

A Study On School Readiness Of The Children In ECCE Centres Of South Garo Hills Baghmara District

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Abstract

Children in the age group of 3-6 years require specific learning opportunities in the non-formal settings. Anganwadi provide the Early Childhood Education through play-way methods which stimulate the mental development and satisfy the curiosity of the children. Children learn to play together, recite rhymes and songs and learn the concepts of colour and the surroundings which form the basic for sound primary education in later years. Readiness means the child's ability to participate and succeed in the beginning of schooling which includes the child's ability to accomplish and engage in processes associated with schooling, whether Nursery school, Preschool, Kindergarten. School readiness means a deficit which is detriment for success in schools. School readiness is the type of schooling which allows the child to get ready for primary school. The child is able to read and write properly. The Pre-school is an early childhood program in which children combine learning with play and programs run by professional trained teacher or coordinator. Children are most commonly enrolled in Pre-school between the ages of three to five. In the State of Meghalaya, pre-school is commonly known Pre-primary school, playschool or Kindergarten which is an educational institution establishment or learning space offering early childhood care education to children before they begin compulsory education at primary school. Therefore, the objective is to study the school readiness of the children in the ECCE centres of South Garo Hills District. The researcher adopted descriptive cum normative survey method and cross sectional research design for the completion of this study. The total population of pre-school centres is recorded 3265 learners out of which 5 percent was taken as the sample size for the study and it came out to be 163 pre-school children. The sample was selected by making a simple random sampling technique. School readiness scale developed by Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi was used to collect the required data and analyzed the data by applying the descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The major findings of the study came out to be satisfactory and functioning the school readiness effectively.

Keywords: ECE, Pre-school, School Readiness

1. Introduction

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a fundamental and integral part of the education system focuses on the teaching of children from birth up to eight years. It lays the foundation for good health and nutrition, learning and educational success, social-emotional learning and economic productivity throughout life. It is important to teach young children from birth to the age of four, so that the child will know the basic knowledge of cognitive, social, emotional, physical, skills. ECCE prepares a child for smooth transition from home to school or from an informal atmosphere to a formal one so that the child becomes ready for schooling.

According to the Article 45 as amended in 2002, "The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years." This means the period covered under ECCE is 0-6 years. UNESCO explains the term 'Early Childhood', 'Care' and 'Education' in the context of ECCE as under:

(a) Early Childhood: It generally recognised as the period from prenatal to eight years. The brain is determined and develops biologically during the prenatal period. By the age of six, 90 percent of the brain's structure and organisation of neural pathways are developed-or not developed if the child has been lacking proper nutrition and stimulation.

(b) Care: It includes health, hygiene and nutrition. The emphasis on care responds to the need to have a broader focus than educational interpreted as schooling. Children who are better nourished are also apt to be less sick and learn better than children who do not receive such care. Care practices reflect what caregivers are able to provide for the child and how safe and adequate the environment is. In practical terms, care practices depend on culture.

(c) Education: Children learn through manipulating objects and materials and exploring the world around them by trial-and-error within their environment, a concept commonly referred to as "Learning-by-doing." Programmes aiming at educating young children should reflect this. They should also promote practices which will serve the best interests of young learners in their own social context and that help them make the most of their active learning capacity, accommodating their diverse needs. (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2007).

Education for all global monitoring report 2007 states, "Every childhood care and education supports children's survival, growth, development and learning-including health, nutrition and hygiene and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development-from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings. Often

provided by a mix (Combination) of government institutions, non-governmental organisations, private providers, communities and families, ECCE represents interconnected arrangements involving diverse actors: family, friends, neighbours, family day care for a group of children in a provider's home, centre-based programmes; classes/programmes in schools; and programmes for parents. ECCE policies and provision vary according to the age and development of the child, and can be organised in formal, non-formal and informal arrangements." (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2007).

2.School readiness

Readiness means the child's ability to participate and succeed in the beginning of schooling. It includes the child's ability at a given time, to accomplish and engage in processes associated with schooling, whether Nursery school, Preschool or Kindergarten. School readiness means social interaction, play, language, emotional development, physical skills, literacy and fine motor skills. In this sense readiness means the child must have certain:

- **Personal-social readiness:** a sense of security good personal habits, pre-social habits i.e., sharing, cooperating, waiting for turn, respecting others, participating in group activities.

