

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO LEVELS OF AGE  
APPROPRIATE ABILITIES OF PRESCHOOL  
CHILDREN AND THE INTERVENTION NEEDS OF  
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AT RISK**

(A Study on Sri Lankan Preschool Children  
Between the Ages of 3 to 4 ½ Years)



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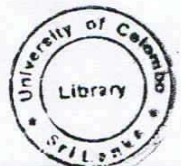
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## Abstract

The present study has investigated into two aspects of early childhood development: the levels of age appropriate abilities of preschool children and the intervention needs of children at risk.

The Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-P), a screening instrument used in the United States was modified to suit the Sri Lankan context to identify the levels of age appropriate abilities of a sample of preschool children between the ages of 3-4 ½ years. The levels of age appropriate abilities identified from the modified instrument were labelled as Ok, Rescreen and Refer.

Ok indicates that the child's level of ability in acquiring skills associated with learning is adequately developed. Rescreen signifies although a child's level of ability in acquiring skills associated with learning is not adequately developed, it will not affect his overall potential for success in school. Refer suggests that there is a possibility of delay or disorder in the child's potential for acquiring skills and knowledge. Such children (Refer) are recognized as children at risk for developmental problems and school failure.

The intervention needs of the children at risk were identified through case studies of a selected sample. Home visits, observations and interviews were utilised for data collection.

The results of the ESI-P revealed that the abilities of a majority of preschool children in the sample were in the levels Ok and Rescreen. But there were 17.4 percent of children whose abilities were in the level Refer.

The analysis revealed that there was a relationship between the demographic characteristics of preschool children and their levels of age appropriate abilities. The demographic characteristics examined were gender, parent's education, parent's occupation, the Educational Division of the preschool and the preschool children attend. But the relationship between these demographic characteristics and the age appropriate abilities of preschool children were not



characteristics and the age appropriate abilities of preschool children were not always consistent with the two age ranges i.e. 3-3.11 years and 4-4 ½ years.

The findings confirmed that the social origins of the preschool children, the disparities existing among Education Divisions in the Colombo Education Zone and the quality of the childcare and education provided in the preschool strongly influenced the levels of age appropriate abilities of Sri Lankan preschool children.

The case studies revealed that Sri Lankan preschool children at risk need interventions related to their own characteristics, home environments and the preschool environments. Effective parental education programmes, family support systems and high quality childcare and education programmes could provide the necessary interventions to meet the needs of these preschool children at risk.

The investigation strongly suggest the need to create a child development profiling system and, the use of an appropriate assessment tool to gauge the development of age appropriate abilities of preschool children. To ensure the implementation of such measures effectively comprehensive databases should be maintained and upgraded systematically. Any interventions on these lines should best be initiated at national level with the participation of all stakeholders involved in early childhood care and development.

Finally, the investigation emphasised the need for state recognition of preschool education and, a legally instituted regulatory framework to ensure that all children benefit from such provisions.