

Assessing the Implementation of the New Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Accreditation in Silvino Lubos, Northern Samar, Philippines

Agner S. Sagonoy*

Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, Local Government of Silvino Lubos, Northern Samar, Philippines

Abstract—This qualitative inquiry examined the implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Program of the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO) of Silvino Lubos, Northern Samar, Philippines using the National ECCD Accreditation Tool as the primary evaluative framework. Exploring readiness and challenges, and contextual barriers of child development service delivery conducted across 26 barangays of Silvino Lubos, a GIDA area, face perennial inadequacies in resources, politics, infrastructures and varied capacities. The study explored the contextual barriers and alignment with the national standards as well as implementation readiness using key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and document review. Through thematic analysis, four key concerns were raised: (1) structural or infrastructure and resources deficiencies, (2) political barriers to prioritization and motivation of a workforce, (3) differences in training and inadequate qualifications of Child Development Workers (CDWs), and (4) the national ECCD standards and the LGUs and barangays colliding gaps in resources. Findings indicate that Child Development Centers remain unaccredited due to inadequate facilities, irregular honoraria and incomplete documentation. A critical gap was also identified between ECCD curriculum implementation (ages 0–4) under LGUs and the Department of Education's Kindergarten program (age 5), resulting in discontinuities in school readiness and learning transitions. The study recommends contextualized accreditation for GIDAs, strengthened workforce professionalization of Child Development Workers and supervisors, political-neutral governance mechanisms, infrastructure investment, and improved coordination between ECCD providers and DepEd to ensure continuity of early learning. For the University of Eastern Philippines, the findings provide empirical evidence to inform policy-oriented research, enrich instruction in social development, education, and public administration programs, and strengthen extension initiatives that support LGUs in designing context-sensitive ECCD interventions for marginalized and GIDA communities.

Index Terms—Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), child development, Local Government Unit (LGU).

1. Introduction

Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is a foundational

public service that supports the holistic development of children aged 0–4 years through integrated interventions in early learning, health, nutrition, protection, and family support. In the Philippines, ECCD is institutionalized through Republic Act No. 6972 and Republic Act No. 10410, mandating Local Government Units (LGUs) to establish Child Development Centers (CDCs), deploy trained Child Development Workers (CDWs), and deliver comprehensive, developmentally appropriate services aligned with national standards.

ECCD takes care of children below four years in health aspects, learning, nutrition, safeguarding, and support to families all at once. In the Philippines, it was established in ECCD law with the purpose of extending care to children and thus, delegated the local government authorities to set up offices for the management of Child Development Workers (CDWs) and provide developmentally appropriate services to children in their areas. On a global scale, ECCD is recognized as extremely valuable given that early childhood covers a period of rapid brain development, resulting in an array of cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, development, and linguistic outcomes for the rest of the individual's life. Documents such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 appoint access to quality ECCD services as a requirement for holistic and inclusive development. ECCD policy frameworks are among the strongest in the country, setting the scene for equitable access to ECCD in the Philippines. However, ECCD is inequitable in its coverage, access, and quality in the country's GIDAs. Still unfilled resource gaps exist as a consequence of weak building blocks: weak infrastructure, geopolitics, low quality of local leadership to name a few. The Silvino Lubos municipality, is an interior municipality of Northern Samar and an example of these challenges.

The ECCD Accreditation Tool enumerates several key standards pertaining to the quality of early childhood facilities. This pertains to adequate floor space, a safe learning atmosphere, sufficient outdoor play equipment and play grounds, hygienic facilities, and storage places for learning

*Corresponding author: agnersagonoy45@gmail.com

materials and other basic materials of the center. Adequate floor space in and around the classroom allows each child to move around, work in groups, and conduct various learning activities among children comfortably without crowding. A safe environment protects children from physical damage or accidents, or the use of materials considered hazardous but child-friendly materials and building confidence and with a sense of security. Accessibility to outdoor play equipment will go a long way in enabling physical development, social interaction, and experiential learning by hands-on experiences critical to the wholesome and total development of children during the early years. Hygiene facilities are comfort rooms and hand-washing stations which are necessary for maintaining health and familiarizing early habits of cleanliness among children in the Day Care Center. In addition, storage areas for learning materials ensure orderliness, safety against damage, and promote systematic teaching-learning processes. All these things combined will provide a safe environment that is truly supportive of the optimum learning, safety, and development of all young children.

