

## A Study of Pre-Primary Education in Papumpare District of Arunachal Pradesh

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**ABSTRACT** The present study made an attempt to analyse the existing condition of pre -primary schools in Papumpare district, Arunachal Pradesh, by keeping in view the parameters like the physical structure, equipment and materials, pre-primary school staff, age and procedure of admission, programme, records and registers All the schools providing pre-primary education located in the state capital and sub-urban areas were included in the sample. Data were collected from 39 pre-primary schools through observation-cum-interview schedule constructed by the investigator. Data were analysed in terms of percentages and qualitatively. In brief, the findings revealed that the existing condition of pre-primary schools covered in the present study is not satisfactory in terms of the physical structure, equipment and materials, pre-primary school staff, programme, records and registers.

### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is the foundation period of life. The basic attitudes and behavior patterns are developed in the first five or six years of life. This period is called the pre-school age. This period between 3 to 6 years is very crucial and imparting pre-school level education to a child becomes imminence. The need and importance of pre-primary education has been well recognized. The International Commitments, Constitutional Provisions, Policy Provisions, National Charter for Children and National Policy for Children, ECE under various Five Year Plans, ECE Initiatives , Public Initiatives, Integrated Child Development Service, Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers, ECE under Primary/Elementary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, ECE through pre-schools attached with Primary, Elementary and Secondary schools, Private Initiatives, Voluntary and Corporate Initiatives and Training and Capacity Building of ECE Functionaries strongly articulated the need and importance of early childhood education. Researchers, policy makers and parents have also recognized the significance of pre-school education to foster children's learning and development. To refer one of the many recommendations, National Policy on Education (1986) has explicitly recognized the importance of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) as a crucial input not only for human development but also for universalisation

of elementary education and women's development.

The trends influencing the growing demand for ECCE include: the increasing number and percentage of women in the labor force, especially those with young children, changes in household and family structure, the decline of the extended family and increase of nuclear families, gender roles are changing and there is a growing proportion of women in the paid labor force. Women are increasingly unavailable to provide care at home for young children and the need for non-parental care is likely to increase even more in the future. The increasing awareness of the importance of preparing children for primary school, the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the World Summit for Children, held in 1990, and the need for alternative, affordable childcare are also some of the major commitments towards protecting children. There has been a growing awareness of the importance and significance of pre-school education coupled with providing care education for the young children.

In view of the above discourse, early childhood education programmes for children derive their importance from the principle that 'Learning begins at birth' and from the emerging need arising from various social, economic, and demographic changes in the last few decades. The importance of pre-primary education is supported by the principle of child development, which says that child development is a continu-

ous and cumulative process, so that what precedes influences what follows. Health, nutrition, and education/psychosocial development are all synergistically interrelated, which need to be addressed through a holistic approach. The child and his overall context are to be addressed for the optimum development of the child. Thus, early childhood education is influenced by many factors and the status of pre-primary education is considered to be an important indicator of educational development of the state.

In spite of a fairly large number of supportive international commitments, constitutional provisions, policy framework and some major initiatives for children of pre-school age, the status of pre-primary education in the state is found behind other levels of education. Regarding the participation rate in pre-primary education, the percentage share of enrolment in Arunachal Pradesh is 47.76 per cent and 63.23 percent primary schools have attached pre-primary section (DISE Analytical Table, 2007 – 08). The state government has invested in the implementation of education at all levels except in pre-primary level where the government has no specific policy for pre-primary education. Primary education in the state is fraught with problems of in relation to status of buildings, number of classrooms, condition of classrooms, average enrolment and number of single teacher primary schools as indicated in the DISE Analytical Report, 2007. There are 20.19 percent *pucca* building primary schools, 19.59 percent are partially *pucca*, *kuccha* building comprises of 34.75 percent, tent type is 19.56 percent, multiple type is 5.90 percent of primary schools in the state. There is high percentage of primary schools (36.61 %) having only one classroom for all the primary classes. There are 19.72% having two classrooms, 9.95% are with three classrooms, 16.89% are with 4 – 6 classrooms, 2.26% with 7-10 classrooms, 0.19 % are with 11-15 classrooms and 0.08% of primary schools are with more than 15 classrooms. Moreover, the condition of the classrooms also need immediate attention as indicated in the report. Majority of the classrooms need to be repaired. It is observed that only 48.73 % of the primary schools are in good condition, 31.55% needs minor repair and 19.73 % need major repair. The average enrolment in the primary schools is found to be only 34 and 66.96 percent are single teacher primary schools. A good number

of primary schools are left to para teachers to manage them. Lack of minimum essential physical and teaching – learning facilities are indicated. Most of the primary schools are far from CRC with a single classroom. The state is still struggling with universal provision and access with quality at the primary level of education and to spare major policy and investment attention to pre-primary education will be a great challenge for the government. Thus, studies are to be initiated keeping in view the status of pre-primary education without which universalisation of elementary education would be a distant dream to realize.

