

Early Childhood Care and Education in Odisha: Quality Dimensions and Challenges

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Abstract: *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a strong and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. It contributes to improvement in enrolment, retention, self-confidence and learning level of children in formal schooling. The present paper analyses the objectives of the ECCE and the management, interventions on ECCE concerning effective early learning, curriculum design, development and implementation. In the State, the pre- school facilities available under ECCE cover less than half of the child population. ECCE and AWC interventions are found to have positive impact on children's learning achievement in mathematics and language and educational competencies in general as compared to children not exposed to pre-school education. The study has suggested the role of dedicated and trained teachers, improvement in curriculum, school infrastructure, development of teacher's capability on child right perspectives, integrating technological development in education with traditional and folk literature etc. for smooth transition of children from ECCE to primary school.*

Keywords: *Childhood, ICDS, SSA, AWC, ECCE, Pre-School Education*

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I. Introduction

The early six years of childhood constitute the most significant period of life; because at this stage the foundations are laid for sensory, cognitive, language, social and personality development. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) extend from three to six years of age. It is considered to be crucial intervention for providing an enabling and stimulating environment to the child to ensure a sound foundation for both life long learning and development. Only school enrolment cannot fulfill the objectives of SSA, unless the child is groomed in a pre-school environment.

ECCE contribute significantly to the improvement of enrolment, retention, participation, self confidence and learning level of children in formal schooling, there by attaining the goal of universalisation of education of children. It also involves community and parents in the education of their children to prevent poor performance and early dropout (Mohanty and Mohanty, 1994).

Children who have been to pre-primary schools tend to learn more rapidly through an organized curriculum, learning aids, and by interacting with other children. Besides it helps older children particularly girls to attend their schools making them free from responsibility of sibling care (Shore, 1997).

Policy initiatives for Pre-school Education in India

- The importance of Pre-Primary Schooling has long been recognized by educational policy and programmes in India and it has also been a constitutional commitment as a part of the constitution. Article 15(3) of the constitution Empowers the state to follow positive discrimination that can favor economically and educationally weaker sections of the population.
- The need for meaningful ECCE programmes has been emphasized in the National Policy on Education, (NPE,1986), and Programme of Action(PoA,1992), that "A full integration of child care and pre-primary education would be brought about both as a feeder and a strengthening factor for primary education and the human resource development in general"
- With a view to implementing the NPE 86, Programme of Action(POA,1992) has marked out the ways and means and also discussed the significant parameters of the quality of life viz. mortality rate, incidence of malnutrition, the morbidity picture and the literacy rates which are correlated with ECCE.
- The significance of ECCE has been confirmed in the National Plan of Action (2005) and National Curriculum Framework 2005 at National level and Global Monitoring Report of UNESCO (2007) at international level.
- The NCF 2005 suggests that young children should be provided with care, opportunities and experiences that lead to all round development, physical, social, mental, emotional and school readiness.

- The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) acknowledges the importance of ECCE for achieving universalisation of elementary education and ECCE is a feeder and support programme for primary education. Further it creates opportunities for the girls to attend the school who are deprived of such rights due to burden of sibling care (NPEGEL, Govt. of India).
- The switchover of education from directive principles of state policy to the chapter of fundamental rights has envisaged- State shall endeavor to provide Early Childhood Care and Education for all children until they complete the age of 6 years (Article 45).
- In the 12th Plan (2012-2017), measures for improvising access and quality of elementary education include:
 - (a) Integration of pre-school education into formal schooling.
 - (b) Funding pre-schooling children under ECCE especially in Special Focus Districts.
 - (c) Making physical education an integral part of curriculum in schools.
 - (d) Stepping up provision of infrastructure through convergence.

1. Planning for access of Pre-School Services for children in the age group of 3-6 years.

- As per census 2001, the country has approximately 60 million children in the age group of 3-6 years. The approximate figures of covering about 34 million children by pre-schooling initiative under ICDS/ECCE and other private initiatives leaves apart a large segment of about 26 million in the 3-6 years population unattended for pre school activities. Thus the gap between the number of pre-school children and the available pre-school services seems to be very large.
- As per the estimate of Technical group on population projections, pre school education services will have to be provided for 70 million children by end of 2011(near the end period of xi five year plan) and 73 million children by 2016 (near end period of XII five year plan).