- **Academic readiness:** good vocabulary, verbal expression, sound discrimination skills, usual discrimination skills, readiness for imitating fine muscular coordination, pre-number skills, example, big-small, long-short, sequences, problem solving.

- **Readiness for co-curricular activities:** activities like dance, music, creative art, craft, sports, games requiring fine muscular, verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

School readiness means that a child is ready to enter a social and educationally based environment making the child ready to start the process of learning and how to do things independently. School readiness refers to whether a child is ready to make an easy and successful transition into school. It also know the capability of the child whether the child is interested or not in learning. In the foundation stage, the child is very eager to learn to know many things as it will grasp their knowledge. The child will be able write their name, alphabets, numerical numbers, shapes, colours etc. The school readiness refer to the five child-level dimensions adopted by the National Education Goals Panel-(a) physical well-being and motor development; (b) social and emotional development; (c) approaches toward learning; (d) language development; and (e) cognitive and general knowledge.

3.Age specific changes

During one year of age, children spent most of the time in eating, sleeping and changing dress but thereby they do learn. They need of cuddling and gentle handling. They require individualized attention and care. During second year most children increasingly gain body control in walking and running, finger control in simple puzzles or painting with brush. For 2 to 3 years old the first group experience occurs in pre-school/ECCE centres away from home. These children need more help reassurance and more assistance while learning new skills like exercise patience and make good humour, promote self-help skills, encourage development of social skills and help the children to explore. Four year olds are very critical because during this age the children demonstrate maturity and competence in motor and language development. They encourage social development and involvement, guide children to develop positive and consistent behaviours as well as in sharing and resolving conflicts. The five year olds are sociable and responsible, self-reliant and self-care activities. Their language is matured, has large vocabulary, use complex sentences and are grammatically correct. The children of six to eight years show mature skills in all areas of development before and after school hours. The development of school readiness skills allows school teachers to expand and further develop a child's skills in the specific areas of social interaction, play, language, emotional development, physical skills, literacy and fine motor skills. School readiness encircles a range of skills and abilities that equip children to transition smoothly into formal schooling. These include cognitive skills such as language and numeracy, social and emotional development, physical health and overall well-being. Essentially, it is preparing the children not just academically, but also emotionally and socially for the classroom challenges.

4.Importance of school readiness

1. **Learning how to learn skills:** It equips children with essential learning skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity. These skills lay the groundwork for academic success, enabling children to engage meaningfully with classroom activities and develop a love for learning.

2. **Self-help skills:** In addition to academic skills, school readiness encompasses self-help skills like dressing independently, using the restroom and following instructions. These skills foster independence and confidence, enabling children to easily navigate the school environment and participate actively in classroom routines.

3. **Managing behaviours:** School readiness also involves developing social and emotional competencies, such as empathy, self-regulation and conflict resolution. These skills are crucial for building positive relationships with peers and teachers, imagining emotions effectively and adapting to social dynamics of the classroom.