In this context, a study has been carried out to analyse the status and condition of pre-primary education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Although efforts have been made by the government, it has been felt that the condition and status of pre-primary education still remains a neglected sector in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Hence, the present study is undertaken to understand the condition of pre-primary education in Papumpare District which is one of the 17 districts of the state and the capital of the state, Arunachal Pradesh.

### Objectives

The objectives of the study are to analyse the existing condition of pre-primary schools in Papumpare district relating to the physical structure and facilities, equipment and material, pre-primary school staff, age and procedure of admission, pre-primary school programme, and records and registers

### METHODOLOGY

The present study covered all the schools providing pre-primary education in Papumpare District of Arunachal Pradesh. A sample of 39 pre-primary schools in Papumpare district was drawn randomly. Observation-cum-interview schedule was prepared by the investigator to elicit information in relation to the physical structure and facilities, equipment and material, pre-primary school staff, age and procedure of admission, pre-primary school programme, and records and registers based on the parameters identified in the minimum specifications for pre-schools by NCERT. The investigator visited all the 39 sample schools located in the capital dis-

tract of the state in the year 2007 and collected information in detail pertaining to the aspects covered in the study. From the data obtained on various aspects of pre-primary school, percentages were calculated and relevant figures were inserted at the appropriate place in the findings.

## RESULTS

Pre-primary schools in Papumpare district of Arunachal Pradesh in relation to the physical structure and facilities, equipment and material, pre-primary school staff, age and procedure of admission, pre-primary school programme, and records and registers are not in conformity with the objectives of pre-primary education and the desired standards (Minimum Specifications for Pre-schools, NCERT) due to the following reasons.

### I. Physical Structure and Facilities

**(A) Location:** (1) Majority (83.33%) of the pre-primary schools in the district are safe from hazards like nearby traffic, ponds, ditches, *nallahs* and pollution etc. (2) Majority of the pre-schools (93.47%) have direct approach road for the parents to bring their children and for the school transport. (3) Majority of schools (83.33%) are attached to primary or middle or secondary schools. (4) 61.90% of pre-primary schools are surrounded by natural resources which can be used as educative material. (5) Majority of pre primary schools (97.619%) were on the ground floor.

#### **(B) Play Areas**

**Outdoor** (1) Limited space is available in almost all the pre-primary schools for outdoor activities. (2) Majority of the schools (90.48%) have provision for jumping and running only. (3) Almost all of the pre-primary schools did have a provision for a variety of activities like climbing, cycling, sand, water play, and gardening. (4) Shaded area for play is not available in most of the schools. (5) There is no separate storage space for pre-primary section as most of the pre-primary schools are attached to either primary or secondary schools. (6) Majority of pre-primary school (85.71%) has proper fencing, gate and door.

**Indoor:** (1) Majority of the pre-primary schools (91%) were without a separate room for

play. (2) 69.23% of the schools did not have toilet and verandah separately for the pre-primary children. (3) Majority of the schools (84.61%) had well -ventilated classrooms with adequate light. (4) Furniture provided and rooms for children were not designed in accordance with the requirements of children. (5) Children's work and other pictorial materials were displayed in most of the schools. (6) Majority of the pre-primary schools did not have a separate science corner, dolls corner, and books corner.

**(C) Facility For Drinking Water:** (1) Drinking water provided in most of the pre-primary schools (79.49) was filter water but most of the children brought their own water bottle from home. (2) Provision for washing of glasses after use were absent in most of them.

**(D) Sanitary Facility:** (1) Almost all the pre-primary schools have toilets but did not provide the essential requirements like water facility, soaps and towels. (2) Majority (69.23%) of the toilet were without exhaust fans. (3) 73.80% of the schools had garbage bins. (4) The sinks were at low level in some of the schools (48.72%)

**(E) Sleeping Facilities:** Majority of the pre-primary schools (76.92%) kept sleeping time/rest time in the daily routine but sleeping facilities like clean mats, folding cots, mattresses with sheets and pillows were missing in majority of the pre-primary schools.

**(F) Storage Space:** (1) Common storage space is available in majority of the pre-primary schools (61.54%). (2) No separate locker for each child is provided in most of the schools. (3) Separate storage room for food stuffs is available in 53.85% of the schools.

### II. Equipment and Material

(1) Outdoor equipment and material for muscle development like climbing, cycling, sand-pit, water basin, etc. were absent in most of the pre-primary schools.

(2) Indoor equipment and materials provided by most of the pre-primary schools lacked in variety and quantity. Most of the materials required for constructive play, imaginative play manipulative play and for language skills development were not available in these schools.