2. Plan of Action of ECCE

- (a) To develop in child a good physique, adequate muscular condition and basic motor skills.
- (b) To develop in the child good health, habits and build up basic skills necessary for personal adjustment, such as dressing, toilet habits, eating washing, cleaning etc.
- (c) To develop social attitude and manners to encourage healthy group participation and making the child sensitive to the rights and privileges of being a member of social group and to encourage him to co-operate, share and take care of property belonging to him as well as others.
- (d) To develop emotional maturity by guiding the child to express, understand, accept and control his feelings and emotions.
- (e) To encourage aesthetic appreciation in the child.
- (f) To stimulate in the child, the beginning of intellectual curiosity concerning his immediate environment to help him understand the world in which he lives and to foster new interests through opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment.
- (g) To encourage in the child independence and creativity by providing him with sufficient opportunities for self expression.
- (h) To develop in the child the ability to express his thought and feelings in fluent, correct and clear speech.

It is found that there is wide difference between the home and school environment which has resulted in the massive failure of children to adjust to formal schooling. This problem is more serious in the rural and tribal areas. By providing Pre-School Education, the social as well as economically deprived and disadvantaged children can get scope for preparing themselves for formal schooling and the rate of dropout will come down and universalisation of primary education can be possible. Research studies show that there are “Critical Periods” at this age for full development of brains potential. The formation of latter attitudes and values as well as desire to learn are also influenced at this stage, while lack of support or neglect can lead to negative consequences, sometimes irreversible. On the whole, ECCE prepares the children to adjust to formal schools in a much better way (Monite and Prochaner, 2009).

The state of Odisha has implemented ICDS programme in the state for the children of 3-6 age group in the year 1975 and ECCE centres started under SSA in the year 2003-04. Keeping in mind the role of ECCE as a support service in Universalization of Elementary Education as well as human resource development, ECCE has been directed to most underprivileged groups in the state of Odisha, those who are still outside the mainstream of formal education. The girls in these groups receive support services like, child care and special care is given to schedule castes and schedule tribes in these groups. As regards to vital statistics on children, the infant mortality rate in Odisha is 77 per 1000 live birth, much higher than all India average of 58. The percentage of severely malnourished children in the state remains around 5 percent of the total child population (Govt. of Odisha, 2011). Against this backdrop, the paper makes an attempt to analyze the status of ECCE in Odisha with the following objectives:

II. Objectives

- (i) To analyse the status of coverage of ECCE and the children enrolled.
- (ii) To analyse the interventions undertaken by Orissa Primary Education Programme Authority (OPEPA) on ECCE.
- (iii) To analyse the management of ECCE and its quality dimensions and challenges.
- (iv) To suggest measures for improving quality of ECCE in Odisha.

The information from OPEPA, W & CD Department, Govt. of Odisha and other secondary sources viz. reports, publications etc. have been used for the present study. Information obtained through personal visits and interactions with various ECCE functionaries under SSA and ICDS have also been used. With a view to delivering ECCE services in an integrated manner, efforts are being made in Govt. sectors (ECCE under SSA and ECCE under ICDS), private sectors (private nurseries, private schools and corporate initiatives) and voluntary sector (NGOs running the pre schools). The present study is confined to ECCE under SSA and ICDS where government interventions are made.

III. Findings

Socio Psychological perspective of pre-school education

On social perspective, ECCE focuses on pre school education as a social fact, a process, an institution, having a social function and being determined socially. The social stratifications viz. social class, gender, race and ethnicity, age and disability have great influence on ECCE. The main social objectives of education is to equalize opportunity, enabling the backward or under privileged class and individuals to use education as a lever for the improvement in their conditions. The approaches to ECCE that build on a developmental paradigm have clear policy implications in terms of optimizing children's development, promoting more equal opportunities or investing in human capital. The equality of ECCE opportunity at the pre school stage requires provisions for all children without any discrimination. A sound pre school system of education provides for learning opportunities in both cognitive and affective areas, in skills of learning, how to learn and learning, how to be a student. Low achieving students can successfully be taught a variety of cognitive strategies such as memory, elaboration, self questioning, rehearsal, planning and goal setting etc.

