Paper presenters urged the students to update or develop national or local level as many Nursery Rhymes, in mother tongue or national language for the pre-primary students of Garo Hills to augment the Reading Comprehension Skills as a parlay for higher academic achievements in the life of 21st century.

Contextualizing specific Nursery Rhymes within domains of ECCE, some rhymes like “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”; “ABCDEFGH”; “One Two Buckle my Shoes”; “Mary Had a Little Lamb”; “Row, row, row your boat” were presented as examples. It was also confirmed that from “Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star” to “Mary Had a Little Lamb”, some of the most recognizable children’s verse in the English language was written by nineteenth century women poets and the tradition of original nursery rhyme was dominated by mothers from the sixteenth century (Gregory, 2015).

Keywords: Women, Nursery Rhymes, Early, Childhood, Care, Education, Literacy, Language, Activities, Development

I. Introduction:

The New Education Policy, (NEP, 2020), lays stress on providing quality integrated ECCE aiming to establish an integrated play based, inquiry based and discovery-based learning, early exposure to three language formula focusing on cognitive, affective, psychomotor abilities and fundamental skills in reading, writing and arithmetic aligning with the SDG 2030 for holistic approach towards learning. The NEP 2020 imitated National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN BHARAT) also aims at creating a conducive environment ensuring universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy by 2026-27. Studies prove that quality ECCE promotes 85% of the brain development, which is influenced not only by health, nutrition and quality care but also with the child's psycho-social environment. Therefore, the childhood years are crucial for psychomotor, cognitive, linguistic and social development, as these aspects lays foundation for inculcation of sensory development, logical inquiry, decision making, creativity, literacy, socialization and socio-emotional development that facilitates in child's long-term development and achievement. Therefore, investing in child early years in crucial and ECCE aligns to the philosophy of integrated approach of child's development where early stimulation is an integral part in achieving quality early childhood.

Nursery Rhymes and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):

Nursery Rhymes are activities stimulating for drawing out balanced and holistic growth in a child. Integrating activities like rhymes, storytelling, action songs and pretend play in child's daily learning and activities can help in the social-emotional, cognitive and self-regulatory development (Beeghly 1993; Fromberg and Bergen 1998), creativity (Trevlas & Zachopoulou, 2003; Russ & Kaugar 2001; Isenberg & Jalongo, 1997 and Russ, 1996) that relates to transformational ability and divergent thinking (Moore and Russ, 2008) as well as development of language and social (Bundy 1997 and Mistrett, Lane and Goetz 2000). All this component positively effects on child's learning that helps exploring the world with curiosity filled with rich imagination in a joyful way. Action rhymes (gross and motor) together with language play can effectively help children develop in their physical health. Rhymes like "I am a little teapot", "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake", "baker's man"; and "Two little dickie birds, sitting on a wall", which involves rudimentary, smaller movements and hand control. These action rhymes build early skill development to jump, throw, roll, kick, hand movements, wrist and fingers control. Rhymes like "If you are happy and you know it clap your hands" and "Little miss Muffet" also equips children to create feelings, bonding, promote and recognize attachment. Exposure to early rhyming helps children develop phonological awareness (Bryant, Bradley & Crossland, 1989; Dunst, Meter & Hamby, 2011) that builds vocabulary (MbGinty & Justice, 2010) like reading awareness, reading and writing skills and numeracy skills, which foster language, cognitive, social and emotional development. Story telling through rhymes also enhances curiosity, communication and general knowledge as it provides age-appropriate information about the environment and the world. Children's interaction through rhymes, storytelling and story making leads to interaction which is crucial for language development.

II. Nursery Rhymes and Language Development:

Oral or spoken language is a channel by which a child creates understanding about the concept of the world, that is the literacy concept enabling them to create capacity to identify, understand and communicate. Cullinan (1991) emphasized that rhymes create a unified model of music of words, phrases and sentences, helping a child to deliver speech rhythms. The improvised language received and the acquired language takes place as the result of the capacity and ability of the child to recognize and understand the root structure of any language (Chomsky, 1957). His theory focused that the early years that is from birth to puberty is a critical period for children to learn language and the acquired language during this period need to be deduce logically that pervade a language. To Chomsky, language conveys message, ideas, attachments and emotions, language construction in children is constantly evolving and is subjected to repetition and is often required to be used in a noble way through the form of through rhymes and songs, as they are unfamiliar with the concepts and the ways to use words. Rhymes recitation and songs fosters child's language development and literacy skills as they learn new vocabulary, word articulation and voice modulation. The rhythmic nursely rhymes are easy for the child to grasp the words quickly, as it not only insists on listening but also singing, acting, expressing, reacting and bodily movements. Thus, rhymes are a great instrument to enhance phonology awareness and memorization skills leading to child's strong foundation in language.

III. The Poetry with Rhythms - Nursery Rhymes: Its History

Rhymes are oral verses traditionally sung or told to the children by the mother or elders. A French poem, numbering the days of the month similar to “Thirty days hath September”, was recorded in the 13th century; then came “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” (1806) and “Mary Had a Little Lamb” (1830) are some of the most important, recognizable and highly valued children’s verse written by women poets. These women authors constitute important evidence of generic innovation and lyric experimentation, who used juvenile poetry to expand the formal potential of the lyric and to adapt to the conventions of oral verse so as to develop a new poetic voice for women, that help them in expressing the complexities that 19th century female experienced: Motherhood. The tradition of original nursery rhymes was thus dominated by mothers (Gregory, 2015).