- (3) First Aid Kit: Majority of the pre-primary schools (79.49%) kept first aid kit but the essential materials lacked in variety and in quality.

### III. Pre-Primary School Staff

- (a) **Staff Structure:** (1) All the pre-primary school teachers were untrained in Early Childhood education. (2) Most of the schools in average have two teachers and one helper. (3) Majority (88.59%) of the teachers are females.
- (b) **Qualification:** The minimum qualification of the pre-primary teachers is Class XII passed and majority of the teachers (66.67%) are graduate. Most of the helpers are under-matriculate.
- (c) **Salary:** There is a wide gap in the salary structure of pre-primary school teachers and helpers. The salary range of pre-primary school teacher is between Rs. 850/- to Rs.8500/-. The salary of the helper in pre-primary school ranges between Rs.450/- to Rs. 3500/-.

### IV. Age for Admission and Admission Procedure

Majority of the pre-primary schools (61.54%) enrolled children of 3years+. Direct admission or first come serve basis is followed in some of the schools (53.85%) whereas 35.9% of the schools conducted simple oral test/interview before the children are admitted to the schools.

### V. Pre-Primary School Programme

- (a) The pre-primary school programme focused only on the early childhood education in majority of the pre-primary schools (76.92%).
- (b) All the pre-primary schools emphasized on teaching of 3Rs and neglected the physical, social, emotional, language, aesthetic and creative development of the child.
- (c) Almost all the schools (92.35%) used formal test/examination to evaluate children in the schools.
- (d) Most of the schools did not have frequent parent contact facilities.
- (e) Most of the schools used both Hindi and English as medium of instruction and communication.

### VI. Records and Registers

- (a) Almost all the pre-primary schools (94.87%) maintained admission records and registers.
- (b) Majority of the schools (84.62%) kept records of only the curricular activities and co-curricular activities are not properly recorded by most of them.
- (c) Attendance register of staff and children are maintained in majority of the schools (71.79%).

### DISCUSSION

Some recommendations arise from the research results presented in this paper are (a) There is convincing evidence that pre-primary schools in Papumpare district are functioning as downward extensions of primary schools. Most pre-primary schools are putting particular emphasis on the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. Although the main method of teaching at this level has to be play- way method, most of the schools are not clear about the philosophical and pedagogical principles of pre-school education. It takes care of only the educational development of the child and fails to provide a sound foundation for all round development of the child. (b) The absence of any system of regulation or registration of pre-schools is observed and this is expected to affect the quality of pre-primary education. The existence of wide diversities in terms of curriculum, infrastructure, fees structure, teachers' qualification, teaching methodology, age of admission, the programme and activities, etc. has been observed in the findings of the present study. (c) Lack of government participation at the pre-primary level of education in the state has also been indicated as the formal system of school education starts officially from class – I. Qualification requirements exist only for teachers working in formal system of education in the state but the state government has not laid down any norms for pre-primary teacher's qualifications, remuneration, or any guidelines for the recognition of the teaching staff as teachers (d) Insufficient number of professionally trained teachers to take care of young population is found to be among the most important determinants of the quality of pre-primary education. (e) Poor record-keeping, resulting in inadequate

or inaccurate information has to be addressed by giving awareness to the teachers and parents about the quality parameters of pre-primary or early childhood education. Most of them recorded attendance and examination marks of children and failed to keep adequate information of children.

### CONCLUSION

To sum up, children- friendly infrastructure and facilities supported by professional training in relation to early childhood education constitute the key to improving the quality of pre-primary education. Improving the educational infrastructure, training and supervision, and provision of children friendly equipments and materials are the best possible investment in pre-primary education. Moreover, the state government has to play a leading role in including pre-primary education as an essential component of school education system in the state. It is important to view pre-primary education as part of a long term process of development. As pre-primary schools play the basic and dominant institution for the young generation, reforming and focusing on pre-primary education can offer new possibilities for children, for families and for communities. There is great potential in investing in young children as they are the future of the nation. There is need for assessment, accreditation and licensing of pre-primary schools. An equally important question is how effective steps can be taken to integrate all the efforts, in terms of schemes and programmes, of the government, NGOs, national and international agencies etc., whose aim is to ensure quality life for young children in particular and humanity in general? The biggest challenge facing us today is to approach pre-primary education in its broadest sense and to adopt holistic

approach considering pre-school education as inseparable from care, health and human development in its many facets. The obstacles to expanding pre-primary education may be due to the competition for resources with the universalisation of elementary education where pre-primary education appears to be ignored. Absence of administrative arrangements within government for setting policies for pre-school education and implementing them, thus, left pre-school education in the hands of NGOs and other private social organizations. Thus, the findings of the study can be useful to the administrators and policy makers as a reference tool for the future educational development of the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

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