

**A STUDY OF THE MANAGEMENT OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN
BALASORE DISTRICT OF ODISHA**

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ABSTRACT:

This paper highlights on the management of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Balasore District under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in Odisha. The starting of the scheme dates back to the year 1975. It was inaugurated on a sacred day i.e the birth day of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation. The scheme has been popularized across the country with its need based programmes for the larger interest of millions of children who are the real assets of the country. The study also examines the various aspects of ECE like organizational structure, learning climate, health and hygiene, monitoring and supervision mechanism as well as the infrastructure of the Anganwadi Centres. The Investigator examines the strength and voids in the working system and suggest for better functioning.

Key Concepts:

ECCE, Readiness, ICDS, Cognitive Development, Creative and Aesthetic Development, learning climate, monitoring, managerial skill.

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INTRODUCTION:

Child is the crowning creation of God. It comes trailing the clouds of glory. The human Child is as transparent as glass and free from impurities. It is soothing like lofty petals of flowers and innocent like lamb. The great French Philosopher Rousseau has rightly said, child is originally good, and it turns bad when it comes in contact with evil society. So to say a child is the symbol of innocence and simplicity and embodiment of God. His/ her education is the responsibility of the state and he/she should be brought up with utmost care in a conducive atmosphere for the all round development viz physical, intellectual social and emotional. In the education system of a country the Early Childhood Education occupies a pivotal place. It is considered as foundation stone on which the structure of educational edifice stands. In addition to education, other components like health, hygiene and balanced diet are duly taken care off for the wellbeing of the child. Children should get opportunity to express their emotion and motives freely in the class and outside it. The movement of Early Childhood Education got an impetus from the findings of psychologists. Gestalt School of Psychology developed as a movement against the theory of behaviourism. Exponents and child psychologist like Jean Piaget and his co-workers conducted research on cognitive processes. Jean Piaget has studied developmental process that gives a clear cut idea about the growth and development of the child mostly related to his cognitive development. Usually primary education of a child starts between 5 and 6 yrs when children are admitted to school. By that time they have not been trained properly to receive the things and adjust with the learning environment. Thus there is a need of pre-school education to ensure readiness for his adjustment in new surroundings. According to National Curriculum Frame Work -2005.

“ The Child hood stage, until the age of 6-8 yrs, is the most critical period when the foundations are laid for lifelong development and the realization of full potential ; research shows that there are ‘critical periods’ are this stage for full development of the brain’s potential. The formation of later attitudes and values as well as the desire to learn are also influenced at this stage, while lake of support or neglect can lead to negative consequences, sometimes irreversible. Early Childhood Care And Education (ECCE) requires that young children be provided care, opportunities and experiences that lead to their all round development – physical, mental, social and emotional, and school readiness. A holistic and

integrated perspective views the health and nutritional needs of children as integrally related with their psychosocial / educational development . The curriculum frame work and pedagogy for ECCE must be based on this holistic perspective , taking into account the various domains of development , the characteristics of children at is sub-stage, and their learning needs in terms of experiences.

It is well-known that children have a natural desire to learn and make sense of the world around them. Learning in the early years must hence be directed by the child's interests and priorities, and should be contextualized by her experiences rather than being structured formally. An enabling environment for children would be one that is rich in stimulation and experiences, that allows children to explore, experiment and freely express themselves, and one that is embedded in social relations that gives them a sense of warmth, security and trust . Playing music, rhyming, art and other activities using local materials, along with opportunities for speaking, listening and expressing themselves, and informal interaction are essential components of learning at this stage. It is important that the language used in early education is one that the child is familiar with in the immediate environment, while an informal multilingual class room would help children to comfortably adjust to the early introduction of second language (English) and the medium of instruction from class –I onwards.

Right to Education Act: 2009 gives stress to identify the needs of a child and address the same with proper nurturing. What a child really requires from the Anganwadi Centre (pre-school education centre) can be well reflected through the following set of achronomies.

- 1- REO- Right to Equality and Opportunities.
- 2- FDE - Freedom for Expression.
- 3- GRP -Group Participation
- 4- RSI - Respect for Identity
- 5- EQN – Environment for Quality Education
- 6- PPP- Peace, Protection & Participation
- 7- PAC – Play Art and Culture.

In the light of the above statements, this paper answers the following research questions,

- Is the pre-school education properly managed?
- Does the Anganwadi Centre cater to the needs of the children?