Traditionally early care and education of children has taken place in an informal context within the family, largely through grand mothers' caring practices, stories and traditional infant games handed over from one generation to the next. With growing urbanization and an increase in women's participation in work force, there have been tremendous changes in the social structure and practices in recent years. With emergence of nuclear families, the care of children is now left to paid maids /care givers amongst higher income families, while in lower income families; it is elder siblings, very often female children who take on this responsibility. These changes in social structure laid the seeds for introduction of ECCE in the country. A summary of ECCE services reveal that ICDS (1975) provides pre school education for children aged 03-06 years decides health care and nutrition supports to target women and children. The DPEP programme (1994-2007) aimed to provide primary school access to all children, improve retention rates, increase girls attendance, increase linkage between pre schools and primary and raise the achievement level. The SSA started in the year 2000 provided limited innovation grants for ECCE in each district and has the objective of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), a component of SSA started in the year 2003 targets 'hard to reach girls' especially those not in school, provides 'model school' in each cluster, mobilizes and supervises female school enrolment, provides gender sensitive learning materials and provides materials and services such as escorts, text books and uniforms. The Rajiv Gandhi National crèche scheme started in the year 2006 provides crèches for the children of working or ailing mothers, including sleeping facilities, health care, supplementary nutrition, immunization, pre school education etc. The ECCE services are also available through private schools and NGOs initiatives. The ECCE is intended to take care of pre school educational needs of different social caste groups (SC, ST, OBC and other deprived sections). There are numerous tribal communities in the country, mostly living in forests, hilly and mountainous areas in a close relationship with nature that isolates them from the main stream of Indian society. Both children and adults from SC, ST and OBC groups in many ways remain disadvantaged despite Government efforts to implement positive discrimination. The children of migrant households are often thought to be at greater risk of exploitation and their parents tend to accept jobs on unfair terms. The migrants often experience larger working hours, poor living and working conditions and poor access to basic facilities such as education, health and food distribution system. Unless their children are sent to pre school, the objectives of SSA on UEE are difficult to be realized. The female children are looked upon as a source of invisible child labour within the home. The elder girls often have to takeover the responsibility of house work. By doing so, the young girl may release her mother for work and enable her brothers to attend schools, there by contributing to household economy (Burra, 2001).

IV. Play way learning in pre schools

The Early Childhood Education in India is closely related to nineteenth century colonials expansion in which successive models of early childhood education were exported. Around British empire (Phillips and Ochs, 2003). The export of play based methodology from the west continues in pre school programme and policy makers often endorse learning through play in spite of the fact that there is considerable variation in the way the methods are understood and employed.

Local ideas about play in early childhood settings are created out of tension between culturally and historically situated beliefs and international ideas dominated by western play theory. These theories are identified with nineteenth and twentieth century educators such as Froebel, Montessori and Dewey and psychologist such as Frued. Bennette *et all* (1997) referred to this 'ideological, philosophical and educational tradition' as the 'nursery inheritance'. Western play based approaches were favoured by early childhood education experts and recommended for all children regardless of social class. In the late 1990s, the ICDS underwent a transition to incorporate child care and greater attention to pre school education. This is also the most joyful play way daily activity, visibly sustained for three hours a day. A formal school like approaches to literacy and numeracy education in early years also affected the delivery of play way. The main function of pre school education component is to stimulate and satisfy the curiosity of the child, and rather than following any rigid learning curriculum, children are taught songs and games. However, since there is no formally structured curriculum and flexibility is encouraged, the AWCs often respond to parental demands to teach the alphabet and elementary numeracy. Thus a situation evolved in which the non formal and flexible aspects of pre school education left the way open for the introduction of academic instructions.