A. The ECCD-Kindergarten Transition Gap

The bottom of the ECCD program from ages 0 to 4, curriculum wise, sitting with the LGU and National ECCD Council, while the Department of Education sinks in seamlessness with the K-12 adjusted curriculum and Program for Kinder 5, is yet to be untangled. ECCD aspires to total growth and preparation for inclining a person in the educational system. However, the daycare range of curriculum being taught and gaps challenges in the learning set and child evaluation practice, performs in kindergarten, a child sets in with a fundamental skill missing. The child development data gaps and the close to none collaboration of CDWs and Kinder teachers, and the varied institutional scope, gives a reason to the gaps in the program as to the flow of the learning in the first years of education.

This gap is particularly evident in GIDA municipalities, where resource limitations further weaken transition mechanisms.

B. Purpose of the Study

Despite existing ECCD policies and accreditation mechanisms, Child Development Centers in Silvino Lubos remain largely unaccredited, and the lived experiences of implementers in meeting national standards remain under documented. This study addresses this gap by qualitatively assessing ECCD implementation using the ECCD Accreditation Tool, with attention to contextual barriers, workforce capacity, governance dynamics, and the transition between ECCD and Kindergarten.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine how ECCD programs are implemented across barangays in Silvino Lubos;
2. Identify challenges faced by CDWs and local officials in meeting accreditation standards;
3. Analyze the alignment between national ECCD standards and local capacities;

4. Explore implications of ECCD implementation gaps for children's readiness for the DepEd Kindergarten program.

Existing studies and reports provide limited qualitative evidence on the contextual, operational, and governance factors affecting accreditation compliance and frontline implementation. This gap necessitates a qualitative assessment of ECCD implementation using the ECCD Accreditation Tool to generate context-specific evidence for program improvement.

The findings provide empirical guidance for the Local Government Unit of Silvino Lubos, barangay governments, the National ECCD Council, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and social workers managing ECCD programs in rural and GIDA settings. This study contributes to early childhood and basic education research by demonstrating how gaps in ECCD implementation affect Kindergarten readiness, instructional planning, classroom management, and learner assessment under the Department of Education. It also strengthens graduate-level scholarship at the University of Eastern Philippines by offering a context-based qualitative analysis of ECCD governance and its implications for school leadership, inter-agency coordination, and equitable early learning outcomes.

This study is anchored on three complementary theories-Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), Implementation Theory (1973), and Systems Theory. These theories have been used to explain the ECCD accreditation implementation in the multi-governance, institutional, and geographical realities-situated complexities. However, the gap between what national ECCD standards stipulate and what actually comes out from local implementation in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas is a strong indication that ECCD performance is a result of more than just the policy design but also has multi-level interactions, frontline performance realities, and systemic coordination. Hence, the study uses the different yet complementary theoretical perspectives to account for the contextual, human, political, and organizational implications for ECCD implementation and accreditation outcomes, coupled with the strong armament for understanding policy-practice gaps and ECCD-Kindergarten transition-related challenges.

The conceptual framework posits that contextual and governance factors (infrastructure, resources, workforce capacity, political dynamics, and geographic isolation) influence ECCD implementation processes (curriculum delivery, accreditation compliance, supervision, documentation, and inter-agency coordination). These processes determine accreditation outcomes and service quality, which in turn affect children's readiness for kindergarten, continuity of early learning, and school management challenges. The framework emphasizes that effective coordination between LGUs and the Department of Education is essential to bridging ECCD and Kindergarten in GIDA settings.

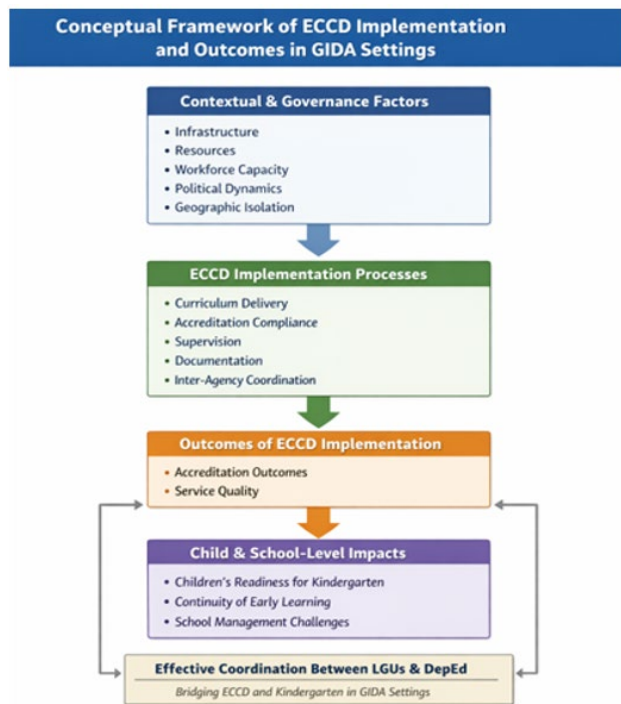


Fig. 1.

