

(Penultimate draft. For favour of comments.)

Position Paper on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)



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State Council of Education, Research and Training (SCERT)

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Vision of the State

The vision of AP is that ALL children should receive high quality education and become responsible citizens with an acute sense of the other. They should be aware of their environment and think about it critically. They should listen carefully and speak fearlessly. They should be able to understand what they hear and read; but they should also be able to question it. Teachers should promote these skills, provide meaningful teaching learning processes in natural and friendly environment that enable children to express themselves freely and ask questions. Teachers are collaborative learners and reflective practitioners. Parents and community should have a sense of ownership and participate in the life of the school. In a world which is becoming increasingly instrumental, materialistic and competitive, school should become a space for reflection, cooperation and promotion of human and ethical values.

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Members of the Focus Group

Chairperson

K. Lakshmi, Chair Person & Director, SRC, ECE, AMS, Hyderabad.

Focus Group Members

1. Dr. N. Upender Reddy, Professor & Head, C&T Dept., SCERT-AP, Hyderabad.
2. N Reddy Prakash, Rtd. Secretary, APREIS, Hyderabad.
3. Suvarna Vinayak, H.M, GPS, Manthani, Karimnagar District, A.P.
4. Kakulavaram Rajender Reddy, S.A., UPS, Thimmapur, Nalgonda District, A.P.
5. T.V.S. Ramesh, S.A UPS, Potlapudi, T.P.Gudur Mandal, Nellore District, A.P.
6. Deepika, Lecturer, SCERT, A.P., Hyderabad
7. Smt. Madhavi, Lecturer, SCERT, A.P., Hyderabad.
8. Rama Krishna, SA, Hyderabad.
9. ED. Madhusudhan Reddy, SRG, Kosgi, Mahabubnagar
10. K. Subrahmanyam, Lecturer, DIET, Kurnool
11. K. Lakshminarayana, Lecturer, DIET, Karimnagar

Special Invities

1. S. Padma, ZPSS Lohitha, Sangam (M), Warangal.
2. H. Sirisha, GCDO, RVM, R.R. Dist.
3. Dr. S. Rathna Kumari, Prof. College of Home Science, Hyderabad.
4. G. Kamala, faculty, SRC, ECE, AMS, Hyderabad.
5. Dr. Chandra Prakash Reddy, Principal DIET, Vikarabad, R.R. Dist.
6. T. Subhashini, RMSA, AP., Hyderabad.
7. B. Sheshu Kumari, Additional Director, School Education.
8. M. Rajaiah, MEO, Yellareddypeata, Karimnagar.
9. P. Sandya, PGT Chinmaya Vidhyalaya, Begumpet, Hyderabad.
10. B. Manohar Reddy, Rtd. AMO, RVM, Nellore.
11. P. Kistaiah Goud, Lect, IASE, Hyderabad.
12. G.M. Anitha, State General Co Ordinator, RVM, AP., Hyderabad.
13. Mis. Anitha, Jagathkar, CFBT, Education Service.
14. Lalitha Naidu, Meridian Schools, LEAP Pre Schools Hyderabad.
15. G. Shanthi Sri, EO, DW & CDA, Hyderabad.
16. S. Yasarri, EO, DW & CDA, Hyderabad.
17. Sarala Rajya Lakshmi, Dy. Director, EO, DW & CDA, Hyderabad.
18. Khanderao Ramesh Rao, S.A., GHS, Huzurabad, Karimnagar District, A.P.
19. Dr. Paripally Shankar, Lecturer, DIET, Hanmakonda, Warangal District, A.P.

Consultants

1. Prof. Rama Kant Agnihotri, Retd, Delhi University, Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre, Udaipur
2. Prof H.K. Dewan , Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur
3. Kamal Mahendroo, Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre.

Development & Coordination Committee

1. Smt B. Sheshu Kumari, Director, SCERT, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.
2. Dr. N. Upender Reddy, Professor & Head, C&T Dept., SCERT-AP, Hyderabad.

Executive Summary

We have neglected Pre-primary education i.e. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for a long time at an enormous cost to ourselves and the world. Early years, namely, 0 to 6 are without any doubt the most formative period of a child's life. The social, psychological, physical and emotional aspects of a person's life take shape during these years. Only about 20 % children in this age group in India have some access to ECCE. There is an urgent need therefore to rectify this situation. Lack of access to ECCE also implies a lower enrolment and retention in the Primary school and later education.

The influence of early childhood is immense on language development, creativity, knowledge development, and individual, social and moral development. Hence, this stage of all-round development should be enriched with special programmes. It is time that the government and the people in general recognize this need and invest on it liberally, both financially and academically. Even though its significance was recognized as early as the latter half of the nineteenth century with the interventions Gijubhai Badekha and Tarabai Modak, we do not have a full-blown programme in place for ECCE.

The early childhood care needs were recognized in India in 1974 with the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and several Early Childhood Education Centres for 3 to 5 years old children were set up in Andhra Pradesh also. In these centres, children are taught songs, stories, speaking, and creative activities in the morning. They are also supplied with nutritious food. The 86th Amendment (2001) of the Constitution of India says that the government should take measures for the care/nurture and education of 0 – 6 age children.

Health, Nutrition and Education are the three key elements that should constitute the backbone of any ECCE programme. Unfortunately, even in some of the most advanced ECCE centres, it is the educational component that does not receive its due. It is important to formulate and critically examine a curriculum for these years which would focus among others on the psycho-motor, emotional, cognitive, affective, linguistic, aesthetic and moral domains.

It will be imperative for an innovative curriculum to focus on how children learn and examine how carefully planned activities involving reflection and analysis (and not just play) can help children learn more. It will also need to explore in some detail the nature of the ECCE environment, its flexibility and the way the ECCE centres will collaborate with the local community to take the cause of early childhood care forward.

1. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

1.1 Background

The physiological and psychological development in early childhood is many times faster than in other stages. Worldwide research indicates that if caring environment necessary for the development of the child is not ensured, the chances of the child's brain developing to its full potential are considerably, and often irreversibly, reduced. More importantly, the psychological development in the first three years is crucial for the holistic development of the child. The foundations of personal habits and social values, which are known to last a lifetime, are laid in this stage. As future human resources of the country, the child has the fundamental right to be nurtured in good environment. Early childhood education plays an important role in giving this to all children.

