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Research Article

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER IN
KATHMANDU VALLEY

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Abstract

Objectives: The ethnographic study was undertaken to assess the situation early childhood education development center (ECED) based on community and school as per ECED minimum standard and also to explore teaching pedagogy, infrastructure and environment of teaching at ECEDs. Similarly this study also tries to identify the challenges and issues to implement the ECED minimum standards. **Method:** A qualitative research design was applied for this evaluation research. The primary data were gathered through interview and observation. **Conclusion:** From the effectiveness perspective, learning environment of early childhood development center for children is satisfactory at home as well early childhood development (ECD) center due to parental care. From the sustainability, ECD management committee are starting to collect fund for ECD center (Admission and monthly fee), ECD management committee has clarity of organizational vision. ECD centers have been found to have trained and experienced ECD facilitator and are able to get Government quota for sustainability of center running cost and similarly from the equity, most of ECD parents belong to marginal families whose children benefit from ECD center and since they cannot afford costly Montessori, children of marginal family can also afford quality education in ECD centers.

Key words: early childhood education development center; ECED; education in Nepal

Introduction

In the beginning, early childhood development (ECD) education in Nepal began from 1948 in the form of pre-primary education with the establishment of the first Montessori School in Kathmandu. Later on, it shifted to the laboratory school in 1956. Then, the Montessori school and Kindergarten (KG) section of the laboratory school was merged and operated as kindergarten school. Likewise, ECD programs were being conducted in the private sector in the name of pre-primary education consisting of Nursery, Lower/Junior KG and Upper/Senior KG. At the same time, the government-funded ECD program was introduced and implemented under Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP-1) in 1991. It was in the name of Shishu Kaksha (SK). More focus of SK was to prepare children for primary schools, and to minimize drop out and repetition rates at the primary level - particularly in grade one (ibid as cited in Baral, 2011). It was then converted into Community Based Early Childhood Development (CBECD) centers in order to enhance community participation in ECD (Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development [CERID], 2004).

In Nepal, nearly six decades after the initiation of early childhood development education, there was an impressive growth rate in the number of opened and operating ECD

centers both in public and private sectors due to their relevance and need (Baral, 2011). The ECED programmes expanded two-fold by the year 2006, and that they offer safe, secure and stimulating environments (Ministry of Education & Sports [MoES], 2003).

There are 4 types of ECED/Pre Primary Classes (PPCs at present- community based; community school based; private school based and privately run but not attached to any school (GoN, 2012). In total there are 33, 404 ECED/PPC in the country (DOE, 2011). Out of the total 86 percent are community based and community school based, and rest are privately owned (Ibid.as cited in GoN, 2012). It is estimated that there are around 5,000 preprimary classes in operation throughout the country. Some of them employ Montessori, Kindergarten and other approaches appropriate to their pedagogical needs in pre-primary education (UNESCO, 2011).

Scope and Purpose of the Study

The scope of the evaluation was to explore the effectiveness of ECED as per government minimum standards. The evaluation documented the results of the program and also analyzed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability perspectives.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- To assess the situation ECED based on community and school as per ECED minimum standard.
- To explore teaching pedagogy, infrastructure and environment of teaching at ECEDs.
- To identify the challenges and issues to implement the ECED minimum standards.

Evaluation Method/Tools

Qualitative information generated from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources of information were collected by reviewing documents such as government policy, ECED minimum standard guidelines, School Sector Reform Plan and Action Plan of EFA. The primary data generated through interview and observation. All total 20 informants from three ECED centers by purposive sampling. Descriptive and explorative design applied for analyzing the data and prepared report.

Regarding to achieve the objectives, researcher visited the two ECD centers at Shoyambu in Kathmandu; one was community based and rest was school based. In evaluation research, team applied following methods to collect the information and analyzed the information.

Observation

Qualitative observations are those in which the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. In these field notes, the researcher records, in an unstructured or semi structured way, activities at the research site (Creswell, 2011). During the field visit, researcher did observation in ECEDs and also took the picture with the received consent from center for comparison ECEDs. From observation, team collected information on location of ECEDs, cleanness, space for playing, studying, displaying the educational materials as per ECED guidelines.

Interview

In qualitative interviews, the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, interviews participants by telephone, or engages in focus group interviews, with six to eight interviewees in each group (Creswell, 2011). Researcher did interview with both ECEDs facilitators, parents, local community leaders and collected the information on teaching and learning technique, students information, capacity building of facilitators, management support

Study Sites

Researcher has conducted evaluation research in Kathmandu Metropolitan, Ward No. 15 in Shree Geetamata ECD center (school based), Shree Ishwor Primary School (school based) and Swoyambhu ECD center (community based).