In respect of private sectors, as there is no single version of play way, various methods are employed in "preparatory" pre schools- those institutions directed solely at preparing children for formal schooling. What the schools have common is that they do not subscribe to learning through play. This does not mean that children do not play, but that the worlds of work and play are distinct in these school settings (Viruru, 2001).

In the context of preparatory pre schools, children's play is not children's work, as it has been portrayed in western play theory. However, the likelihood of a wide spread increase in the practice of playway may be greatest in the public sector.

V. Coverage of ECCE

In Odisha, the area of operation of ECCE is confined to

(a) Habitation without any Anganwadi Centre (AWC) where more than 20 children of 3-6 age group are present and

(b) ECCE centres are operational in different geographical areas such as hilly areas, scattered and remote habitations and forest areas. It is being operated in each model cluster school (MCS) under National Programme for Enrollment of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL).

- Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority has been supporting the existing and new ECCE centres, upgrading the sub centre of ICDS with inclusion of ECCE component and supporting the AWCs through ICDS Programme.
- Both boys and girls of 3-6 years age are covered under ECCE Programme. In the state at present 3626 ECCE centres are operating by enrolling children in the age group of 3-6 years. Due to opening of new AWCs, many ECCE centres are functioning under AWCs. Women and child Development Department has decided universalisation of ICDS facilities. So the ECCE centres running under SSA are to be merged with ICDS when new ICDS centres shall be opened in the area. SSA is to play the role of facilitator.

Status of ECCE in Odisha

The spread of ECCE centres in the state is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of Pre-school Education / ECCE centres in the state during 2008-09.

Items	ECCE centres under SSA	ECCE centres under ICDS
i. No.of centres	3626	41697
ii. No.of children enrolled	87154	14.4 lakhs
iii. Coverage of children per ECCE	24	34

Source : OPEPA, Govt.of Odisha

Table 2: Enrollment of Preschool children under ICDS 2001-02 to 2008-09

Year	Enrolled (in lakh)	Attended (in lakh)	Attended as % to enrolled
2001-02	9.8	8.4	85.71
2002-03	10.0	8.5	85.70

2003-04	10.0	9.3	93.00
2004-05	11.0	9.4	85.45
2005-06	10.8	9.4	87.04
2006-07	10.7	9.7	90.65
2007-08	13.0	11.3	86.92
2008-09	14.4	12.9	89.58

Source : Economic survey , 2011-12, Govt. of Odisha

As per 20011 census, the child population in the age group of 0-06 years in Odisha is 52.73 lakhs. If we consider 0-03 years age and 03-06 years age separately nearly 27 lakh children are in the age group of 03-06 years. The pre school facilities available under ECCE (SSA and ICDS) cover less than half of the child population in that group.

There are 3626 ECCE centres operating under SSA in Non-ICDS areas of the state spread over different districts of the state enrolling 87154 children. The enrollment of children in ECCE are more in Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Rayagada and Nuapara districts than other districts of the state. This higher enrollment is apparently due to focus of ECCE to function in remote and forest areas.

Apart from this ECCE centres under SSA, Anganwadi centres of ICDS are providing Pre- school education (Early Child Hood care for 0-3 years children and learning readiness programme for 03-06 years children).

There are 41697 ECCE centres operating under ICDS, enrolling 14.4 lakh children in the year 2008-09. The coverage of children per ECCE is 24 under SSA as compared to 34 under ICDS. The enrollment and attendants have been increased over the years. However there is a considerable gap between pre school children enrolled and attended in Odisha. Lack of motivation of parents inadequate coverage of ECCE, lack of basic infrastructure, poor time management, inadequate availability and use of play and learning materials etc. are the apparent reasons for this low enrolment. Further it is reported that the dropout rate in early primary classes is unacceptably high at 20-21 per cent indicating the existing pre school component in ICDS is very weak (Planning commission, Govt.India 2009). As regards to pre school services, the facilities under ECCE are not at par with ICDS. No medical and nutritional services are provided by SSA. There is also no provision of food or midday meal in ECCE centres run under SSA.