2. Materials and Methods

A. Research Design

The qualitative descriptive research technique worked to document the live experiences, perceptions, and contextual realities of the ECCD implementers and stakeholders. Basically, this ensured that a deeper understanding of areas of implementation was collected, which cannot be sufficiently explained by covering this issue with quantitative measures.

B. Research Setting and Participants

The study employed purposive sampling, appropriate for qualitative inquiry, to select information-rich participants directly involved in the implementation were purposively selected based on direct involvement in ECCD implementation and included:

- One (1) Social Welfare Officer II
- Five (5) Child Development Workers
- Three (3) Barangay Captains
- One (1) ECCD Focal Persons

The participants represented key governance and service delivery levels and included one (1) Social Welfare Officer II as the overall ECCD in-charge, one (1) ECCD Focal Person responsible for program coordination and supervision of Child Development Workers (CDWs), three (3) Barangay Captains overseeing barangay-level support and resource allocation, and five (5) CDWs serving as frontline implementers. To capture geographic and contextual variation, participants were drawn from the poblacion area and from barangays within the Pambujan River and Suba River clusters, the latter two classified as geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs). This sampling design ensured representation across accessible and GIDA settings and enabled an in-depth

examination of ECCD implementation gaps, contextual barriers, and accreditation challenges across governance levels.

C. Data Collection Methods

Data were gathered through:

1. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with Social Welfare Officer II, ECCD Focal Person, Child Development Workers and Barangay Captains;
2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with CDWs;
3. Compilation or review of ECCD-related documents such as center inventories, attendance records, and partial accreditation files.
4. Interview and FGD guides prepared in English as well as Filipino (Taglish). This is to ensure clarity and put the participants at ease.

D. Data Analysis and Ethics

Thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's six-step framework (2006) was employed to analyze the qualitative data—it contains no hard-and-fast rules and has immense flexibility in examining qualitative data within extremely complicated governance and geographical contexts. This process starts with familiarization data from transcripts of interviews and FGDs followed by the systematic coding across meaningful segments of data, and bringing together related codes into broader themes which are relevant to ECCD implementations and accreditation. The themes were reviewed, refined, defined, and named to ensure they are coherent and relevant to answer the research questions. Thematic analysis will then proceed to the last stage of pulling together the themes into an analytical narrative, supported by quotations from the participants and linked to relevant literature and policy frameworks. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six steps (2006)—familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, review and refinement, and final thematic mapping. These processes maintained high ethical standards on informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and non-tracking of data. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, audit trails, and thick description.

3. Results

Structural and Resource Limitations: Most CDCs operated in temporary or dilapidated structures lacking sanitation facilities, inadequate space, and mostly no safe play areas, conditions that directly undermine accreditation compliance and child safety. The lack of adequate infrastructure in Silvino Lubos' Child Development Centers (CDCs) significantly impedes ECCD implementation. Many centers operate in temporary, dilapidated structures without proper sanitation, no safe play areas, or insufficient learning spaces. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), such deficiencies in the child's immediate environment (microsystem) directly affect learning, safety, and holistic development.

Implementation Theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Lipsky, 1980) explains that while national standards prescribe

adequate facilities, local constraints like limited budgets, political priorities, and the discretion of CDWs which result in non-compliance. Systems Theory further highlights that infrastructure weaknesses disrupt the interdependent ECCD network, affecting workforce performance, child engagement, and the continuity of learning into DepEd Kindergarten. They are flimsy structures with easily perishable materials that are no match for daily wear and tear or weather elements. Their dilapidated state was the result of years with little or no maintenance, clear damage compromising safety and comfort. Most of them were not provided with basic sanitation facilities at all since they lacked standard comfort rooms or handwashing facilities, inadequate floor space, lack of safe learning environment, incomplete outdoor play equipment, and lack of storage areas for learning materials. Such gaps affected the entire living environment and compromised health, especially in communities that did not have access to clean water and hygiene supplies. Poor structures provided urgent attention to infrastructures and better sustainable support systems for the affected residents.

A Child Development Worker shared:

“Every year we request improvement, but the barangay says there is no budget.”