The worldwide financial, social and demographic changes have also influenced Early Childhood Education. The changes in family life, working mothers, improvement in job and educational opportunities, etc., have necessitated Early Childhood Education Centres, crèches and day-care centres. The activities of the Early Childhood Education centres have short-term and long-term uses for the 0 – 6 age group children belonging to the poor, minorities, or socially marginalized groups. It is useful for the child's future life if they are brought up in Early Childhood Education centres rather than in impoverished conditions that lack sanitation, adequate nourishment and care.

Research around the world suggests that early childhood and primary education programmes need to take into account three important principles of child development. They are:

- Comprehensive development should be ensured from prenatal stage to primary stage. Blocks/ hitches in any stage will have serious consequences on all other stages of life.
- Health, nutrition, education, and psychological development are all closely interrelated.
- Addressing the holistic development of child thus means, addressing not only the child, but also the child's overall context.

The productivity, growth and development of a country are closely related to the programmes taken up for childcare.

The child population in poor and developing countries is more than in other countries in the world. That means, the number of children who have no conducive environment to grow and develop is more. In other words, most of the children on earth are 'at risk' in terms of their life chances.

Various programmes are being organized under various names for 0–6 age group (0 – 3 and 3 – 6) children. Sometimes, child education programmes are being organized as a part of primary education. Programmes have been conducted for 0 – 3 age group children under Early Childhood Education (ECE). *Early Childhood Care and Education* (ECCE) retains the same educational thrust but enlarges its scope to include the care component (including nutritional and health care and early stimulation for 0–3 year olds). In India, in addition to the child, pregnant and lactating mothers and adolescent girls are also beneficiaries of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

1.2 ECCE - The Beginnings and the Need

The earliest formal documentation of preschool / early childhood education, as an organized initiative in India, dates back to the latter half of the nineteenth century when Gijubhai Badekha and Tarabai Modak, among other, became the pioneers of this movement in the country. Till India's independence in 1947, voluntary agencies and private institutions primarily fulfilled the need for ECCE, particularly in the form of preschool education. The first government initiative in this area was the setting up of the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953, which started a grant-in-aid scheme for voluntary agencies. Over this half century, however, the concept of early childhood care and education (integrating health, nutrition and education aspects) has been widely accepted.

(From Education for all: Mid Decade Assessment, p. 3)

For a variety of reasons, there is an urgent need to put the ECCE agenda on a strong footing.

- In urban areas, both the husband and wife being employees, the children are left with nobody to look after or take care of.
- In rural areas, the whole family goes to work.
- Sibling care forces the girl child to drop out of school.
- The children of the rich have access to pre-primary education centres, whereas the poor cannot afford them.

- Casual and careless organization of centres in the name of Child Care without any specific plan.
- The behavior of the teachers in private Early Childhood Education centres, who have no understanding of early childhood development, and the dearth of good, specially trained ECCE teachers.

1.3 ECCE: Objectives

- To serve as a foundation programme for the holistic development of children.
- To help working women.
- To promote girl child education.
- To prepare children for schooling.
- To protect the children's rights.
- To prepare children to observe, analyze and reflect.

1.4 Global Context

The influence of early childhood stage on the financial development of a country is now widely recognised. In 1989, for the first time, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was conducted for the welfare of children in society. The second major event in the issue of early childhood was the creation of Human Development Index by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990. The Human Development Index takes the education of children, infant mortality, child labour, healthy life, development of knowledge, and decent standard of living as indicators to arrive at HDI.

In 1990, in Thailand, in the World Conference on Education For All (EFA), it was announced that 'Learning begins at birth'. In the year 2000, the World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, reiterated the importance of ECCE through the involvement of the state, the family, and the community. India has been a signatory, as a participant nation, in all the above said international conferences.

In Japan, nurseries for 0 – 3 age children are with the welfare sector, whereas kindergartens for 3 – 6 age children are with the education department. Curriculum is framed involving group living experiences, intellectual learning activities, and creative constructional activities and the centres are run under the guidance of trained specialist teachers. Philippines and Malaysia too, have a system to implement ECCE.

The E-9 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan) have realized the importance of ECCE in achieving Education For All and are taking steps to promote Early Childhood Care and Education including attempts to introduce holistic curricula, train teachers, and several other such things.

1.5 The Indian Context

The global events have a serious influence on the Early Childhood Care and Education in India. The need for early interventions on behalf of children, especially those from economically marginalized communities has been recognized. In the year 2011, the population of India has reached 121 crores and it stood as one of the countries with the largest child population.

At present, the population of 0 – 9 age children is 12% of the total population of the country. Our position in Human Development Index is falling down. The development of our country in health, life expectancy, education, and hunger is not positive. India's progress in moving towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been much slower than that of other developing countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and China in relation to goals such as reduction of child mortality, achieving gender equality, and primary school completion. The prospect of attaining the MDGs by 2015 seems doubtful at this pace. Hence, ECCE should be recognized as the most important factor to achieve MDGs. Though the Constitution has provided everyone with equality, freedom, and justice, some communities are subjected to discrimination in getting education at pre-primary stage.

Research in India (in South Asian countries too) has suggested that ECD (Early Childhood Development) programmes have not only increased 15 – 20 % retention in primary schools, but also improved the quality of learning and scholastic achievement.

In India, 22 % children go to the centres organized in the public sector. There are no figures available for the private sector, which is estimated to be possibly as large as the public sector. A lot of children go to the centres organized by NGOs for which also there are no accurate figures available.

The growth and development of children below 6 years in India is not encouraging. Notable progress is possible only when organizations are constituted and responsibilities are fixed separately, for 0 – 3 age children and 3 – 6 age children.

1.6 The Andhra Pradesh Context

Recognizing the importance of physiological and psychological development in early childhood, the National Policy for the Child was prepared in the year 1974. In our state, Early Childhood Education centres for 3 – 5 age children are being run under Integrated

Child Development Services (ICDS). In these centres, children are taught songs, stories, speaking, and creative activities in the morning. They are also supplied with nutritious food.

At present, many Child Care Centres for 0 – 3 age children have also been started in the private sector. LKG and UKG classes for 3 – 5 age children are run in all private management schools as supplements to primary education. While the centres under private management focus on teaching above the level of children, the centres under government management satisfy themselves if they can keep the children in the centre.

Under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), in addition to running the ECE Centres, medicines are supplied to pregnant women and lactating mothers, and nutritious food is given to adolescent girls. In areas where there are no ECE Centres under ICDS, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan is running ECE Centres. Similarly, ECE Centres are run by SSA under NPEGEL scheme. Majority of 3 – 6 age children in the state are going to any one of the above said centres. The teachers and organizers working in centres under private as well as government managements are not trained in child development, hence they teach as if they were teaching in a formal school. This ruins the child's creativity, the zeal to learn, and stand in the way of child's development. Children can be turned into good human resources of the country only when separate curriculum is framed and taught by trained teachers.