- Are their needs properly addressed?
- Is the pre-school education managed in an appropriate manner?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the existing management system of Pre-school education in Balasore District of Odisha.
- To examine how pre-school education significantly compensates for early environmental deprivation on the home front by providing appropriately stimulating environment to the child.
- To know how far it caters to the needs of the children with respect to the holistic development of the children.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY :

The study deals with the functioning of the ICDS Programme in Balasore district of Odisha.

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY :

The sample of the study comprised 100 Anganwadi Workers , 24 Lady Supervisors , 4 Child Development Project Officers .

METHODS OF THE STUDY :

To have a real picture of the ground realities the investigator had regular visits to the anganwadi centres and had informal discussions with the workers, interacted with the small children, conducted a focused group discussion with the people of the locality and collected the data to fulfil the needs of the study . He also observed the activities of the centre to know how far the activities are meant for the holistic development of the children. So the investigator filled in some information schedule as he observed .

He also conducted personal interviews with the CDPOs, Supervisors to collect relevant data. Then he processed the data and made an indepth analysis to arrive at concrete findings

Recognising the predominated position of the child population in the demographic picture of the country and their exceptional vulnerability, the Government of India tried to ensure special care and assistance to this population of the society by enunciating a special programme for them. This special programme was launched in the country on an experimental basis on 2nd October, 1975 under the banner of Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) with an integrated package of services under health, nutrition and education component such as :

- Non formal Pre-school education.
- Immunisation.
- Health Checkup.
- Supplementary nutrition.
- Medical referral services.
- Nutrition and health education for women.

It symbolizes India's commitment to the development of its children. The early years are the most crucial periods in life, when the foundations for cognitive, social emotional, language, physical/motor development and lifelong learning are laid. Recognising the early childhood development constitutes the foundation of human development; ICDS is designed to promote holistic development of children within the age group 3 to 6 years, through strengthened capacity of caregivers, communities and improved access to basic services at the community level.

The ICDS is a holistic and unique Programme because all the basic sectoral services related to early childhood care, pre-school education, nutrition and health coverage are ensured through it. Among the different package of services ensured through the ICDS, the early childhood care and pre-school education component stands unique. The most joyful play way activity organized daily visibly sustains for four hours a day. It brings and keeps the young children at the Anganwadi Centre – an activity that motivates parents and community. Early childhood care and education as envisaged in the ICDS, focuses on a total development at the children. It includes promotion of early stimulation through intervention with mothers and

caregivers. It is a programme for the children belonging to 3 to 6 years age group in the Anganwadis and is directed towards providing and ensuring a natural joyful and stimulating environment with emphasis on necessary inputs for optimal growth and development. Child-centred play way activities developed by Anganwadi workers through enriched training are promoted. The early childhood pre-school education programme conducted through medium of play, aims at providing a conducive learning environment for the promotion of social, emotional, cognitive, physical and aesthetic development of child.

The concept of ECCE / Pre-school Education is of recent origin in India. It did not find any mention in the educational literature till the formulation of National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986). For the first time the nomenclature of ECCE/Pre-school education for the stage preceding elementary education has been used in the policy.

UNESCO on the meaning and nature of ECCE explains the term Early childhood, 'care', and 'Education' in the context as:

Early childhood constitutes the period from parental to 8 years of age which is characterised by rapid development of brain for laying pathway for social, emotional, physical and immunological developments, failure to support the child through proper care can lead to damage.

Care includes health hygiene and nutrition. The emphasis on care responds to the need of the child in a broader sense.

Education refers to the learning of children through manipulating objects and materials and exploring the world around them by trial and error within their environment. Programmes aiming at education promote practices which can serve the best investment of the young learners in their own social capacity, accommodating their diverse needs.

UNICEF on the nature of Early Childhood (ECD) in its publication, The State of World Children, 2001, states, " the acronym ECD refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and their caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child's right to develop his physical potential. Community based services that meet the needs of the infants and young children are vital to ECD and they should include attention to health, nutrition, education and water and environmental sanitation in homes and communities."

NCERT in a publication Early Childhood Education Programme (1991) explains the concept ECCE in Indian context as care and education of children from birth to eight years which includes early stimulation programme (0 to 3 years old), Pre-school/ early childhood programme (3 to 6 years old) and early Primary education programmes as a part of Primary Schooling (6 to 8 years old).