The municipality cannot meet infrastructure standards required in the ECCD Accreditation Tool, such as:

- adequate floor space,
- safe learning environment,
- complete outdoor play equipment,
- hygiene facilities,
- storage areas for learning materials.

In sum, inadequate facilities not only compromise accreditation readiness but also hinder school readiness, health, and developmental outcomes, emphasizing the need for targeted investments and policy interventions in GIDA contexts.

Political Influence on ECCD Prioritization: ECCD funding and CDW honoraria were often affected by local political dynamics, resulting in inconsistent program support and weakened workforce motivation. The study found that ECCD funding and CDW honoraria were often affected by local political dynamics, leading to inconsistent program support and weakened workforce motivation. This aligns with Implementation Theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Lipsky, 1980), which emphasizes that local policy outcomes are shaped by bureaucratic discretion and political priorities, particularly in resource-constrained settings. Systems Theory further explains that ECCD functions as an interdependent network of LGUs, barangays, and frontline workers, where political interference disrupts service delivery, accreditation compliance, and child development outcomes. Empirical evidence from rural Philippine municipalities supports this, showing that program quality and continuity are contingent on local political will, with fluctuations in funding and workforce incentives undermining morale and accountability (Bautista & Ramos, 2020; Cruz, 2018). This underscores the need for depoliticized funding, transparent governance, and inter-

agency coordination to sustain quality ECCD implementation.

One informant stated:

“Kung hindi ka kapartido, wala kang honorarium kahit nagtatrabaho ka.”

- ECCD is not consistently prioritized in barangay budgets.
- Implementation varies depending on the supportiveness of barangay officials.
- Political turnover disrupts continuity of child development services.

ECCD often ranks low in barangay budget priorities, with allocations reflecting the interests and commitment of local officials. Budget support and program implementation vary widely, as more supportive leaders enable consistent service delivery, while political turnover can disrupt funding, staffing, and program continuity. These dynamics create uneven ECCD quality and sustainability across barangays, undermining the effectiveness of early childhood services.

Variability in CDW Qualifications and Training: Many CDWs lacked formal ECCD-related education and access to continuous professional development, limiting their ability to implement the curriculum and comply with documentation requirements. Variability in Child Development Workers' (CDWs) qualifications and training reflects Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which links education and professional development to workforce effectiveness. Limited formal education and inadequate training hinder CDWs' ability to implement the ECCD curriculum, maintain documentation, and meet accreditation standards. Implementation Theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Lipsky, 1980) highlights that gaps in frontline workers' skills lead to inconsistent service delivery, a pattern supported by empirical studies in rural Philippine municipalities (Cruz, 2018; Bautista & Ramos, 2020). Continuous professionalization is therefore essential for ensuring high-quality ECCD implementation.

Misalignment Between National Standards and Local Capacity: The ECCD Accreditation Tool was perceived as highly technical and resource-intensive, making full compliance unrealistic for GIDA municipalities.

These issues collectively contributed to weak ECCD–Kindergarten transitions, as inconsistent early learning experiences affected children's readiness for formal schooling under DepEd.

The implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) program in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) reveals a persistent misalignment between national standards and local capacity. According to Implementation Theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973), policy outcomes depend on the interaction between program design and the contextual capacity of implementing agencies. In practice, the ECCD Accreditation Tool, designed to ensure quality, is often perceived as highly technical and resource-intensive, limiting local compliance. Capacity Theory (Boyne, 2003; Grindle & Hilderbrand, 1995) further explains that insufficient facilities, scarce learning materials, and undertrained Child Development Workers (CDWs) hinder effective implementation, resulting in inconsistent program

delivery. Conceptually, this misalignment creates systemic barriers to child readiness, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), where interactions across microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem levels shape developmental outcomes. Consequently, children in GIDAs experience uneven early learning, which affects their transition to formal schooling under the Department of Education.

4. Discussion

The findings highlight a systemic gap between policy intent and implementation reality in GIDA contexts. Structural deficiencies, politicized governance, and workforce capacity gaps mirror patterns documented in rural ECCD literature. Importantly, the study reveals that weaknesses in ECCD delivery have downstream effects on the Kindergarten program, as children enter formal schooling without consistent foundational competencies. The absence of institutional coordination between LGU-run ECCD services and DepEd Kindergarten exacerbates learning discontinuities and misaligned undermining the goal of a seamless early childhood education continuum.