1.7 Constitutional Provisions

Recognizing the importance of Early Childhood, the Indian Constitution has several provisions for 0 – 6 age children either as Fundamental Rights or as Directive Principles of State Policy including the RTE 2009.

It is necessary to keep in view the Early Childhood stage while implementing the fundamental rights i.e., the right to equality, the right to freedom, and the right to justice. The role of Early Childhood Care and Education in the right to protection, the right to survival, and the right to development is very important. According to the 86th Amendment of the Constitution (Art 45), the government should take measures for the care/nurture and education of 0 – 6 age children.

According to chapter III of RTE – 2009, the government should make necessary arrangements to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide them with basic care and education until they turn six.

1.8 What should be done in ECCE Centres?

ECCE Centres should not become a school before formal schooling. These centres should develop the health, nurture/nutrition, and education of 0 – 6 age children. They should create pleasant and joyful environment in which children develop their physiological and psychological competencies through socialization, constant interaction with their surroundings and elders. Children should develop their potential in the fields of creativity, reasoning, logic, and cognition. They should also come to grips with basic competencies in language, numbers and observation. They should develop social and experiential learning and self confidence.

The education through ECCE Centres should contribute to the all-round development of children. The areas of all- round development of the child are:

- The psycho-motor domain
- The emotional domain
- The cognitive domain
- The affective domain
- The social domain
- The language domain
- Symbolic expression
- Aesthetic appreciation

The education in ECCE Centres should keep in view the needs of children and help them develop physically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially. A brief synoptic view of the needs of children, activities that should be undertaken by the ECCE centres and outcomes is given below:

S. No	Needs of the Child	Provisions to be made by ECCE Centres	Outcomes
1.	Safe and protective environment	Protection and affection	Feelings of self
2.	Interaction, communication – physical & social	Activities and material to involve children in interactions with adults and among them	Free expression of emotions; explorations and experiments
3	Socialization	Spending time away from home, playing and sharing	Get ready to participate in social groups

S. No	Needs of the Child	Provisions to be made by ECCE Centres	Outcomes
4	Habit formation	Hygiene, food habits, discipline	Disciplined life
5	Need for awareness	Activities based on the interests of children	Construction of knowledge
6	Experience and feelings of self-worth	Motivating environment	Self confidence(I can do)
7	Achieving improvement	Monitoring and remedial measures	overcoming backwardness
8	School-readiness	School readiness activities	Inspiration and development of the zeal to learn

2.ECCE IN ANDHRA PRADESH

2.1 Introduction

Pre-primary education is very important in achieving Universal Primary Education. ECCE Centres play crucial role in the quantity of primary school admissions, which is very vital in universal education. The Early Child Education Centres help children below 6 years age to develop their physical and mental faculties. The Early Child Education was started as an agitation in the mid 19th century and gained strength and popularity thanks to Gijubhai, Bageeka, Tarabai Methak, Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, and other leaders. After independence, many individuals as well as voluntary organizations started and organized many Early Child Education Centres. In Andhra Pradesh too, many government, private and voluntary organizations established Early Child Education Centres to give pre-primary education to children. However, these could cater to the needs of a very small group of children.

To give good pre-primary education as a part of universal primary education, many programmes are being conducted in Andhra Pradesh under various managements.

2.2 Childcare Institutions

We may first look at the government institutions. Anganwadis are run for 3 – 6 age children under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). According to the survey conducted in 2003 by MHRD, Government of India, the percent of enrollment in ECCE Centres is only 19.64 percent. As the centres under ICDS were not sufficient, ECE Centres were established (during DPEP scheme in our state) in places where there were no Anganwadis and run in the primary school premises. Ayahs and cooks were appointed in these centres in addition to trained teachers, and they were organized with the slogan “aata – paata – maata” (play – song – word). The necessary teaching learning materials and play materials were supplied, and the teachers were given good training. At present, ECE Centres are run under the management of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan in partnership with Mahila Samaakhya Societies.

The job chart of Anganwadis:

1. Teaching children about personal hygiene
2. Providing children with nutritious food
3. Teaching games, songs, and stories that are useful for expression and mental development.
4. Gearing up children for primary school

5. Take care of children's health

The working hours of pre-primary schools in Andhra Pradesh:

The Early Child Education Centres in Andhra Pradesh under various managements adopt different timings. While Anganwadis and ECE Centres work from 9.30 a.m. in the morning to 1.30 in the afternoon, the centres under private management, which are run like formal schools, work from 9.00 a.m. in the morning till 3.30 p.m. in the afternoon.

Private Sector

In Andhra Pradesh, even in small towns, many private organizations are running pre-primary education centres under various names like nursery, day-care, crèche, kindergarten, pre-school, play school, pre-primary school, etc. While some of these are run as subsidiary (supplementary) to the main school, the others are run as stand-alone institutions. The statistics regarding the enrollment in these institutions are not available.

In some pre-primary schools run by private organizations, quality play materials, instruments, audio and video equipment are used. But in some schools, they are run as if they were formal schools, without taking the physical and psychological development of children into consideration.

Voluntary Organizations

Many voluntary organizations that work for child rights and out of the school children are running pre-primary education centres with the contributions from the government and the philanthropists.

2.3 Outcomes

Even though most of these organizations work under difficult circumstances, they have produced some positive results.

- The enrollment in primary schools increased considerably due to the attendance of children at the ECCE Centres.
- The children who have completed pre-primary education showed good progress in primary schools.
- Children expressed themselves freely without any fear or inhibitions.
- The percent of dropouts at primary stage decreased and retention increased.
- Girl child was freed from sibling care and joined school.
- Care on children's health and nutritious food increased.
- Joyful and playful learning improved socialization.

Research shows that the children who enroll at Early Childhood Education Centres achieve better results than those who do not get pre-primary education, because they acquire mathematical and linguistic competencies which are necessary for primary education. It is necessary to revamp ECCE Centres to achieve much better results.

2.4 Limitations

One can say that the quality of pre-primary education in the ECCE Centres is not satisfactory.

In these centres, the quality should be measured with respect to the care, nurture/nutrition, and all-round development of children. A survey conducted on the quality of pre-primary education in Mumbai concluded that only 3.5% of the centres are working with some quality. The state of affairs in Andhra Pradesh is not different from this.

