

**CASE STUDY**  
**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM (PIP) FOR EARLY**  
**CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT - KHYBER INTERIOR SINDH**

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**Abstract**

Parental Involvement Program (PIP) for Early Childhood Development (ECD) at Khyber (Interior Sindh) was initially developed and implemented by Shivji at the request of a local community of Khyber (Interior Sindh), where most of the mothers were illiterate and did not know how to play an active role in their child's development. This program empowered local mothers to become their child's first and most influential teacher. Unique to this program was the urban-rural dynamics, in which women from the urban setting of Sindh as teachers utilized their acquired knowledge from Master Teacher Training Program - ECD to replicate the PIP to the underprivileged area of Khyber. After participating in the program children showed positive changes in their academic, cognitive abilities, social behavior and linguistic development. The participants' mothers showed an appreciation for early learning, in contrast to prior apathy. There was an increase in self-esteem and confidence; and an observable shift in their physical appearance and behavior. Two most important positive changes are that it has created civil society in Khyber. Women dialogue with each other to improve the quality of life. It has also created bridge between rural and urban women. This kind of program should be replicated in other parts of Pakistan to build the capacity of communities further utilizing a longitudinal study design.

Early Childhood Development research focuses on active participation of parents in their child's education, resulting in successful performance of their child's later school education. These children become more competent socially as well as emotionally, and show higher verbal and intellectual development during early childhood.

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One of the earliest Early Childhood Development program is the Reggio Approach developed by Loris Malaguzzi (see <http://>). This is an educational philosophy which focuses on preschool and primary education of children. Initially it began by involving the parents of the villages around in after . The vital components of this philosophy are the parents. Parents are viewed as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children. The teachers respect each parent as the child's first teacher and involve parents in every aspect of the curriculum. It is not uncommon to see parents volunteering within classrooms throughout the school.

Further evidence has expanded traditional kinds of involvement by identifying parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community as the six types used in schools for parental involvement as suggested by Epstein in 1995. It has been demonstrated through research that each type of involvement is valuable, and each has an impact on students, teachers, and the parents themselves.

The findings of Trivette & Dunst in 2005 suggest that parents' capacity to promote child's social-emotional development is operationalized as confidence / competence, further reporting four major findings which state that (a) parent support programs improve parental competence / confidence and parental beliefs that child-initiated interactions are most important in parent-child interactions, (b) general parent support programs support social-emotional development of children, (c) participatory help-giving practices contribute the most to parents' judgment of their children's emotional competence and (d) group approaches to parental support have a more powerful effect on child's social-emotional competence than home-visiting approaches.

**Back ground of the Project:** Razia Shivji an ECD specialist from the United States and her team developed plans in 2008 to involve parents in Khyber community based on the ECD programs. This program was named Parent Involvement Program (PIP). It was created at the request of a local community in Hyderabad (Aminabad), Pakistan; and was subsequently replicated into a village, Khyber, located in the rural parts of the Interior Sindh Region. Through an honorary capacity, Shivji and a team of local volunteers galvanized mothers from the community at Aminabad (Hyderabad) to participate in a pilot project during the evening hours. Mothers, with their three to six year-old children, partook in an eight-week experiment to measure how conducive they would be to receiving instruction on engaging young children and implementing best ECD practices in a home environment.

PIP is a supplemental ECD program that empowers mothers to become their child's first and most influential teacher. The program, operated by a majority of women volunteers, gives the necessary tools and knowledge to parents in an endeavor to unleash the maximum potential of their children. It also serves as an incubator to cultivate and train individuals, particularly women, to sustain rural ECD projects currently underway in a part of Interior Sindh.