5. Review of related literature

Haque et.al. (2013) had conducted a comparative study on universal pre-primary education where they had laid emphasis on the foundation for lifelong learning. The main purpose of pre-primary education is to prepare children physically, emotionally, socially and mentally for formal schooling and to prevent poor performance and early drop out. Gogoi (2015) in her study she explained that Early Childhood Care and Education is the holistic development of the child and prepares the child for schooling in Golghat district of Assam. Her main objective is the availability of the teaching-learning materials in the early childhood care and education. McCoy et.al (2017) in his journal Early Childhood Care and Education and School Readiness in Zambia participate to be significantly and positively predictive of children's receptive vocabulary letter naming, reasoning fine motor executive function and task performance skills. Jairam and Chopra (2019) in their article play in Early Childhood Education Centres of India explained to us that play is the utmost characteristic of the early childhood care and development. It provides opportunities to explore world, make relationships, enhance creativity and develop early literacy skills. Mythri (2019) a comparative study on the school readiness of pre-schoolers exposed to contemporary preschool curriculum and a need based designed preschool curriculum said that school readiness has been linked with positive social and behavioural competencies in adulthood as well as improved academic outcomes in primary and secondary school. The present study also supports the importance of quality in ECCE programs, the use of better qualified teachers and full day program. Kaul and Bhattacharjee (2019) Early Childhood Education and School Readiness in India puts a variety disciplines and contexts confirms that is best help children acquire their skills and abilities which they will need in future, both in school and life making the children to be ready. Sakellariou and Banou (2020) explained to us that in Greece, the Kindergarten Curriculum emphasizes on the active participation of parents, children and Educators in the Kindergarten's educational process itself, as well as on the collaboration among them on issues that concern selection, designing and evaluation of toy-objects and play activities. George (2021) in his study on a study to identify school readiness in pre-school children 3-4 years aimed at finding the prevalence of children who are ready for school both by gender and age. Diale and Sewagegn (2021) Early childhood refers to the period between 3 and 6 years of age. It is a very critical time in life where the young children learn the skills and develop abilities that set the foundation for future development. It also refers to the range of processes and mechanism that sustain and support development during the early years of life. Khandagale (2021) A study on school readiness among the preschoolers of Gosavi Community were not upto the mark in family, community and school capabilities hence, are lacking behind in school readiness. Pradhan (2022) in his national journal on National Education Policy 2020 and transformation in school culture with school readiness in early year smooth transition of children entering grade I was found that child development in a holistic approach needs to be nurtured in a joyful learning environment for smooth transition of school education. Alam (2023) conducted an empirical study on Bangladesh's Early Childhood Education Settings' School Preparation Depends on Parental Socioeconomic Status where the research of this study mainly involves the participation of the parents the stakeholders and also the availability of classroom and school readiness. The researcher of this study tries to communication have eventually the participation of parents, stakeholders performs with the child in the school premises. Sriprakash et.al (2023) in their book normative development in rural India: 'school readiness' and early childhood care and education examines a competitive and socially stratified school system. Panton(2024) in his study try to explore parents' perspective on school readiness, roles in preparing their children for kindergarten and current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness.

6. Rationale of the study

It has been marked that the first 6 years of any body's life are considered utmost important for taking the individual in other stages of life. This is the period which 90 percent brain of the child gets developed and affected by health, food and other nutrition along with the intensive care. ECCE has shown its effect on the growth and development children from the age group of 3-6 years and its impact has also been marked on other educational stages of the child. Similarly some of the studies like- Haque et.al(2013), Gogoi (2015), Jairam and Chopra (2019), Sakellariou and Banou (2020), Diale and Sewagegn (2021), Pradhan (2022), Alam (2023) and Panton (2024) carried out the various issues of ECCE centre in different parts of the country and also taking into consideration about the school readiness making the child ready for primary school. The child should also have the cognitive, affective and psychomotor in order to develop their skills. Similarly some of the studies have also been conducted like- According to Bhise and Sonawat (2016) said that the quality and properly trained teacher is a key to success in any circumstances. Teachers are to be prepared for teaching is a crucial indicator of education quality. Reetu, Renu and Adarsh (2017) conducted a study on Quality Early Childhood Care and Education in India: Initiatives, Practice, Challenges and Enablers where they have laid emphasis on the eighth quality standard of ECCE. Standard I (Interaction) it helps the children to build a solid knowledge foundation and prepare them for formal schooling. Standard II (Health, Nutrition, Personal care and Routine) Standard III (Protection care and Safety) Standard IV (Infrastructure/Physical Environment) infrastructure ensures high quality programs for children and better school readiness skills. Standard V (Organisation and Management) ECCE curriculum should be developmentally appropriate and have school readiness component as learning at this stage should be in accordance with children's interests and developmental priorities. Standard VI (Children Experience and Learning Opportunities) Standard VII (Assessment and Outcome Measures) Standard VIII (Managing to Support quality System). Mythri (2019) a comparative study on the school readiness of pre-schoolers exposed to contemporary preschool curriculum and a need

based designed preschool curriculum said that school readiness has been linked with positive social and behavioural competencies in adulthood as well as improved academic outcomes in primary and secondary school. The present study also supports the importance of quality in ECCE programs, the use of better qualified teachers and full day program. Kerker et.al. (2023) in their journal re-imagining Early Childhood Education and School Readiness for Children and Families of color in the time of COVID-19 and beyond highlights a high quality and responsive for young children to ensure that all children are healthy and ready to learn when entering Kindergarten, we must revisit what is high-quality ECEC and explore what modifications are necessary to support families of colour. But, the investigator thought to make an important study on the school readiness of ECCE centres across the state of Meghalaya and finding out the existing school readiness of children towards ECCE in the state of Meghalaya. Keeping in mind, the researcher selected the following research problem.