- Anganwadis and ECE Centres function in unhygienic environment
- Damaged and broken play materials and grimy children with soiled clothes are found in the centres.
- Attendance is below 60 percent.
- The only thing done in the centres is cooking and serving nutritious food.
- The teachers manage the centres on the lines they learnt.
- There is no supervision on these centres.
- There are no set performance indicators to determine the quality of a centre.
- There are no indications of regular health check-ups.
- The centres are run like formal schools where children trace letters on a slate.
- In the system of pre-primary education there is no co-ordination between the services rendered by various organizations and individuals.
- The needs of special needs children are not met with
- There is no system that provide for the economic resources necessary to have basic facilities.
- The pupil teacher ratio is high.
- The performance of the centres is substandard.

2.5 Challenges

- Health, nutrition, and education are the three key elements and should be given equal importance. But often the education component is neglected or is not given due importance.
- The measures to be taken (as mentioned above) for the holistic development of children put before us some challenges. Most importantly, the curriculum for pre-primary education should face all challenges efficiently and facilitate holistic development of children through play-way methods.
- The teachers, parents, and the school management have a narrow view on pre-primary education that it is only for tracing letters, mechanical repetition, and to accustom children to school environment. So, the challenge is to develop in them the right attitude by bringing in them an awareness of the broad view of pre-primary education.
- Available teachers are appointed in these centres instead of teachers specially trained in pre-primary education. There are no training institutes in the government system to give special training to teachers.
- Inability to provide enough funds to buy play materials and other teaching learning materials to make the pre-primary education centres attractive.
- Lack of coordination between the field functionaries in supervising pre-primary education centres.
- Though the mother tongue of the children is Telugu, private management schools provide pre-primary education in English. Though the government rules insist that the pre-primary education to 3 – 5 age children should be in the child's mother tongue, private management schools provide education in only English medium in the name of LKG and UKG. This is not useful for the development of children and in fact, detrimental to it.
- Keeping all the above issues in mind, pre-primary education should be treated as part of school education as indicated in Education Act – 2009, but not as something related to ICDS. Taking all these things into consideration, efforts should be made to provide children with pre-primary education facilities.

3. NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ECCE

3.1 Introduction

Pre-primary Education is the foundation for providing 'Education For All'. Everyone should realize that Pre-primary Education plays an important role in the development of children, and that everyone has a right to Pre-primary Education of equitable quality. In spite of our best efforts in this direction, we are still far away from this goal. It is meaningless to expect results without bringing out radical changes in the present system.

Recognizing the importance of Pre-primary Education, the following proposals were put forward at international level.

- In 1989, at the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all the participant nations resolved that measures should be taken to protect and promote the well-being of children.
- In the World Conference on Education For All, it was recognized that learning begins at birth, so in 1990, all the participant nations resolved to give Early Childhood Care and Education.
- The Dakar Forum, in 2000, decided that the first goal should be to give Pre-primary Education to oppressed and socially and developmentally marginalized classes.

We have already discussed the provisions at the national level. Therefore, the following policy changes should be brought forward in Pre-primary Education.

- Comprehensive Curriculum for Pre-primary Education
- Capacity building
- Convergence of various branches, institutions and society
- Management and organization
- Monitoring and cooperation

3.2 Comprehensive Plan

- To ensure that 100% school age children join and continue their study in schools, it is important to see that 100% 3 – 5 age children join Pre-primary Education centres. For this, information regarding 3 – 5 age children should

be gathered habitation-wise and sufficient centres should be established making them available at least 1 for 10 children.

- Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the same curriculum in all Pre-primary Education centres under government, private and voluntary organizations.
- This curriculum should be related to the areas of child's physical, mental, emotional, and social development.
- The curriculum should be so designed that it develops the child's potential in all domains, such as health and well-being, cognitive, motor, sensory, physical, social, personal, emotional, and language development.
- The Pre-primary Education should be viewed as two parts. The first one should take care of children below three years age providing them with nutritious food, keeping them in good health, and getting them ready for Pre-primary Education. The second one should take care of 3 – 5 age children developing their potential as discussed in Pre-primary Education Curriculum. Additionally, they should be prepared for primary school. But they should not be taught the topics in class 1 in the name of school-readiness.
- At this stage, play should be the basis for learning. Similarly, art too should form the basis for education. The special features of children's thinking should be recognized. The cultural elements of the child, such as rhymes, songs, etc., should become instruments for learning.
- At this stage, direct experiences and enjoyment should be the important objectives. Similarly, integration of health and well-being based on healthy habits and protective measures to keep good health should be taken up.
- All organizations should manage Pre-primary Education Centres keeping these components in view. The material used in these centres should be according to the standards laid down by State Level Institutions like the SCERT.
- A monthly salary or honorarium of Rs.10,000/- should be offered to attract volunteers to work in Pre-primary Education centres. Alternatively, Pre-primary Education should be recognized as part of primary education and

trained teachers should be appointed on regular full-fledged pay. The other people who work in the centres should also be paid properly.

- ECCE should be introduced as a subject in Diploma in Education. Similarly, Diploma in ECCE course should be started by SCERT and offered to the interested candidates in distance mode.
- Measures should be taken to see that Anganwadis follow the primary school timings and work in tandem with them.
- The children in these centres should be provided with mid-day meals too in addition to the nutritional food served in the morning.
- Activities related to physical, mental, social, and emotional domains should be conducted for three hours. The remaining two hours should be spent on rest and enjoyable activities. School readiness activities should be designed and implemented for 4 – 5 age children. That is to say, children should be involved in activities related to language readiness, mathematical readiness, and expression.
- Research projects should be taken up in the field of Pre-primary Education and appropriate measures should be taken up based on the research findings.
- The District Institute of Education and Training, Education Department, and Women and Child Welfare Department in the district should prepare a plan collaboratively to strengthen Pre-primary Education and implement it.
- Only trained teachers should be appointed in Pre-primary Education Centres belonging to all managements. If un-trained teachers are working in centres, they should be trained within three years. A long-term teacher training plan should be made and implemented to see that these teachers improve their competence by attending training programmes at regular intervals.

3.3 Capacity Building

Capacity building programmes for ECCE functionaries at various levels should be designed and implemented.

Early childhood education should take many components into consideration. Play-way methods based on multiple intelligence should be used to develop the inner potential of children. Through such activities, it is possible to encourage different types of growth among children.

If teaching learning activities are aimed at improving the following types of intelligence (multiple intelligence), the Pre-primary Education gives good results.