Findings and Analysis

Researcher had conducted evaluation in different areas based on ECED minimum standards and analyzed in following areas.

Demographic information

Researcher visited three ECEDs and collected the enrolled child data and found more children are in Geeta Mata ECED and also have two facilitators as per the children number. The data also shows that child enroll as per ECED minimum standards.

Data shown in Table 1 explains the age wise children enrollment in ECED and found more children are 3 years age and also found 12 children are more than 5 years.

It is evident with the Table 2 that there are mixed group and the indigenous children are more enrolled in ECED because the data shows 39 indigenous children are in all ECED and if we see it separately Geeta Mata ECED have more indigenous children enrolled. But, It is also found that there are mixed group in ECED which also positive part from the cultural exchange and learning. There is no discrimination among the children.

Table 1: Age-wise Child Data

Age	Geeta Mata		Ishwor		Swoyambhu	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
3 years	5	5	4	3	11	6
4 Years	2	3	6	5	0	0
5 Years	7	3	1	1	0	0
Above 5 years	7	5	0	0	0	0
Total	21	16	11	9	11	6

Table 2: Caste/Ethnicity wise Child Data

Caste/Ethnicity	Geeta Mata		Ishwor		Swoyambhu	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Bramhan/Chettri	4	3	2	1	1	0
Indigenous	11	9	4	1	8	6
Muslim	1	0	3	3	0	0
Dalit	5	4	2	2	2	0
Other	0	0	1	1	0	0
Total	21	16	12	8	11	6

Infrastructure and Learning Environment

As per the ECED minimum standards, researcher also explore the infrastructure and learning environment at ECED center. The positive aspect where found in the entire three centers. Room space and areas are found as per ECD standards, Room environment also suitable for children, sitting arrangement also found well. In Swoyambhu ECD center they also have the provision of separate rack for keeping the equipment or goods for the students where as in Geeta Mata and Ishwor ECD center separate rack where not found for keeping the goods or equipment for the students.

As above mentioned table, All ECEDs are maintaining the quality as per minimum standards but also found that there is lacking some areas from the equipment in Geeta Mata ECED and also not ECED in ground floor in Ishwor ECED which also need to maintain as per standards.

Facilitators Role Management

Regarding facilitators role in management, it is found that all facilitators have clear role in management and also doing their role as per ECEDs standards in all ECEDs. It is found that all the facilitator did their role as mentioned in ECD standards like, patch the schedule, poster, book management, taking weight of child, Tiffin bring from home, Prepare report and submitted related agency through management committee.

Hygiene, Nutrition and Safety

Regarding Hygiene, Nutrition and safety part, there are available drinking water and have first aid kit but there is lacking the toilet as child friendly and also they do not have regular health checkup as per ECED standard in all three ECEDs.

ECED Management Committee

Regarding Management Committee, All ECEDs have formed management committee and also are involving the actively. There is regular meeting in management committee in school based ECEDs and community based ECED management committee meeting organize in need basis.

Equipments at ECED as per Learning Areas

Regarding equipments for learning areas, researcher found that there are enough goods and equipment for indoor whereas lack of the outdoor goods or equipment. As per the researcher observation there is less space which may also a cause for outdoor and also they do not have enough funds for outdoor equipments or goods.

Administrative Management

Regarding administrative management in ECEDs, All ECEDs are maintaining the record and document as per standard but did not found the maintaining of individual file in each ECED which is also needed as per ECED standards. Geeta Mata ECED has maintained the individual file previously but it is also closed now a day due to lack of human resource.

Human Resources

Researcher found that all ECED's facilitators have trained in ECED and also gave the refresher training as per standard. They all knew about their job responsibilities and also maintaining the ECEDs as per their knowledge and skills.

Parents and Community

All ECEDs have management committee and also have participation from the parents and community. Committee has been doing monitoring and also sends the report to District Education Office. The Chief of ECED also got the

orientation on ECED. ECEDs are running as per standard curriculum.

Environment for Quality Service

Regarding quality service, all ECEDs has maintaining the minimum standards, also have child friendly environment for learning, conduct meeting regularly. But community based ECED do not have parents notice board which is also a minimum requirement.

Cost for child

All ECEDs has taking the minimum cost from the child which also help to maintain the expenses of ECED because government of Nepal only provide the minimum budget to operate the ECED and unable to maintain the quality. It also help for sustainability because if there is no support from government part. Researcher also found parents also not taking financial burden to pay it because they felt that their child is learning something.