At the National level it is reported that out of the total pre primary school children enrolled, 48.50 per cent are girls (DISE, 2007-08). Around 56 per cent of children in pre schools are enrolled in Anganwadis (ICDS centres) for Early Childhood Care and Education. Among them only 31.00 per cent are attending the centres regularly (IIPS, 2007).

It was reported that the girls enrollment rate in ECCE centres is 53.03 % (Cuttack, Bhadrak, Boudh and Nuapada) districts as against 51.45% in AWCs at aggregate level in these districts (Paltasingh, 2011).

Interventions on ECCE

Interventions undertaken both at AWC and ECCE centres include((a.) capacity building of ECCE Instructors and AWC workers on pre-School educations/ Mother tongue language, (b) supply of kit box to ECCE and AWC centres at the cost of Rs. 1000 / kit in each year,(c) providing reading, writing materials to ECCE/ AWC children,(d) organisation sishu utsav ,(e)providing environment friendly element to school where the ECCE/AWC are running ,(f) wall painting on ECCE/AWC ,(g) workshop on preparation of materials ,(h) provision of ground level wall, black-board and (i) provision of ARUNIMA BOOKS (Specially designed for Childhood education) to ECCE/AWC centres for 120 days activities in a year.)

VI. Quality Dimensions of ECCE

To provide ECCE of equitable quality to all children NCF-2005 has identified six basic dimensions of quality to be addressed namely :(i)Development of appropriate curriculum ,(ii) Trained and adequately rewarded teachers ,(iii) Appropriate teacher child ratio ,(iv) Infrastructure support of children's need and ,(v) Encouraging supervision and monitoring and (vi) Improvement in learning level .

i) Development of appropriate curriculum

The quality of class room learning environment and educational process is tied to curriculum offered. A curriculum should for instance be, coherent, multi dimensional and integral, practicable but allow for flexibility, culturally pertinent, child centred, responsive and interactive, active, based on play and exploration and discovery. It should allow for assessment, incorporate technology, use relevant materials, be consistent with child rights perspective and respect diversity and individuality. The curriculum is to include activities related to physical development, personal health care, creative expression through various forms of art and music, ethics and moral values and understanding cultural diversity. A total of 3626 ECCEs are addressing the development of younger children in broader perspective encompassing, Pre-school and Non- formal education by adopting

ARUNIMA as their course curriculum. The supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check up, referral services nutrition and health education of children are attended by AWCs.

The OPEPA, Department of Mass Education and Department of Women and Child Development, Govt. of Odisha, jointly have developed ANUNIMA the curriculum for the age group of 3 to 6 years based on developmental stages of children. Both ECCE centres and AWCs are to follow ARUNIMA as their curriculum. This curriculum is for 120 school working days in a year. ECCE centre is to run minimum 20 days in a month.

The contents of ARUNIMA covers five broad areas of development of children viz. linguistic, physical, mental, social and skill development. The linguistic development of children includes oral conversation, story telling, rhymes, alphabets, picture composition, play, word play, colouring, framing of words, sentences, picture book reading and letter rhymes.

The physical development activities encompass –Drill, play, drawing, exercise, rhyme, queue making, knowledge of left right, front and back directions in drill, preparation of clay toys, jumping of animals, running and walking race, skipping, small stone jumping play, sack jumping, jumping race, hide and seek, relay race, preparation of paper toys, pasting, musical chair, drill with song, eye movement, blind walk, jalebi race, ring ball, swing etc. The mental development curriculum includes- knowledge of sound, smell, touch, taste, memory play, knowledge of colour, knowledge on shape and size, number, direction, knowledge on science and environment, leadership, body parts, animals, birds, hot and cold, time, vehicles, dress, insects, counting of numbers, knowledge of day and night, temperature, creative thinking, food, sound, groupings of like objects.