1. Linguistic intelligence
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence
3. Musical intelligence
4. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence
5. Spatial intelligence
6. Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence

If we want to improve Pre-primary Education, training programmes should be organized for teachers, helpers, ayahs, authorities, and monitoring staff. Training programmes are conducted now and then for those who work in anganwadis and ECCE Centres in government sector. But training to those who work in private organizations remains a question. Similarly, capacity building programmes are restricted for teachers only. In fact, they should be organized for ayahs, supervisors and all authorities along with teachers. Importantly, training programmes should be conducted on organizing the centres, organizing special childcare programmes, estimating children's behavioural characteristics, and identifying and recording children's growth(physical, mental, readiness, etc). Training should also be given on preparing plans, management, monitoring, evaluation, etc. Training should be given to the mothers' committees, their representatives, authorities and all those who are connected with the centres.

For capacity building, every year, at least ten days should be earmarked for training, visits to good centres, conferences, melas, etc.

3.4 Convergence of various Branches, Institutions and Society

For the effective functioning of Pre-primary Education Centres, convergence among Women and Child Welfare Department, Education department, Panchayat Raj Institutions, members from society, and voluntary organizations is necessary. They should focus on the following issues while working together.

- Collection of children's data
- Establishment of centres
- Curriculum – preparation of material
- Monitoring the functioning of the centres and extending cooperation

- Organization of review meetings
- Taking up research and evaluation programmes

In our state, mainly, Pre-primary Education Centres are run in the name of Anganwadis under the management of Women and Child Welfare Department. Similarly, ECCE Centres are run under the management of Rajiv Vidya Mission. In many instances, the expected objectives are not fully achieved due to lack of coordination among various departments. To overcome this, a coordination committee should be constituted at the state level as nodal agency.

At present, while ICDS is taking on the responsibility of establishing the centres, the Education Department is taking on the educational responsibilities. Instead of this, the Women and Child Welfare Department should take on the responsibility of the centres for children below 3 years. The Education Department should shoulder the responsibility of the centres for 3 – 5 age children. The SCERT and the DIET should play key roles in the preparation of curriculum, preparation of material, and the organization of evaluation. ICDS should work collaboratively with the Education Department in capacity building and monitoring the centres. The SCERT and the DIET should take on the responsibility of preparation of reports about success stories in centres run by voluntary organizations. Similarly, they should collaborate with universities and voluntary organizations to assess the performance of the centres, their influence, and the results.

The partnership of the society is vital for the successful organization Pre-primary Education Centres. Experiences in our state show that the centres accomplish good results wherever there is partnership of the society and their monitoring. For example, the members of the society belonging to scheduled tribes in Utnoor agency of Adilabad district established a Pre-primary Education Centre, and appointed a teacher. And the centre results of the centre are good. The children from this centre are showing good progress in class 1. In our state, voluntary organizations have established and run successfully many centres with the help of the members of the society in Suryapet, Vizianagaram, Rangareddy, Medak, Hyderabad, and Krishna districts.

Taking these experiences into account, measures should be taken to make the members of the society i.e., mothers, local people representatives, etc., partners in Pre-primary Education Centres.

3.5 Management – Administration

The management of Pre-primary Education Centres should take the following measures.

- The responsibility of establishment and maintenance of centres for children below 3 years should be under the purview of the Women and Child Development Department.
- The responsibility of establishment and maintenance of centres for 3 – 5 age children should be under the purview of the Education Department.
- The collection of data of 0 – 3 age children and 3 – 5 age children should be done by the respective departments.
- Every year a specific plan should be prepared and implemented for capacity building.
- Measures should be taken to pay salaries regularly to those who work in the centres.
- Month-wise reviews should be organized to assess the performance of the centres.
- The timings of the primary schools and the centres for 3 – 5 age children should be the same.
- Data regarding the attendance of the children and the teachers, and the organization of various programmes should be collected on-line and then analyzed.
- Promotions of the teachers in the centres should be given on the basis of their performance.
- In capacity building programmes, highly qualified teachers should be used as resource persons / subject experts.
- Research and evaluation programmes should be organized to assess the performance of the centres and to study thoroughly at least 10% centres.
- Courses for professional development of the teachers should be designed once in five years, and the authorities should see that the teachers study/pass them.
- Certainly, the local people who have the requisite qualifications should be appointed as teachers in these centres.
- The maintenance in all centres under all managements should be up to the standards laid down by the government.

- Measures should be taken to see that age-appropriate material, audio visual aids, play materials, etc., are available in all centres under all managements.
- In the centres run by the government, the government itself should provide the physical facilities, material, teaching learning materials, and mid-day meals.
- The centres should make a plan in collaboration with the health department and organize regular health check-ups.

3.6 Monitoring

At present, the self-confidence of those who are working in Pre-primary Education Centres is very low. Moreover the status of their job is also low. Hence, they need cooperation, motivation and encouragement. This can be done by extending cooperation, training programmes, and continuous monitoring. Usually, the persons who monitor these centres are government employees who have authority. So, a gap is formed in monitoring. The monitoring should not be done focusing on statistics and the attendance of the children keeping the ayahs dumbstruck by displaying authority.

Some of the important elements of monitoring are, observing the environment at field level, estimating the performance and maintenance of the centres, identification of the difficulties of the teachers, analysis of the organization of daily programmes, identification of the children's progress, and initiating partnership with the society. Monitoring should make the teachers believe that they get cooperation and suitable directions when required. Meanwhile, monitoring should not be restricted to departmental activities but should go beyond them and make the society a partner in the maintenance and monitoring of the centres.

According to the 73rd and the 74th amendments of the constitution, the monitoring of the centres were brought under the purview of the local bodies, so for each centre, a mothers' committee should be formed under the chairmanship of the local ward member/councilor and thereby increase the community partnership in the management of the centres. Review meetings should be conducted with these members, and their opinions should be taken into consideration.

We are aware of the national festivals and the festivals related to different religions. But the boys and girls belonging to Pre-primary Education centres, their parents, and the members of the society of Utnur in Adilabad district celebrate a different festival called 'School Festival' once in a month. On this festival day, the children exhibit their progress by means of dance, songs, drama, etc.

4. Early Childhood Care and Education – Curriculum

4.1 Introduction

“Let the little one wash her handkerchief herself, let her run after the dragonflies in the flower garden, let her play, jump – do not snatch her freedom holding out your hands and standing in her way”, says Gijubhai.

Though many efforts are made in public and private sector in Early Childhood Education, it is necessary to prepare a comprehensive plan encompassing all those factors that contribute to it. Even in ECE Centres, as in primary schools, children are made to sit for a long time tracing letters and reading, which is detrimental to their development. We are not able to provide young children with good education because the teachers in ECCE Centres are not trained and they have no awareness of the early childhood education.