The findings highlight a persistent systemic gap between the intentions of national ECCD policy and the realities of local implementation in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs). In the Municipality of Silvino Lubos, structural deficiencies, political interference, workforce capacity gaps, and unrealistic national standards collectively constrain the delivery of quality early childhood services. Most Child Development Centers are semi-permanent or makeshift structures, lacking basic utilities, unsafe play areas, and insufficient space for holistic child development. Such inadequacies compromise children's safety and health, while undermining the effectiveness of developmentally appropriate practices—an observation consistent with studies in rural and low-resource contexts (Bernal *et al.*, 2019; UNICEF, 2020).

Political dynamics further exacerbate these structural constraints. Barangay-level prioritization of ECCD programs is often contingent on the support of incumbent officials. Turnover in local leadership frequently interrupts program continuity, delaying honoraria payments, suspending supervision, and hindering infrastructure improvements. These patterns mirror documented effects of decentralized governance in rural areas, where local politics significantly influence service quality and sustainability (Yoshikawa *et al.*, 2018; World Bank, 2021).

Workforce capacity remains a critical determinant of service quality. Child Development Workers (CDWs) exhibit wide variability in educational attainment, with many lacking formal professional development or refresher training. These gaps limit their ability to implement structured lesson plans, maintain accurate documentation, and deliver consistent, high-quality early learning experiences—a challenge echoed in literature emphasizing the role of workforce competence in early childhood outcomes (Britto *et al.*, 2017; Engle *et al.*, 2011).

Importantly, the study underscores the mismatch between national ECCD standards and local realities. The ECCD Accreditation Tool, while designed to ensure quality and

standardization, is perceived as highly technical and resource-intensive, making full compliance unrealistic for municipalities with constrained budgets, limited technical personnel, and geographical isolation. This misalignment has tangible downstream effects: children entering Kindergarten often lack consistent foundational competencies, and the absence of coordinated LGU–DepEd linkages exacerbates learning discontinuities.

Collectively, these findings illustrate a cascading effect: structural, political, workforce, and policy-related challenges at the local level disrupt the ECCD–Kindergarten continuum, weakening the goal of seamless early childhood education. To bridge this gap, contextually aware adaptations of national standards, sustained technical and financial support, workforce capacity-building, and strengthened institutional coordination are essential. Without such interventions, national accreditation goals may remain aspirational rather than attainable in GIDA settings.

A. Implications

Policy Implications: National ECCD standards and accreditation tools need contextual adaptation for GIDA municipalities, ensuring they are achievable given local resource and workforce constraints. Sustained funding and integrated LGU–DepEd coordination are critical to support seamless early childhood education.

Practice Implications: Local government units must prioritize structural improvements, workforce capacity-building, and non-political honoraria systems to enhance service quality and program continuity.

Research and Academic Implications: Universities, such as the University of Eastern Philippines, can play a pivotal role by providing training, technical assistance, and research support to improve ECCD implementation. UEP can develop community-based interventions, capacity-building programs for Child Development Workers, and applied studies to inform context-sensitive policy and practice in GIDAs.

5. Conclusion

The study reveals a persistent misalignment between national ECCD policy intentions and the realities of local implementation in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs), as exemplified by the Municipality of Silvino Lubos. Structural deficiencies in Child Development Centers—such as temporary or dilapidated facilities, inadequate sanitation, insufficient space, and unsafe play areas—directly undermine accreditation compliance, child safety, and holistic development. Political influences further exacerbate these challenges, as barangay-level priorities, leadership turnover, and discretionary allocation of funds and honoraria disrupt program continuity, weaken workforce motivation, and create disparities in service delivery.

Workforce capacity and qualifications emerged as critical determinants of program quality. Many Child Development Workers lack formal ECCD education and continuous professional development, limiting their ability to implement the curriculum effectively, maintain accurate documentation,

and provide consistent early learning experiences. These human resource gaps, combined with the technical and resource-intensive nature of the ECCD Accreditation Tool, illustrate a systemic mismatch between national standards and local capacity. As a result, children often enter Kindergarten without consistent foundational competencies, highlighting the downstream impact of weak ECCD implementation and the absence of coordinated LGU–DepEd linkages.

Overall, the findings underscore a cascading effect: structural, political, workforce, and policy-related challenges collectively disrupt the ECCD–Kindergarten continuum and misaligned undermining the goal of seamless early childhood education. Bridging this gap requires context-sensitive adaptations of national standards, sustained technical and financial support, workforce capacity-building, and strengthened institutional coordination. Furthermore, academic institutions such as the University of Eastern Philippines can play a strategic role by providing training, research support, and community-based interventions to enhance ECCD implementation, ensuring that national accreditation goals translate into meaningful improvements in child readiness and development in GIDA contexts.

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