The social development activities focus on- moral rhymes and knowledge on family/members, story telling, leadership, knowledge on village and surroundings, domestic animals, traffic signals, traffic rule professions, ways to greet elders, knowledge on vehicles, family, distinction between good and bad habits, festivals, preliminary knowledge on first aid, state, play on doctor and patient, rhyme, celebration of birth day(story), famous personalities, post office, national anthem, ideal personality, good habits, pollution of surroundings, children's day, etc.

Efforts made in the curriculum for skill development of children include- drawing and colouring, preparation of clay toys, paper toys, rhymes, stitching of flowers, sand structure, toy making from waste materials, jhhoti, cut and paste, cloth and wool toy making, knowing different moods through pictures, floor drawing, knowledge on different sounds, fur pasting, postman, making different shapes etc.

Very recently Women and Child Development Department with support from OPEPA, UNICEF has prepared a revised ARUNIMA- course curriculum for 03-04 years and 04-06 years children separately but yet not implemented.

It is reported that all the ECCE centres and AWCs do not follow ARUNIMA as their course curriculum. Only 70% of ECCE centres in Cuttack, 90% in Bhadrak, 100% in Boudh and 80% in Nuapara follow ARUNIMA as their course curriculum (OPEPA 2011). This possibly due to lack of availability of trained teachers to follow ARUNIMA curriculum.

ii) Training manual for teachers

Training of ECCE instructor is a prerequisite for transaction of curriculum in right perspective. OPEPA, ICDS, SCERT, UNICEF, are joining hands over training and strengthening the overall development of ECCE. The training manual has been developed by OPEPA/SCERT, with help of experts from the areas and from different institutes and has full of suggestive activities for transaction of the curriculum. The resource persons have been selected through specific selection procedure and a total of 300 RPs per district have been listed. The training duration has been 6 days both for RPs and ECCE Instructors/AWC workers conducted separately. The AWC workers have to complete 30 days training in a year. The monthly visit by experts and field functionaries to ECCE is undertaken for follow up action and to get a feed back and on the spot guidance to ECCE Instructors/ AWC workers. Print materials have been developed for better learning of pre school children. The following modules/ Guidelines have been developed for imparting training to field functionaries associated with implementation of NPEGEL scheme in the field. These include: (a) Teachers Training Module on Gender Sensitization, (b) cluster Co-ordinator Training Module and (c) job chart of Cluster Co-ordinator and ECCE Instructors and month wise suggestive list of play materials for ECCE.

To improve other quality aspects of ECCE, the monitoring formats for MCS Co-ordinators and ECCE Instructors have been developed and used.

iii) Teacher Pupil Ratio

In order to pay adequate personal attention to children, the ideal Teacher Pupil Ratio is 1:30. This magnitude in ECCE centres under SSA and ICDS are 1:24 and 1:34 respectively. Thus the ideal Teacher Child ratio is more or less followed in the state.

iv) Infrastructural support of children need

While 35% of AWCs have their own buildings, others run in rental houses or space provided by GPs. The ECCE centres under NPEGEL run under model cluster schools in the school buildings. These centres are equipped with drinking water facilities, toilet outdoor play materials and boundary wall. While regular health check up is extended to most of the AWCs, the children of ECCE do not get such support on regular basis. ECCE centres face problems of different categories like no provision of Mid day meal, inadequate play materials, instructional materials and irregular presence of Instructors (OPEPA, 2011)

Play is spontaneous activity which stimulates and guides the health of body and mind. It assists neuromuscular development so that children who are slow, dull and clumsy become quick, skillful and agile. Toys and games serve as means to satisfy five major aspects of child development viz. (a) physical activity (b) acquisition of skill (c) individual and social satisfaction (d) satisfaction of curiosity and (e) mental curiosity. The provision of outdoor and indoor play materials at ECCE /AWCs includes:

- a) Outdoor play materials:- Slides, swings, bicycle, tricycle, rubber balls etc. are outdoor materials. Govt. has provided slides and swings to some schools whereas many of the AWCs do not have all outdoor materials and of adequate quantity.
- b) Indoor Play Materials:-Painting, drawing, clay works, building block charts etc. are provided by the Govt. to both AWCs and ECCE under SSA.
- c) Activity wise sitting arrangement is important for the children. No formal class room sitting is preferred for this class. But in practice, children are sitting in a formal manner.