4.2 ECCE : The Process

Critical observation of the child’s physical, psychological, social, and familial factors is necessary to prepare an efficient ECCE curriculum. The following key elements should be borne in mind while doing this.

1. Understanding children.
2. Play as the basis for learning.
3. Ensuring flexible environment.
4. Building and establishing partnerships.
5. Helping to learn through discovery

Holistic development in children is possible when ECCE can provide for learning experiences in play-way methods. It is necessary to observe extensively while preparing the curriculum. For this the following factors should be considered.

- Regarding Early Childhood Education, the 0 – 5 age children group should be considered as two groups of 0 – 2 and 3 – 5 age children.
- The curriculum can be prepared based on the needs of the children in different age groups.
- The curriculum should be prepared keeping in view the age, needs, and abilities of children.

- It should encourage the natural curiosity and enthusiasm of children to learn. It should help them use their energy, abilities and capacity to the optimum levels.
- It should be comprehensive and help children develop physically, psychologically, socially, emotionally, and linguistically.
- It should accommodate all children who come from different family backgrounds and different language environments.
- It should focus mainly on the health and nutrition of children.
- It should be helpful to women and girls.
- It should get children ready for primary education through early child education.

4.3 ECCE Curriculum: Basic Principles

Indian as well as foreign philosophers have indicated that education should start at childhood. The child is in constant interaction with her surroundings, so she should be taught to learn through her sensory organs. ECCE Centres should provide children with education through games, songs, stories, and activities. Modern philosophers like Piaget, Bruner, and Vygotsky have said that play and activity are the child's natural modes of learning. Indian educationists like Gandhi, Tagore, and Gijubhai conceptualized a child-centred approach to the care and education of young children. The basic principles of Early Childhood Care and Education are as follows.

- Play, observation and reflection should be the basis for learning
- Song, drama, music, and drawing should be part and parcel of education
- The activities should be based on the features of thinking of children belonging to different age groups.
- The basic concepts of literacy and numeracy should be taught based on the familial, social, and cultural background of the children.
- The activities in ECCE Centres should be a mix of formal and informal interaction.
- Opportunities for experiences should be provided to enable children to face the challenges and competition in day to day life.
- Similarly, learning experiences of familiar things should also be provided.
- The learning experiences should aim at experience rather than expertise.

- The activities should be such that they develop the physical, mental and emotional faculties of children.
- The materials used for activities should be locally available.
- Groups activities that develop the child's sensory organs, motor organs and develop her potential in cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social domains should find place.
- It is not constant teaching, but conducive environment that helps children grow and learn naturally.
- The mothers and women in the habitation of the centre should constantly be in touch with the centre.

4.4 Educational facilities for Children below Three Years

The curriculums for 0 – 2 age children is very valuable and should be prepared with utmost care. The teachers and managers of crèches, balwadis, and sisuvihars should have a good awareness of the curriculum for 0 – 2 age children. Training is not just enough for them; they have to gain the trust and faith of the parents by demonstrating quality childcare. The main points of this curriculum are as follows.

- The Early Childhood Care and Education for a few days/months old children should focus mainly on protection and care/nurture.
- The place where they are kept should be clean and hygienic.
- At this stage the children start learning to speak and walk, so the classrooms should give room for them to walk and run freely.
- Children should be exposed to experiential learning involving their senses.
- Children use the language of their home which results in multilingual context in the ECCE classroom. As the children at this stage observe and imitate a lot, they learn the vocabulary of other languages/varieties.
- At this stage, children like to be very close to adults, so the teachers should behave in such a way that they gain the faith of children.
- As children like to play on their own, sufficient play material and space should be made available.
- Children should be given toilet training, taking food, dressing (buttoning the shirt, lacing the shoes, etc.) and such other elements of personal care.

- Children repeat an activity many times once they learn how to do it, and that is the way they master it (e.g. Beating a tin with a stick, throwing objects, etc.) Hence, the activities should be so designed that they give space for this.
- Children at this stage play hide and seek, say new words, and sing songs, so the curriculum should give space for these activities.
- Two year olds learn language quickly. Looking into picture books, they name things, animals, and birds. Therefore, picture books should be made available to them.
- The books should be prepared with things, animals and events familiar to children.
- The curriculum should give space for activities involving jumping, hopping, playing, singing, and singing, which develop the bodily kinesthetic potential of children.
- Children can identify people by names and can also identify the relations between them, so the curriculum should include people – relations.
- The children at this stage do not like to share their belongings with others, so individual and group activities that teach and facilitate 'sharing' should find their place in the curriculum.
- The children at this stage are very sensitive. They have problems to accustom themselves to their surroundings, so the teachers should see that they get over this by providing them with necessary support and resources.
- The curriculum should ensure enough field staff in the centres since many teachers and helpers are needed in the centres to serve food and to take care of children.
- Babies like to be always under the protection of adults, so the teachers should not leave them alone or in groups. They should always be at the disposal of the children and give them a feeling of security.
- Children like to do the same activity again and again. They learn by trial and error, so the curriculum should have activities that give scope to learning by trial and error, repetition, imitation, and identification.
- Though all children look alike and their needs are the same, they are quite unpredictable. What are the things they are attracted to and what things they

reject depends on the context, so the curriculum should elaborate on this and give suitable directions.

- The mother of a child below one year talks to the baby and plays with the baby and a firm bond is established between them. The baby can differentiate her mother and her family members from others. So, the teachers in ECCE Centre should mimic the mother and facilitate natural learning.
- Children, by the time they complete one year, can walk and say a few words, so the centres should use wooden horses for play and songs for literacy.
- It is necessary to give children milk and food at the appropriate time, so the curriculum should include important points related to 'children – food habits – health factors'
- Two year olds can talk, sing, hop, run, grab with hands, throw, and catch, so if the curriculum provides for such activities, children's physical, mental, and linguistic faculties will develop.

4.5 Curriculum for 3 – 6 Years Old Children

This stage is crucial in the personal development of a person. The physical growth in this stage is rapid and the mind works actively. They form clear concepts based on their interactions and experiences. Their ability to observe and imitate is very high. They are very active, and they think they can do everything on their own. And they wish to do them. Therefore, the curriculum for this stage should facilitate the development of physical, mental, emotional, and linguistic potential of children. Since physical growth is rapid in this stage, importance should be given to giving nutritious food, and involving children in games that develop bodily-kinesthetic potential. The following components are essential in the curriculum.