National council of Teacher Education (NCTE) in Norms and Standards for Teacher Educational Institutions (1998) has observed, “Early childhood care and Education (ECCE-a substitute nomenclature, a broader and more inclusive concept than the Primary Education) constitutes a critical input for total child development.”

The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE-1986) gives a great deal of importance to ECEE. It views that ECCE is an important input in the strategy of human resources development as a feeder and support programme for the primary education and a support service for the disadvantaged section of the society. It also points out that, ECCE aims at attending all aspects of child development through its child friendly programmes. The entire effort is directed towards providing and ensuring a healthier, happier, natural and enjoyable joyful environment for the child to achieve the desired development.

Committee for review of NPE, 1986 headed by Charka Ramamurti in 1990, on the promotion of ECCE major recommendations of the committee intend to strengthen the ECCE for generating able citizens of the country and to include it in the “Minimum Needs Programme” organized by the government. Further the committee emphasized on setting up a central fund for the child care services at the national level and allocation of higher funds for ECCE programmes. The committee also suggested extending the constitutional commitments as contained in Article 45, of providing free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years to ECCE.

The Programme of Action (POA) 1992, on ECCE, in its observation and recommendations suggested that every child should be assured access to the fulfillment of all his basic needs so that the child can grow in a self motivated manner instead of any compulsion and pressure. ECCE programmes should cover early childhood stimulation, health, nutrition for holistic development of the child.

Special initiatives for development of children during the **Ninth Plan Period (1997-2002)** appear to be an important phase at the national level. The initiatives include launching of

‘Balika Samrudhi Yojana’, Kishori Shakti Yojana, extension of central assistance under Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana, Universalisation of ICDS to cover all the blocks, enhancement of honorarium to Anganwadi workers and helpers, drafting of National policy and Charter for Children, setting up a National Commission for children to safeguard the rights.

Major strategies adopted by **Tenth plan** for the development of the children were based on survival, protection and development.

The Serva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA-2001) realizes the importance of Pre-school learning and early childhood care and its role in improving participation of children in schools. Some of the illustrative interventions adopted by SSA were –

- Strengthening Pre-school component in ICDS through training of functionaries, provision of additional persons and supplying learning materials.
- Setting up Balwadis in uncovered areas.
- Generating awareness through advocacy programmes
- Organisation of community based programmes
- Providing intensive planning for ECCE
- Promoting convergence.

The **National curriculum frame work (NCF -2005)** on ECCE observes that the early childhood state is the crucial period’ as the foundations are laid down for life- long development and realization of full potential.

The focus of attention of the report of **Indian Education (1964-66)** was on socio-emotional and cognitive development of the child through ECCE programmes.

There are several **Constitutional Provisions** in the country under Article, 15(3), 42, 45, 47 & 21 (A) either as Fundamental Rights or as Directive principles of State Policy that have been used to promote Pre-School Education Services.

In accordance with the pledge in the National Agenda of Governance, the **National Charter for Children, 2003** was announced with the provisions like survival, life and liberty, promoting high standard of health & nutrition, play & leisure, early childhood care and

development, ensuring child friendly procedure, free and compulsory education and so on for the welfare and development of children.

International Treaties and Agreements relating to ECCE/Pre-School Education like Declaration of human rights , 1948, Declaration of the rights of the child, 1989, Convention on the rights of the child, 1989, Salamanca statement, 1994, Dakar Framework for Action of Education for all, 2000 have well emphasized on the education of young children.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ICDS PROGRAMME IN ODISHA

The Pre-school education under ICDS Programme in Odisha was launched in 1975 in Subdega Block of Sundargarh district in an experimental basis with the following broader objectives :

- To provide home stimulation for compensating early environmental deprivation.
- To reach at the first generation learners with appropriately stimulating environment.
- To adopt suitable strategies for smooth switch over to primary education.
- To provide family life education & parental awareness.
- To enrich enrolment and retention in primary schools through readiness programmes.

The ICDS Programme is considered as a programme for child protection as well as child development. At present i.e. by the end of 2010 the State is having 198 no. of non tribal projects (60-74%), 12 number of urban projects (3.68%), 116 number of tribal projects (35.58%) to cater the needs in the targeted population. (Table No. 1.1 & figure No. 1.4)

ICDS projects function in an integrated and inter-sectoral approach for the development of children and women. At the state level, the Department of Women and Child Development Works as the Nodal Department with overall responsibilities for the implementation of the programme activities. At the district level, the distinct level officers like Collector, District Social Welfare Officer, Sub-Collectors are the immediate authorities for the effective implementation of the programme . The project level functionaries are the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) Lady Supervisor and Anganwadi Worker and Helper.