IV. Nursery Rhymes for Child’s Growth and Development:

Rhymes are the first learning tool introduced to a child for development of word recognition. Reciting and singing rhymes by the mother or caregivers’ lays literacy foundation for the child’s learning in the future, as memory, language acquisition, speech, imagination and creativity are built through rhymes. There is a close link between rhymes and child’s future success in reading, writing and spelling. The sounds and patterns heard and sung by young children helps to put the words together through rhyming, rhythm and repetition. The beat, rhythmic sequences and repetitions of words helps in the recognition of sounds, which improves the listening competency of a child. Studies found by Myer (1994) studies shows that young children who get the opportunity to experience rhymes are benefited more than those who do not, as they learn intonation patterns, symbols, new words and concepts, understand the basis to read and write (Danielson, 2000). The chanted phrases, the mimicked words and repetitions to practice helps in the speech rhythms of a language, which is important for effective communication in the later years. Parents reading a nursery rhyme and the repeated parent-child conversation contribute to child’s acquisition of language (Partridge, 1992). Rhymes like “One Little, Two Little, Three Little Indians” teach children to count; “The Moon is Round” teach mathematical skills and concept formation; “A B C D E F G...” helps to learn alphabets, new words and “Bits of Paper” create curiosity, expands imaginations and fosters creativity through imitation in the form of drama and action songs, all of these which caters to early development of literacy skill. Research also indicated directed instructions and training in rhyming significantly fosters reading ability of young children. Furthermore, book browsing also need to be introduced to children as it will imbibe their interest on reading, phonemic awareness is the most powerful factor to enhance reading skills. Reading along with rhyming will also develop the concept of print and its relation to speech. Pointing and reciting to each word with rhyming of the rhymes help children to understand the relation between spoken and written language (Danielson, 2000). Listening to stories, poems, rhymes and story making also improve reading comprehension and creates interest in book reading.

Nursery rhymes are the first form of poetry that the children experiences. Children should be introduced to poetry through nursery rhymes as rhymes are true poems (Godden, 1988). Early caregivers need to offer variety of everyday continuous experiences through rhymes and songs to children. Story times and recitation of poetry in free times and leisure moments should replace the present-day disasters of digital world. Parents are no longer reading to their children anymore. Today, the art of communication, reading and writing are often missed by the development of technology, where face-to face conversation is decreased, lacking communication, creativity and emotional skills. Children have loss imaginative, appreciation and sense of fascination as they are navigated by technological driven directed activity. Early care givers involvement to teach children with early nursery rhymes in home language serves as an effective pre-reading tool enabling them to develop with rich vocabulary in future learning. When parents read, children by hearing the language first understand the reading, this develops reading comprehension. Rhymes need to be read aloud and specific words, sounds, vowels or letters need to be highlighted clearly and repeatedly together with the child.

V. Nursery Rhymes in the Pre-school of Garo Hills:

Children initially learn literacy skills through rhymes and songs first at home and then in pre-school classrooms. There are evidences to support that majority of the students of Garo Hills are lacking these skills which is reflected in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examinations under Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBOSE). Students are found lacking reading comprehension skills (Momin & Sangma, 2021), where children read without questioning and understanding. Due to poor Reading Comprehension Skill children’s language development frails downward more and more. Reading comprehension skill most probably is underdeveloped because of lack of recitations of nursery rhymes at the pre-school, or recitations without knowledge construction or understanding of the meanings of words, lines and the rhymes, and/ or complete absences of nursery rhymes in the ECCE centers. Most of the schools encourage rhyming through

rote learning, and where focus is in the second language i.e., English, where it bounds the students to rhyme a new language without comprehension, thus weakens the reading comprehension on a large scale. Parents who lack basic literacy skills in second language are unable to provide directed guidance for language development, thus contributing to lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills especially among the students of Garo Hills region. Children should be introduced to rhymes in mother tongue or home language initially at home as well as in pre-schools. Mother tongue is the initial language that a child hears right after birth and thus play a crucial role in improving critical thinking skills, and the cognitive processes of second language learning and literacy skills. The literacy and numeracy development of this children can only be supported with nursery rhymes, as rhymes are correlated with various of activities that leads to various skill development, including building of mathematical concepts.

VI. Suggestions:

Nursery rhymes should be a part of everyday activities in a child's life focusing on theme, stories, learning about letters, sounds, expression and social life. Following is few suggestions for fostering rhymes in the child's daily routine.

1. Mothers and early caregivers should recite nursery rhymes in their everyday activities like during play, feeding the child, before sleeping or bath time.
2. Nursery rhymes for children must be taught in mother tongue, as this will help them to grasp and identify words more easily.
3. Mother and teachers should draw attention to read and re-read picture and storybook that focus on sounds, rhymes and alliteration.
4. Early childhood care givers and educators must have phonological awareness skills, as this will help in good understanding of sounds and sounds structure in spoken words.
5. When singing or reciting a rhyme or reading books that rhyme to children, it must be expressive, with excitement and emotions. The changing of the tone, loudness of the voice and expression can keep the child interested and helps in communicating the message.
6. Early care givers should engage in play-based activities by storytelling, story making, singing, pretend play and conversation so as to encourage child's creativity, imagination, communication, language and social skills.
7. Nursery teacher training is crucial in order to have a holistic approach to play based learning; capacity building of the ECCE teachers for executing rich learning experiences to the child.

VII. Conclusion:

Exploring rhymes and songs through of games, dance, sports and role play stimulates understanding about the concept, provides knowledge and literacy and phonology skills enabling future success in their later years. Nursery rhymes promote healthy and balanced attitude towards language learning that provide a means for children to read effortlessly and accurately. Integrating nursery rhymes into early childhood curriculum as everyday activities would contribute to a linguistically rich skill. Furthermore, in order to facilitate this developmental skills children's interaction with adults; listening and responding to rhymes and stories and to experiment with sounds of language in a socially engaging, playful and developmentally appropriate way must be provided to the child.

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