7.Statement of Research Problem:”A Study on School Readiness of the Children in the ECCE Centres of South Garo Hills Baghmara District.”

8.Significance of the study

The present study is considered significant in the context of South Garo Hills Baghmara Districts. In such situation, the study will come out with the status of ECCE centres across the state in relation to their school readiness. The study will highlight the major challenges pertaining to the quality of learners in terms of school readiness. It is expected that the school readiness of the study will act as an eye opener for teachers/Anganwadi workers in the ECCE centres. Therefore, the study will make the child ready to go to the primary stage of schooling.

9.Objectives of the study

1. To find out the level of school readiness among the children of ECCE centres of South Garo Hills Baghmara District.
2. To find out the difference in school readiness of male and female learners in ECCE centre of South Garo Hills Baghmara Districts.

10.Hypothesis

1. There will be no significant difference between the school readiness of male and female learners in ECCE centre of South Garo Hills Baghmara District.

11.Methodology

The researcher adopted descriptive cum normative survey method and cross sectional research design for the completion of this study. The total population of pre-school centres recorded 3265 learners out of which 5 percent was taken as the sample size for the study and it came out to be 163 pre-school children. The sample was selected by making a simple random sampling technique. School readiness scale developed Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi was used to collect the required data and analyzed the data by applying the descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

12.Analysis and Interpretation of Results

For the purpose of analysis and computation of results, the researcher adopted the tables-1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7.

Table 1: Frequency Table showing the school readiness scores of learners in ECCE centres of South Garo Hills Baghmara District.

CI	f	x	fx	fx ²
67-69	15	5	75	375
64-66	36	4	144	576
61-63	23	3	69	207
58-60	30	2	60	120
55-57	19	1	19	19
52-54	11	0	0	0
49-51	15	-1	-15	15
46-48	3	-2	-6	12
43-45	6	-3	-18	54
40-42	3	-4	-12	48
37-39	2	-5	-10	50
Total	163		Σfx=306	Σfx²=1476

$$M = 58.61, \sigma = 7.05,$$

$$P_{33} = 55.19, P_{66} = 60.98$$

Table 2: Level of school readiness of ECCE learners in South Garo Hills Baghmara District

High Level	Moderate Level	Lower Level
114	37	12
69.93%	22.69%	7.36%

Interpretation: The table-1 adopted for computing the mean score and SD of school readiness scores of ECCE learners of South Garo Hills Baghmara District and the computed school readiness mean score came out to be 58.61 which is 84.94 percent. It means that the computed school readiness mean score is quite high which makes it very clear that the ECCE centres of South Garo Hills Districts are working effectively and making the learners ready for primary school education in the state. In view of the computed SD (7.05) may observe that there is variation of 7.05 points and shows a very nominal variation among the school readiness scores of the learners of ECCE centres. The researcher computed the values of P_{33} and P_{66} which came out to be 55.19 and 60.98 respectively. The ECCE learners who were found below the value of P_{33} (55.19) have been considered as the learners of low level of school readiness and only 7.36 percent learners were found in this category. The learners above P_{66} (60.98) were found 69.93 percent which is a great matter of satisfaction as quite high percentage of learners posses high level of school readiness and 22.69 percent learners could have moderate level of school readiness. Finally, it is concluded that the ECCE centres seems to function effectively and achieving the goals of setting up ECCE centres.