In ICDS Programme utmost care has been taken in selecting the most needed services for the children on the basis of mutually re-enforcing relationship among the chosen services cost effectiveness and administrative feasibilities . The package of services provided under this scheme for the children and women are as :

- Supplementary nutrition.
- Health checkup
- Immunisation
- Primary Health Care / Referral Services
- Nutrition and Health Education.
- Non Formal Pre-School Education.

Non-Formal Pre-School Education. :

Non-formal Preschool Education happens to be an important component of the package of services provided under ICDS as it lays the foundation for proper physical, psychological, cognitive and social development of the child. So to say Pre-school education is important for overall development of the child as early years are critical in the life of a child.

Various committees and commissions such as Child Care Committee (1961-62), Indian Education Commission (1964-66), Study Group on the Development of Pre-School Child (1972), NPE, 1986 and POA , Acharya Rammurti (1990), NPE 1992 & POA 1992 have their views with regard to the methodology adopted in Pre-school education as :

- Free and structured conversation.
- Story telling & Story making
- Play ways joyful and activity based learning.
- Dramatisation and Song
- Indoor and Out door play
- Field trips and activities

- Science exposure and so on.

Pre-school education is considered as a place of convergence of all services of ICDS programme. The function of Pre-school education in Anganwadis is designed to stimulate and satisfy the curiosity of the children not following any rigid learning curriculum. The Pre-school activities may be categorized into five sections dealing with the areas of development.

- Activities for physical and motor development.
- Activities for language development.
- Activities for socio-emotional development
- Activities for cognitive development.
- Activities for development of creativity & Aesthetic expressions.

Implementation of ICDS in Balasore District :

It may be noted that the District Balasore having twelve blocks with the population of 20.24 lakhs according to 2001 census.

Out of such huge population, about 12.63 per cent constitutes child population below 6 years of age; where as 6.05 per cent belongs to the age group 3 to 6 years. ICDS was implemented in Balasore district in the year 1978-79 after four years of its inception in only one tribal block i.e. Nilgiri which is having highest tribal population (52.16%) with 141 Anganwadi centres. This scheme has been extended to all the 12 blocks of the district by the end of 1995-96 within 17 years of its initial implementation at the district level. The programme activities of ICDS project in the district are presently managed by 12 CDPOs, 50 Supervisors, 3595 Anganwadi workers.

Time Management in the Centre

The centre opens at 7AM and closes at 11AM. The following activities are conducted as per the time schedule for a period of 4 hours.

Sl No.	Different activities Organised	Time Allotted
1.	Well Come of the students	15 minutes

2.	Prayer	15 minutes
3.	Conversion with Children	30 minutes
4.	Action Song	30 minutes
5.	Activities for Physical Development	30 minutes
6.	Activities for Cognitive Development	30 minutes
7.	Creative Activities	30 minutes
8.	Story Telling	20 minutes
9.	Song / Riddles / Quize	20 minutes
10.	Good Bey / See Off	20 minutes
	Total	4 hours

N.B. : All the children are at the Pre-Operational stage and the activities are accordingly designed .

Home Visits by the Workers:

Types of activities undertaken by the workers

- Sensitise the parents about the children's progress
- Look after the health and hygiene of the children and explains about it to the parents
- Enquire about the good and bad habits of the children
- Discuss about the problems of the children
- Make the parents aware of sending their children regularly to the centre

Duties of the Monitoring Officers:

The monitoring officers namely the Child Development Officer and Supervisor visit the centre to look into the proper functioning of the centre. The frequency of monitoring is weekly, fortnightly and monthly. The basic purpose of monitoring includes the following aspects

- To ensure the punctuality and regularity Worker
- To encourage the children for regular attendance
- To motivate the children for their active involvement in the activities of the centre

- To establish rapport with the community and discuss about solution of the problems of the for sound solution

MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are as follows :