- Language and communication
- Mathematical concepts
- Scientific thinking

Language and communication

Language is one of the most powerful instruments that enables us to understand children and enables children to understand the world around them. Using language efficiently is one of the important skills that the child masters even before she enters the school. The

teacher should understand the natural, meaningful, and contextual situations that facilitated this linguistic competence.

Development of Language Skills	Activities
Oral Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Conversation▪ Story telling▪ Dramatization▪ Puppetry▪ Picture reading▪ Creative self-expression
Reading Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sound, hearing, discrimination▪ Phonemic awareness▪ Letter sound correspondence▪ Coordination of sight and hearing▪ Reading from left to right
Writing readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Handling objects with hands and fingers▪ Drawing lines and pictures▪ Differentiating letters and identifying the relation between letters▪ Using the writing materials▪ Finger dexterity and control

Mathematical Concepts

Mathematical concepts should not be taught formally without proper readiness. Children will be able to understand mathematical concepts only when they are cognitively ready, so Early Childhood Education should provide for the following experiences related to mathematical readiness.

- Classifying things
- Arranging in rows
- Forming patterns
- Reasoning
- Identifying logical relations
- Engaging in conversations
- Solving problems

The pre-mathematical concepts necessary to achieve the above are quantity, length, width, weight, height, thickness, distance, number concept, sense of time and space, etc.

Scientific Thinking

Knowing about scientific research and the fruits of research surprises children and keep them wondering, so the seeds of scientific attitudes should be sown in the pre-primary education. For this, children should be trained in using their sensory organs to observe the world around them.

Learning experiences that should be ensured at early childhood education

- Since children at this stage show interest to speak and listen to, there should be activities like telling stories, re-telling them, and acting out scenes from the stories.
- Opportunities should be provided for making children talk about the birds, animals, things, people, etc., in their surroundings.
- As children imitate a lot, activities that give scope for imitating their peers, elders, and mimicking their walk and talk should be given.
- When children are asked to retell known stories, they add some more characters or conversations to them. This helps them develop their language and vocabulary and they will be able to experiment with new sentences.
- Children at this stage like to play with wooden slabs, wooden toys, and toys that move on wheels. They also like activities like climbing up and down the stair case. Hence, they should be provided with such learning experiences.
- Four-year old children flex and train their bodies to do a lot of day to day activities like cutting something with scissors, tightening or opening the lids/caps of bottles, cans, etc., so they should be given tasks that involve them in such things.
- As children at this stage can identify colours, shapes, and quantities, if they are given activities that give opportunities to do such things, they develop their eye-hand coordination. Hence the curriculum should include activities that introduce pre-mathematical concepts like, shape and quantity of things.
- Children at this stage like to play team games and parallel games, so play material that give them opportunities to play like others and play with others should be made available. These should find place in curriculum as they

develop in children social skills like sharing with other children, cooperate with others and play as a team, etc.

- Children at age 4 or 5 can not only recognize the shape of things and people, but also identify them quantitatively, so opportunities should be provided for introducing the concepts like big, small, long, short, thick, thin, etc.
- Since engaging children in conversations, talking about what they see or listen to, retelling stories, etc., facilitate the development of language faculty, such activities should be given priority.
- Opportunities should be given for learning experiences that develop language skills like reading with the help of pictures, identification of letters, reading, writing, etc.
- By planning and implementing activities that give opportunities to write letters and numbers, foundations should be laid for mathematical and linguistic skills.
- Children of 3 – 5 age group can think of things not only in their surroundings, but also beyond them. Hence, activities like talking about a picture shown, talking about what can be done using an instrument / thing, etc., which develop the capacity to think extensively should be included.
- The sports and games for children at this stage should be natural, attractive, and pleasant. They should be such that they encourage them, give them an opportunity to win a prize, and lead to self-motivation.
- If we try to teach something through games, children do not like to participate in them, so such attempts should not be made.
- Since games help children develop balance, control over body, language competence, social skills, etc., the curriculum should be play-based. But many parents think that games and songs are only to pass time and that they are useless. To overcome this hurdle, the parents should be educated, but under any circumstances, these should not be substituted with mechanical tracing of letters, reading, group recitation, etc.
- Since hopping, jumping, running, playing with balls / cans, and playing in sand develop children's limbs, facilities for such activities should be provided.
- Children acquire a basic comprehension of language and mathematics by drawing pictures, filling them with colours, matching, joining and detaching (in jig-saw puzzles) etc.

- Art is one of the important basis for ECCE, so singing songs , dance, drama and music should certainly be a part of the curriculum.
- Children develop socially when they sing individually as well as in groups.
- Children gain a sense of society and the way it operates when they are allowed to create characters and enact them. This leads to creativity.
- Activities like, measuring water / sand, stringing beads, distribute things, etc., enable children to develop their understanding of the world and improve their thinking capacity.
- Children should be made to observe the plants, flowers, and animals in their surroundings. The episodes of a plant growing out of a seed, a bud blossoming into a flower, a dog feeding its puppies, should be shown to children as they help them develop their sensitivity to the flora and fauna of their environment.
- When children are given opportunities to tell their own stories, they often mix in them their own likes and dislikes, experiences, fears, desires, etc. This will help them use the language meaningfully and creatively.
- Children should be given freedom to express their opinions and interests without any fear. Then only they feel that 'school is a home away from home'.
- The centre provides for playing, singing, story-telling, drawing, etc., according to a plan and habituate children to the schedule. In the meantime, it gives opportunities for them to sing their own songs, tell their own stories, and paint the colours they like. Thus the centre appears to have the characteristics of both formal and informal education, which leads to free and natural development in children.
- Children like challenges as much as they like freedom. Hence, if the games, songs, and experiences we give them have challenges appropriate to their age, they will try to learn more joyfully. Since children do not like negative remarks like 'you cannot do this', 'don't go for that', etc. should not be made by the teachers.
- The learning experiences should give scope for doing an activity again and again, but in the meantime, they should not be mechanical, boring, and done under compulsion. They should aim at experience rather than expertise.

- The components of ECCE curriculum should be known to the parents too. They should not only know what their children do in the centres, but also become partners in the management of the centres.
- The curriculum should ensure early childhood education to people belonging to all classes.
- By providing opportunities to disabled children too in the ECCE Centres, they will be given a chance for socialization and join the regular stream of education.
- The present ECCEs and teachers should see that special needs children too join the centres. The teachers should receive training to serve them.

4.6 ECCE: Teaching Learning Materials

It has been proved that the first five years are most crucial years in the personality development of a person. It is necessary to provide children with quality education, nutrition, and protection at this stage. By engaging children in situations that develop them physically and psychologically, we can achieve the objectives of ECCE. To choose appropriate teaching learning materials, it is necessary to understand what abilities we need to focus on.