Table 3: Frequency Table showing the male learners of school readiness of ECCE centres of South Garo Hills Baghmara District

CI	f	x	fx	fx ²
67-69	8	6	48	288
64-66	20	5	100	500
61-63	12	4	48	192
58-60	15	3	45	135
55-57	10	2	20	40
52-54	3	1	3	3
49-51	4	0	0	0
46-48	2	-1	-2	2
43-45	2	-2	-4	8
40-42	2	-3	-6	18
37-39	2	-4	-8	32
Total	80		$\sum fx=244$	$\sum fx^2=1218$

M= 59.15 $\sigma= 7.29$ $P_{33}= 57.56$ $P_{66}= 63.53$

Table 4: Levels of school readiness of male learners of ECCE centres of South Garo Hills Baghmara District

High level	Moderate Level	Lower Level
60	14	6
75%	17.5%	7.5%

Interpretation: The table-3 adopted for computing the mean score of the male school readiness of ECCE learners in South Garo Hills Baghmara Districts of Meghalaya and the computed mean score came out to be 59.15 out of the maximum 69 marks which is 85.72 percent and it show that the computed SD value was found to be 7.29 which shows very low variation among the school readiness of ECCE male learners. Further, the table-4 reveals that the school readiness of the male learners were divided into three categories, i.e., high, moderate and low categories which were found 75 percent, 17.5 percent and 7.5 percent learners in each category respectively which seems to be almost a normal distribution. Generally, 92.5 percent males have shown good amount of school readiness and only 7.5 percent male have shown a bit low performance. In view of this, a little more efforts need to be put for the improvement of school readiness at the ECCE level on the part of ECCE teachers/Anganwadi workers.

Table 5: Frequency Table showing the female learners of school readiness of ECCE centres in South Garo Hills Baghmara District

CI	f	x	fx	fx ²
67-69	7	5	35	175
64-66	16	4	64	256
61-63	11	3	33	99
58-60	15	2	30	60
55-57	9	1	9	9
52-54	8	0	0	0
49-51	11	-1	-11	11
46-48	1	-2	-2	4
43-45	4	-3	-12	36
40-42	1	-4	-4	16
37-39	0	-5	0	0
Total	83		∑fx=142	∑fx²=666

M= 58.13 σ= 6.75 P₃₃= 54.65 P₆₆= 57.53

Table 6: Level of school readiness of female learners of ECCE centres of Baghmara District

High level	Moderate Level	Lower Level
39	35	9
46.98%	42.16%	10.84%

Interpretation: The table-5 adopted for computing the mean score of the female school readiness of ECCE learners in South Garo Hills Baghmara Districts of Meghalaya and the computed mean score came out to be 58.13 out of the maximum 69 marks which is 84.24 percent and it shows that the computed SD value was found to be 6.75 which shows very low variation among the school readiness of ECCE female learners. Further, the table-6 reveals that the school readiness of the female learners were divided into three categories, i.e., high, moderate and low categories which were found 46.98 percent, 42.16 percent and 10.84 percent female learners in each category respectively which seems to be almost a normal distribution. Generally, 85.14 percent females have shown good amount of school readiness and only 10.84 percent female have shown a bit low performance. In view of this, a little more efforts need to be put for the improvement of school readiness at the ECCE level on the part of ECCE teachers/Anganwadi workers.

Table 7: Comparison of male and female learners of school readiness of ECCE centres of South Garo Hills District

Groups	N	Mean	SD	SE _D	df	t-value
Male	80	59.15	7.29	1.09	161	0.93
Female	83	58.13	6.75			

Interpretation: The table 7 indicates that the computed t-value came out to be 0.93 which is lesser than the table criterion t-value at .05 level of significance for 161 df, hence, the computed t-value (0.93) has not been considered significant and the formulated hypothesis: "There will be no significant difference between the school readiness of male and female learners in ECCE centres of South Garo Hills Baghmara District" got retained. From this, it is interpreted that the school readiness scores of male and female ECCE learners really do not differ significantly as the computed school readiness mean scores of male and female shown 59.15 and 58.13 respectively in table-7. It shows that gender as variable does not influence the school readiness of ECCE centres in South Garo Hills Baghmara District.

13. Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that Early Childhood Care and Education emphasizes a holistic approach focusing on the child's physical, emotional, social as well as cognitive development. The objective of ECCE is to nurture the children for their physical and mental development and to prepare them for schooling with right attitudes and habits. School readiness is the right path for the child to be in the right track for schooling. Therefore, the child must be ready to go to school for primary education.

The study on school readiness plays a vital role in shaping and moulding the child in the right direction. The school readiness of learners at pre-primary school level has been found satisfactory in the state of Meghalaya.

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