v) Supervision and Monitoring

ECCE Instructors usually take help of BRCCs, CRCCs, Gender Co-ordinator appointed in DPO. AWC workers take help of CDPOs and supervisors incase there is any requirement. Continuous monitoring and supervision of ECCE activities is done by BRCCs, CRCCs, SCERT and OPEPA officials. The monitoring format for MCS Co-ordinators and ECCE Instructors have been developed. Accordingly the ECCE centres are graded as A, B, C or D category.

Table 3: Financial support to ECCE centres in Odisha

Items	ECCE centres under ICDS	ECCE centres under SSA
1. ECCE Instructor/Anganwadi Worker Remuneration	Rs. 20,000/- @Rs. 2000/pm	Rs. 5000/year(Max) For 9 months
2. Helpers Remuneration	Rs. 5000/- @Rs. 500/pm	-
3. Play kit for centre	Rs. 1000/kit	Rs.1000/kit
4. Contingency (Register paper, chalk etc.)	Rs.1250/-	Rs. 500/-
5. Mngement and Supervision charges	Rs.1250/-	

Source : OPEPA and WCD Department, Govt. of Odisha,2011

It may be seen from the above table that the financial provisions for ECCE under ICDS are comparatively better than ECCE under SSA. The remuneration of ECCE Instructor is too meager to create interest in them on pre school activities.

vi) Improvement in the Learning level

Table 4: Learning achievement level of ECCE, AWC exposed students and general students (not exposed to ECCE and AWC) in Mathematics and Language

Districts	ECCE exposed (N=128)		AWC exposed (N=128)		General Students (N=128)	
	Lang.(%)	Math (%)	Lang.(%)	Math (%)	Lang.(%)	Math (%)
Cuttack	77.5	70.6	75.2	65.3	72.7	66.6
Bhadrak	68.5	70.5	72.6	62.5	67.0	60.4
Boudh	72.3	55.9	68.5	57.2	68.4	58.8
Nuapada	68.1	70.4	72.6	62.5	58.7	47.0
Average	71.5	66.8	72.2	61.8	66.7	58.2

Source : Paltasingh, T(2011), Report on impact of ECCE in Odisha

A study conducted by OPEPA reveals that the average percentage of marks in Mathematics scored by students of ECCE, AWC and general students are 66.8% , 61.8% and 58.2% respectively. Similarly the scores in Language subjects for the same categories are 71.5%, 72.2% and 66.2 % respectively. As may be seen from the above mentioned average scores, the performance of students having interventions (ECCE/AWC), have done better than the students of general back ground(without any intervention). It is inferred that ECCE and AWCs interventions are found to have positive impact on children’s education as compared to children not exposed to Pre-school education.

The educational system in India is made very competitive for children. Admission is difficult even to primary schools and young child of six is often expected to take a written test and is usually interviewed before he or she is admitted. Parents desirous of admitting their children to good schools are keen that their children learn to read and write as soon as possible. As a result there is pressure in most of the pre school to concentrate on formal education. Even through several interventions have been made on capacity building of institutions by providing reading materials, supply of educational kits etc., the programme is not free from operational constraints.

VII. Challenges on functioning of ECCE in Odisha

Availability of quality pre-primary education will promote inclusive education and meaningful access to school education by increasing enrolment and reducing the vulnerability of children to failure and dropout at later stages of education. The challenges on functioning of ECCE in the state are discussed in four different constraints viz. a) Basic conditions and constraints, b) lack of systematic support, c) curricular issues and d) programme constraints.