- **Operational status of ICDS scheme in Balasore district**
 - ICDS Scheme has become operationalised since 1998-96 in all blocks.
 - 3595 Anganwadi centres are in the district to provide pre school education and other basic services.
 - 12 CDPOs, 50 supervisors and 3595 Anganwadi Workers engaged for the execution of the scheme.
- **Educational Status of Anganwadi Workers, Supervisors and CDPOs.**
 - 75% CDPOs are graduate and 25% are of post graduate
 - 75% Supervisors are graduates
 - 55% Anganwadi Workers are under Matriculate and rest ones are matriculate and above.
- **Capacity building of Anganwadi Workers, Supervisors and CDPOS.**
 - 100 % CDPOs have been exposed to ICDS training.
 - 87.5% Supervisors are trained.
 - 100% Anganwadi workers have been trained.
- **Service Experience of Anganwadi Workers, Supervisors and CDPOs**
 - All the CDPOs are having more than 6 years of experience.
 - 67% Supervisors are having more than 6 years of experience.
 - 55% Anganwadi Workers are having more than 8 years of experience.
- **Infrastructural Status of Anganwadi Centre.**

- 31 % Anganwadi centres have their own building
- 40% Anganwadi centres are functioning in community hall.
- 20% Anganwadi centres are functioning in primary school building.
- 9% Anganwadi centres are functioning in workers house.
- **Status of Availability of Materials in Anganwadi Centre.**
 - Materials like table, chair, dari, box, water filter, water drum, black board, toys, cup and plate, charts, posters have been supplied to pre-school education centre.
 - 70% Anganwadi workers are of the opinion that these are not sufficient.
- **Facilities available in Anganwadi Centre :**
 - 60% Anganwadis are having adequate space to organize activities.
 - 32% Anganwadis have inadequate space where as rest 8% have no space of their own.
- **Impact of Visit of CDPOs and Supervisors :**
 - All most all the CDPOs and Supervisors opine that their visits ensure increase in enrolment, enhance regularity and punctuality of Anganwadi Workers, provides adequate exposure and ensures practical cooperation among the functionaries.
- **Status of Pre-School Children in Anganwadi Centre :**
 - Girls enrolment is more than the boys.
 - SC, ST and other back ward caste children are more in comparison to general caste students.
- **Enrolment of Children in Primary Schools after Completion of Pre-School Stage.**
 - There is a trend of increase in enrolment of children in Primary schools having ICDS back ground.
- **Pre-school Activities Organised in Anganwadi Centre for Holistic Development.**

- Activities undertaken for gross motor development, fine motor development, language development, development of basic concepts, concept about environment, emotional development, social development, development of creative potentialities and aesthetic ability in Anganwadis for holistic development of the child.

- **Impact of Pre-school Programme Activities :**

- On the impact of Pre-school programme activities all the Anganwadi workers opine that it ensures readiness for formal schooling through development of desirable social attitude, personal health habits and hygiene, linguistic skills, positive approach towards schooling.

- **Impact of School Readiness Activities on the Anganwadi based Children in Primary Schools.**

- More than 50% Anganwadi based children are found in class-I of every sample schools.
- Anganwadi based children are more conscious in respect of positive health habits, personal cleanliness.
- Anganwadi based children are more orderly in respect of performing activities in school.
- Anganwadi based children are found more cooperative, sharing, supporters, sociable and helpful in nature.
- Anganwadi based children are emotionally well matured, curious, tolerative, active, eager to know more in schools.
- They are self dependent and desirous to lead the team

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE SCHEME:

The findings of the present study synthesized into a set of recommendations for effective planning as well as organization of pre-school activities.

- Relaxation in Government norms for opening of Anganwadi centres in scattered habitations of hilly, tribal, forest areas.
- Opportunity to enhance qualification of under matric Anganwadi workers by the Government.
- Frequent training to ICDS functionaries on content, methodology, preparation of Teaching Learning Materials.
- Construction of building for building less centres.
- Setting up Anganwadi centres in suitable places having adequate open space for play activities.
- Supply of adequate pre-school materials with Kit to the Anganwadi centres to meet individual needs of the learner.
- Community mobilization needs to be strengthened to ensure parental cooperation.
- Establishment of strong linkage between Anganwadi centre & primary schools for effective organisation of preschool activities.
- Activities basing on pre-school experience need to be organized in primary schools to provide familiar base to the children.

CONCLUSION :

It is felt that the Govt., local people, NGO, peoples representatives should work collectively to do something vital for the cause of the little children. Mobilisation of community is dire need to fill the voids The needs of the pre-school children should be addressed after assessment of the same to help the small children. What the investigator felt there is a need of revamping the pre-school education by going deep into grass route level problems. In this connection what is taking place abroad should be studied .

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