PIP is designed for families with children in the Montessori First Plane of Development, specifically ages three to six years. Mothers, accompanied by their children, attend weekly sessions with trained Mentors / Teachers for lessons on various concepts that are taken home to practice. The program is organized into three levels: Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. Each level has a cycle of seven months of instruction conducted on a weekly basis. The curriculum utilizes best practices from Montessori education and an amalgamation of ECD concepts from varied philosophies focusing on the child-centered approach. A fundamental principle underlying the program is the development of the whole child, which refers to holistic development of the physical, emotional, social, aesthetic and cognitive needs of a child. A unique feature of this program is the urban-rural dynamic, in which women from the urban setting i.e. Hyderabad (Aminabad) use their acquired knowledge on ECD to replicate PIP to underprivileged area i.e. Khyber. This sense of community service is at the core of the program and will ensure its sustainability.

The observed results were phenomenal and clearly established that the project empowered women and provided a framework in which holistic development of children could occur within the home and in a community setting.

This research paper presented a study in which PIP management, parents, mentors and volunteers and preschool children in Khyber were interviewed about their experiences with Parent Involvement Program (PIP) as well as observed PIP lessons and activities in natural settings to evaluate its impact on children, parents and community as whole.

The study aimed at evaluating the impact of Parental Involvement Program (PIP) on Early Childhood Development against a set of predetermined parameters.

It further on focused on answering the following questions as part of in-depth analysis.

*What were the aims and objectives of Parent Involvement Program at Khyber (Sindh)?*

*What were the important contents of Parental Involvement Program?*

*Were the psychological as well as social needs of young children fulfilled through Parent Involvement Program?*



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*What activities had been incorporated in Parental Involvement Program?*

*What positive changes in family, school and community took place after Parental Involvement Program?*

### Method

The research design is qualitative and analytical survey. For this purpose Stake's Countenance Model was chosen as a framework for evaluating the Parental Involvement Program PIP shown in Figure 1. Stake's Countenance Model of Evaluation (1975). To achieve the objectives as outlined in the figure five checklists were developed. The researcher's approach was to obtain more holistic impressions of teaching and learning in PIP at community setting and at home. Manager of PIP, two mothers, two mentors, two leaders of the community, and two volunteers of the program were interviewed and observed in natural setting. A selected group of young children of PIP were also observed and informally interviewed by researcher.

This is a responsive approach to conduct a research (Stake 1975). To provide this flexibility the model answers and identifies prominent events in conducting evaluations. This model needs not to follow a straight sequence but allows moving between events, turning back, if necessary to refine issues. In order to stay on the track the researcher wrote daily reflections and it gave me an opportunity to introduce new ideas and strategies as the study proceeded.

### Results

The framework of the study consists of an array of data gathering instruments and cluster of stakeholders, i.e. children as participants, director of the program, mentors, volunteers of the program, and the community leaders.

The PIP documents professed that it will look after the educational needs of preschool children of Khyber and it was the most challenging task. The observation of the situation and interviews with stalk holders of the program demonstrated that PIP was managed effectively and mentors of the program delivered lessons to the parent and the children in a very interesting manner. More over parents of Khyber also showed eagerness and enthusiasm in learning new skills.

*“Each Sunday mentors travel from Hyderabad to Khyber and teaching lessons to mothers and children. Mentors also remind mothers and children to revise it at home. Each class is full of joyful learning for children and as well as for mothers and at the end of the class mothers and children look forward for next*

*week. Not only that but volunteers are trained by mentors also visit homes and observe how mother and children are practicing lessons at home."*

Children with parents were provided very conducive environment. The teaching and learning material were pictorial and attractive. Children and parents were given awareness about health and hygiene. PIP has its own curriculum. All lessons are taught through activities.

*"Children and parents come to attend PIP session in neat dresses. They have their books and material in their bags. During lessons mothers and children were speaking English with confidence. Parents and children learned to tell stories in the most amazing style. They also know few English poems."*

Young children have certain growth and developmental needs i.e. the need for attachment to the mother and caregiver. Secondly, they need stimulation and it means that a child needs people and objects to interact with which stimulates his senses. Thirdly, the opportunity for playing and exploring is an essential element of the child's development. The interviews and observation of the children showed that the mentors of PIP have an understanding of developmental needs of children. They usually provide stimulation for learning and fulfill children's need of exploration and play.