a) Basic Conditions and Constraints

- i. Inadequate Infrastructure- About 35% of existing AWCs have buildings on own. The ECCE centres running under SSA many of them have their own building however drinking water facility, toilet, outdoor play materials and boundary wall provisions are not available in all the centres.
- ii. Poor time Management and inadequate time duration for ECCE- The ECCE centres run from 7.00 am to 11 am and the curriculum specified for each day is not strictly followed. A higher proportion of time is devoted to rhyme, songs and outdoor activities.
- iii. Inadequate availability and use of play and learning materials- The outdoor play materials (slides, swings, bicycle, tricycle, rubber ball etc.) are limited and some are non functional. The indoor play materials (painting, drawing, clay work, building block etc.) are not sufficient for the children.
- iv. Overburdened inadequately qualified or trained ECCE Instructors / AWCs workers skills required differ for different activities learning by doing is the best method for children. Due to shortage of qualified teachers/staff, all the learning activities are not properly performed.

b) Lack of Systematic Support

- i. Insufficient training and supervision with inadequate resource materials.
- ii. Inadequate monitoring and Evaluation, in absence of tangible indicators.
- iii. Limited community awareness, demand and involvement. No community based committee to oversee the ECCE programme.
- iv. Misconception about ECCE, either 'song' or 'rhyme' or down word extension of Primary Education.

c) Curricular Issue

- i. The use of teaching learning materials are not properly demonstrated in the curriculum frame work.
- ii. Limited daily/monthly planning is being done leading to mere 'Song' and 'Rhyme' or 'Alphabets' and 'Numbers' programme.
- iii. No regular or informal assessment / tracking of children's learning and development are made in the programme.
- iv. Children from diverse back group and multiple competencies find difficulties in learning.

d) Programme Constraints

- i. Inadequate coverage of ECCE- ECCE/ AWCs are more concentrated in rural and tribal areas.
- ii. No urban strategy-It should include special centre to cater needs of children at a risk and urban deprived
- iii. Weak partnership with NGOs and Private sector-Govt-NGO partnership is to be strengthened on convergence approach with other departments.
- iv. Inadequate supervision/staff- The number of staff and instructor should be increased.

VIII. Conclusion and Policy Implications

In this paper it is sought to show the functioning of early childhood care and education in Odisha with special focus on quality aspects. No doubt pre school education assumes greater significant in realising the goals of SSA in achieving Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), as a school readiness programme. The improvement in quality pre school education services can be achieved through:

- i. Regular feedback / interaction / orientation meetings are to be organised with parents of the children as parents have lasting influence on children's value, attitudes, concepts, learning and ideas. Since parents and community members have pivotal role in improving the quality of pre school education, a large proportion

of them, mothers in particular who have some amount of education should be more pro actively involved in quality improvement. The PTA, MTA have to be involved in enhancing the enrolment and retention, regular attendance of teachers and children and class room transaction as per the curriculum. Motivation camps should be organized in villages more frequently especially for parents belonging to socially and economically weaker sections to send their children to AWC/ECCE centres.

- ii. Constitution of community groups like youth group, MTA,PTA, to monitor and support AWCs/ ECCE functioning.
- iii. Self assessment tools for use by parents to monitor their child progress and Development of observing school readiness.
- iv. Orientation of teachers, PRIs and parents on key aspects of ECCE to enable effective monitoring and support.
- v. Development of linkages with primary schools relevant NGOs and their orientation on school readiness.
- vi. Development of school readiness instruments, cognitive and linguistic readiness outcomes.
- vii. Dedicated and trained teachers, appropriate programme design with space for flexibility, creativity and innovation. The training materials of high quality need to be developed with involvement of expert in the field. After training is imparted, the inputs must be used in class room practices for understanding of children.
- viii. Provision of appropriate and adequate infrastructure and teaching materials and Stakeholders participation and monitoring.
- ix. Development of teachers' capability on child rights perspective and towards integrating technological development in education with traditional and folk literature.
- x. Schools identified with large number of at risk students should be provided with staff specially trained to meet the needs of those students.
- xi. Promoting educational inclusion by enrolling children across culture, gender, mother tongue and children with disability and other special needs.
- xii. Developing a National ECCE Curriculum Guide for children and an integrated curriculum for early Primary Grades ensuring smooth transition from ECCE to Primary school.

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