Fund Operation

As per ECED minimum standard, there should be separate account for financial operation but it is only found in community based ECED and remaining ECEDs are operating account from school account.

Interview with Parents

Researcher did interview with parents of ECED going children and found that children are happy to go ECED due to environment and playing activities. Parent felt that child are uplifting the skills and value from ECEDs. Mostly parent are not engage in management committee and also found that they do not call for meeting except some parents. All parents are paying the cost for their child. Parents are feeling that there is lack of enough materials for ECED because materials/equipments need to be managed as per children ratio.

Interview with Management, Community Leader

As interviewed with management and community leader who also involve in ECED activities, they stated that ECD is the most important phase for the children at present context and time because it helps for child holistic development and found remarkable opinion on early childhood is a receptive phase of life. The influences, environmental, familial, social or otherwise, that occur in early childhood have lasting effects well into adulthood. They also stated that it is the duty of parents to take care of their children in early childhood with adequate.

They argue that ECED programme also aims at mitigating risks associated with early childhood such as malnutrition, inadequate stimulation or learning opportunities, iodine deficiency and anemia and the problems of early childhood development are more glaring in the developing countries than in the developed ones. Therefore, Investments in early childhood are productive for society and the nation as a whole. Where such investments are made, children grow into literate and numerate adults. Such adults, in turn, can contribute greatly to national development in the future.

In Nepal, the government has run early childhood development (ECD) centers through agencies like Plan, World Vision, Seto Gurans and many others. Some welfare organizations like Nepal Children's Organization, SOS Village and Paropakar are also conducting ECD centers for orphans and indigent children. The government encourages the establishment of ECED centers in schools but does not provide adequate support such as logistics and teachers. What the government provides remuneration for ECD teachers (Rs. 2,400 per month per teacher and stationery worth Rs. 1,000 for a year). Even the available teachers are not well-versed in teaching, which needs to be conducted by using child-friendly methods.

As a matter of fact, ECD teaching differs from general teaching found in private schools. ECD teaching is conducted by adopting a child-friendly method keeping in mind the rights of children to education, development and participation that perhaps goes beyond the Montessori Method. However, teachers who are well-versed in the Montessori Method can prove effective ECD teachers. So, the government need to prioritized and invest in ECD centrally, especially in the rural areas where most of the children are deprived of the light of education.

Conclusion

Researcher visited all ECDs and observed the learning environment and found different in centers. In school based ECD center researcher found less space for room according to children ratio. As per ECD learning environment, there need to be learning corners and did not maintain the learning corners. There is no space for playing and found learning and playing room is same place. Where as in community based ECD center researcher found more space for room according to children ratio. As per ECD learning environment, there was learning corners and maintaining the learning corners. There is space for playing and found learning and playing room is same place which we can see easily in picture too. Regarding community based ECD, there is no specific textbook for teaching however there is learning corner as per ECD requirements and facilitators conduct session as per their schedule.

Regarding capacity building of facilitators in both ECDs, the facilitators have found trained and received training from Seto Gurans and government office. But caretaker did not get any training on child caring. Trained ECD facilitators on understanding child psychology, play material making from local resources. Regarding cost for ECD child, All ECDs are taking monthly fee for sustainability as well as managing the additional staff care taker and the additional expenses which is not covered from government fund.

Regarding continuation of education after graduating the ECD by child, there is no option to continue upgrading class in same place at Community based ECD because they do not have other level classes and compel to search other place for continuation the education. But, there is easy to continue

for upgrading class in same place at School based ECD because they have other level classes therefore child can easily continue the session. Based on National Minimum Standard for ECD Centers, child's age should be 3-5 for ECD enroll but found some children are more than 5 years age. It is also found that ECD need to renovate of class space and materials for center running (carpet, cushion, child friendly low tables) and toilet facilities.

From the effectiveness, all ECEDs, Learning environment for children is satisfactory at home as well ECD center due to parental care. Parents are aware of children's care and need. Quality of services ECD centers is enhanced due to infrastructure and equipment support.

From the sustainability, ECD management committee are starting to collect fund for ECD center (Admission and monthly fee), ECD management committee has clarity of organizational vision. ECCD centers have been found to have trained and experienced ECD facilitator. Able to get Government quota for sustainability of center running cost. From the equity, most of ECD parents are belong to marginal families whose children benefit from ECD center and since they cannot afford costly Montessori, children of marginal family can also afford quality education in ECD centers. ECD centers are enrolled to all caste and ethnicity and there is no discrimination based on ethnicity and caste.

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