It is necessary to develop children's potential in all domains. As these domains are inter-related, the teaching learning materials in ECCE Centres should be multi-purpose material that can be used by many children for many purposes. However, the material should not be the same for children of all ages. Two year old children like to play on their own, 3 – 4 age children like to play the way the other children does, while 5 – 6 age children like to play in groups. Hence, the teaching learning materials should be made available to children keeping in view their developmental characteristics.

Points to be kept in mind while choosing Teaching Learning Materials

- Focus on care/protection – nurture/nutrition is necessary for 0 – 2 age group children (in crèches and childcare centres), which means, material useful to feed children, to let the children play, and to let them take rest are necessary.
- Children of 3 – 5 age are found in most ECCE centres, so the materials that facilitate their physical, psychological, social, and linguistic development should be present.
- The materials should facilitate exercising the limbs, and useful in giving practice to hold, catch, throw, etc.,

- Since the development of sensory organs (eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin) is essential in early childhood, materials that develop sensory perception are necessary.
- The materials should be useful for children to know the plants, animals, birds, and people in their surroundings.

Materials that should be available in ECCE centres

In ECCE centres, the following materials that help develop in children the age-appropriate abilities and skills should be available.

- Toys with wheels
- Toys that make sound
- Balls of different sizes
- Building blocks
- Assembling squares
- Marbles
- Plastic buckets and glasses
- Plastic cans, bottles, and caps of different sizes.
- Rubbers springs that can be stretched
- Wooden blocks
- China clay
- Cradles
- Balloons
- Tubs to hold sand
- Tape recorders
- Models and charts of different birds, animals, flowers, fruits, etc.
- 'Big books' with big pictures
- Story books and story cards with a few words and sentences
- Locally available flowers and food substances to identify smell

4.7 The Role of the Teacher

The teacher in Early Childhood Care and Education centres should try to provide children with games, songs, and stories that facilitate their development physically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially. This is possible through encouraging them to speak, act, and play in groups. Hence, the teacher in this centre should not teach as is

done in formal schools. She should adopt a much simpler and uncomplicated way. She should provide for learning situations according to the interest and curiosity of individual children. Children will stay in the centres happily, if the school environment is similar to that of their homes; the teachers should ensure such environment by making good teaching learning materials available in the centres and by providing them with necessary education – care/protection – nurture/nutrition.

The role of the teacher / centre organizer is vital in early childhood education. As children aged a few months to a few years come to the centres, the teacher/organizer should be aware of the following points.

- Any ECCE centre teacher, whether working in government or private managements, should definitely be a trained one.
- She should have a clear understanding of the children's physical, psychological, social, and emotional development.
- The teacher should have close relations with the children as well as their parents/society and ensure home-like environment in the centre.
- She should have an understanding of teaching children 'how to learn'.
- Since 0 – 5 age children learn according to their interest and speed, the teacher should not compare them with others and punish them. She should help children learn in line with their ability, interests, and speed.
- While evaluating children, the teacher should be able to identify, record, and analyse the physical, psychological, emotional, linguistic, and social development of the children without troubling them.
- To ensure cooperative learning among children, it is necessary to see that good relations are established among children, and among the teacher and the children.

The ECCE curriculum should reflect the needs and interests of the children, the teachers, and the parents. By preparing such a curriculum, it is possible to develop children physically, psychologically, socially, emotionally, and linguistically, and to get them ready for the primary school. By providing all children with Early Childhood Care and Education, they will be giving nutritious food in addition to good education, so they grow healthy. To see that the teachers behavior towards 0 – 5 age children is much more sensitive, they need to undergo quality training programmes. This helps us organize the

early childhood education much more efficiently which leads to the production of a strong future generation.

4.8 Evaluation in ECCE Centres

In pre-primary education, the learning of children goes through four stages. They are knowing, discovering, forming relations, and application. Hence, evaluation should also be done based on these learning stages.

Evaluation is not syllabus based. It observes the children's development from physical, psychological, linguistic, mathematical, and emotional angles and records it. Every child should be evaluated and it should be done in an informal way through activities. It should be done without using marks or grades. The most important tool for evaluation is the observation of the children's behavior in various situations. This can be done with respect to play, talk, song, story, creativity, observation and reflection.

5. Systemic Reforms

Based on this Position Paper, we make the following proposals:

- The establishment and functioning of ECCE should be done according to NCF – 2005 guidelines.
- The government should take the responsibility for the care and pre-primary education of 0 – 6 age children.
- The department of education should take on the responsibility of establishing Early Childhood Care and Education centres for 3 – 6 age children.
- According to RTE – 2009, three year old children should join the pre-primary education centres in partnership with the society.
- Awareness should be created about the pre-primary education through coordination meetings with departments related to education and welfare.
- All programmes related to ECCE should be integrated and organized through the Department of Education.
- Programmes related to childcare, health, nutrition, and physical and psychological development of children should be organized by Education Department in coordination with Women and Child Welfare Department.
- Plans should be prepared to conduct programmes to develop the children in ECCE Centres physically, psychologically, and emotionally.
- ECCE centres should focus on school readiness programmes for children who have completed four years. Focus should also be on 'language readiness of the children' and 'training children so that they participate in communication activities', etc.
- The government should take responsibility for the provision of room, play materials, teaching learning materials, and child-friendly environment.
- Only trained teachers should be appointed in ECCE centres. For this, the DIET should design a Diploma Course and offer it to the aspirants.
- Similarly, on behalf of the SCERT, the DIET should conduct Diploma Course in distance mode.
- The children in ECCE should be given good nutritious food as mid-day meals.
- Health-care machinery should be devised to conduct health check-ups and to ensure good health.
- Parents committees should be formed to monitor ECCE Centres.

- Departmental monitoring should be done by the school complex headmasters and other educational authorities.
- The DIETs should give in-service training to the teachers in ECCE centres to improve their professional skills. A separate branch should be established in DIETs for ECCE.
- ECCE centres should adopt play as the basis for learning. Space should be given for oral expression, expression of opinions, and activity-based processes that bring out the inner potential of children.
- Continuous research should be done on ECCE programmes and organization.
- The performance of the ECCE centres should be evaluated externally.
- ECCE should find place in D.Ed. syllabus.
- ECCE centres should use the teaching methods, materials and workbooks approved by the SCERT only.
- ECCE is an important programme that helps us identify special needs children. Early identification of special needs children paves way for early remediation, so necessary equipment should be available in ECCE centres.
- The DIETs should establish and run one model ECCE centre.

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