*"In the classroom during individual lesson time, each child had learning cards. It gave them a chance to learn with exploration and joy. The classroom was decorated with pleasant learning material. The children's own creativity was at display and it boosted their self-esteem. In the last part of the program, the children went out to play area, where two adults were looking after them. There was no structured lesson. The children were happy. There also, they got time to play and explore. In this way during the whole day the children got a chance to play and explore. The management and mentors had organized their teaching around play. They know that play is a way of learning for their children".*

As a whole, PIP look after the psycho-social needs of children. The management provides stimulation for learning and do give importance to play. Children receive love and affection from family.

Shivji spent her great deal of time in preparing activities and learning material. Not only had this but mentors given an orientation of that material. This was the most challenging task which Shivji and her team accomplished very successfully.

*"In the village of Khyber, children never learned anything through activities. But in PIP, mentors through pictures, stories and poems introduce objects, which are not present in the environment. To design the activities of preschool children, the teachers use Montessori books. All these activities are*

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*carried out in such a manner that it does not burden these preschool children and their mothers."*

It was studied that the gender differences start working at the earliest period i.e. when the child is in mother's womb. Generally, a girl child is less acceptable than a boy child for both parents and society at large. The difference between a girl and a boy child could be seen in the playgrounds. In Pakistan, especially in rural areas, a girl child is involved in domestic chores, whereas a boy child remains free to enjoy games. PIP brought a phenomenon change in mothers' attitude towards boys and girls upbringing.

*"In PIP girls and boys both got opportunities to grow and learn. Both have access to play and enjoy activities. This gender equality in learning and play are the most unique features of the program. It is preparing mothers to see their boys and girls from the same lance."*

As with initiative, building capacity is critical to ensuring success and longevity of the program Early Childhood education is relatively novel concept for many and creating awareness about its importance will be crucial going forward. A lot of time is required to conduct PIP sessions, manage the program overall and create resources. Razia Stated in her interview that.

*'It is difficult for volunteers, a majority of women, to cope with pressures from their homes and give service. As PIP continues to grow, capacity will increase as more and more beneficiaries will want to give back to program and provide service. Organizational structures have been developed at a regional and local level and PIP has been brought under a community organization umbrella to ensure sustainability'*

PIP functions as a supplement to a child's schooling as well as to empower mothers to become engaged in their child's holistic development. Mothers' have already demonstrated higher levels of interaction with their families at home and increased capacities in their knowledge of early childhood development. As time goes on, we will begin to see children excel in school and whatever extra-curricular activities they wish to participate in. Also, mothers will gradually exhibit confidence in their ability to raise children and in other activities throughout their daily lives.

Shivji in her interview expressed: *"the PIP has successfully brought an urban-based set of volunteers to replicate and sustain the program in a rural area, where poverty is widespread. As we continue to build a network of urban-to-rural connections, the capacity of PIP to impact both city and country-side families, especially women, will correlate. Not to mention the number of fallout benefits that will ensue, including the building of metaphoric bridges with communities of all backgrounds, the empowerment of women, and the*



*development of a sustainable mechanism to combat the cycle of poverty through education. Therefore, it is vital that PIP get support from civil society organizations and the Government to ensure that we have the resources necessary to replicate it into more.”*

**Conclusion:**

PIP was planned and implemented at Khyber (Interior Sindh) by a team who had long experience in parenting program in USA. They adapted wisely for a rural area of Sindh. They developed the aims and objectives of program with deeper understanding of the needs of the children, mothers and community as a whole. There is a positive change in mothers' outlook. Two most important positive changes after this project took place are that it has created civil society in Khyber. Women dialogue with each other to improve the quality of life. It has also created bridge between rural and urban women. All these consequences lead towards holistic development of children of Khyber community.

**Recommendations:**

Future research should include longitudinal studies to study the impact of parental involvement on early childhood and late part of life while reflecting on other local cultures and ways of child rearing in Pakistan.

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