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Sarbananda Sonowal



**Chief Minister, Assam
Guwahati**

Dispur
18.09.2019

MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to learn that Early Childhood Development Forum for the first time in North East is organising a conference on Early Childhood Education and Care on 'The Future is Today' Creating Next Generation Doers on 20 October, 2019 at NEDFi House Auditorium in Guwahati. A commemorative journal is being published to mark the event.

Early Childhood Education and Care is very crucial for holistic development of a child's social, emotional, psychological, intellectual, cognitive and physical needs and their upbringing. With the emergence of science and technology and their increasing importance on education, a focussed approach for drawing a broad roadmap of early childhood education and care becomes a paramount importance.

In this backdrop, I hope participation of experts from the domain of Early Childhood Care and their deliberations on the topic would generate widespread awareness for creating an enabling environment conducive to early childhood education and care.

I convey my best wishes for resounding success of the conference. Hope the journal being published on the occasion is read and appreciated by everybody.

(SARBANANDA SONOWAL)

সিদ্ধার্থ ভট্টাচার্য

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MESSAGE



It gives me immense pleasure to learn that DN Acharya Foundation for Children and Women Welfare is organizing a National Conference on Early Childhood Education and Care, themed- 'The Future is Today' Creating Next Generation Doers, on 20th October, 2019 at Guwahati.

Women and children constitute a major part of the population and as such, discussing the various aspects related to them is the need of the hour. I am hopeful that the delegates will share their knowledge on the topics taken up for discussion and that all the participants of the conference will be benefitted.

I wish the conference all success.

(Siddhartha Bhattacharya)

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Printed and Published: Bhabani Offset Private Limited

Address: Lachit Nagar, Guwahati, Assam

A Publication of: Early Child Development Forum (ECDF)

Address: Krishna Magnum Opera Tower 1

Zoo Tiniali, R.G. Baruah Road,

Guwahati-21

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EdCLANNING

WE TAKE PRIDE AND EXPRESS IMMENSE PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING THE RELEASE OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT FORUM'S (ECDF) EDUCATION JOURNAL EDCLAN ~EMPOWERING EDUCATORS, NURTURING YOUNG MINDS, IN THE ECDF NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONFERENCE ~THE FUTURE IS TODAY, CREATING NEXT GENERATION DOERS.

THIS DEBUT EDITION IS THE FIRST FOOTSTEP OF ECDF TOWARDS CREATING A PLATFORM FOR THE EDUCATORS AND RESOURCE FOR THE GENRE OF MARKET AND ITS STAKEHOLDERS. MARKING ITS FIRST MILESTONE, THIS EDITION FEATURES PIONEERS OF THIS INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY, THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND AND UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. IN FACT, THIS IS THE RESULTING GIFT OF THE FIRST OF ITS KIND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE NORTHEASTERN INDIA. STRIKING THE DOTS OF MANY-FIRST, HERE AT ECDF, WE ARE JOINING THE DOTS THAT CAN LEAD ALL OF US TOGETHER TOWARDS A BETTER TOMORROW. AND, ED CLAN IS ONE SUCH PATH. INTENDED TO BE PUBLISHED AS A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE, ED CLAN WILL COVER THE LATEST IN THE EDUCATION INDUSTRY AND GIVE ITS READER A MICRO AND MACRO PERSPECTIVE IN TERMS OF INNOVATIONS, EDUCATION POLICIES, BEST PRACTICES AND ALL THAT IS HAPPENING AT THE REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVELS.

Signing off



Vasavi Acharjya Bora

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Dr. Vasavvi Acharjya Bora

M.A, LL.B, PhD

Founder and Managing Director: Inner I Foundation Pvt. Ltd. (IIFPL)

Founder and Chairperson: Early Child Development Forum (ECDF)

& D N Acharya Foundation for Children and Women Welfare (DNAF)

About Dr. Vasavvi Acharjya

An Early Childhood Education Expert, Edupreneur, Social Activist, Mentor, Child Rights Enthusiast and Author

Entrepreneur and Leader

Dr. Vasavvi has been working in the domain of Early Childhood Education for the past two decades. She is the Managing Director of Inner I Foundation Pvt. Ltd. the parent company of Tender Petals (preschool chain), Tender Day Care, Early Childhood Educators Training, Dream Catchers ~a skill development initiative for adolescents, and ReevEd Solutions an education consultancy for aspiring edupreneurs.

Tender Petals preschool chain has its presence in different parts of the country with successfully running centre. IIFPL Early Childhood Educators Training Program has empowered multitudes of educators to teach children in their early years. Tender Daycare, is a second home for children of working

parents and Dream Catchers workshops and seminars have trained adolescents in different sets of skills needed to be 'Future Ready.'

Her edupreneurial journey is an inspiring story for many, enabling a lot of men and women alike, to step into their own edupreneurial venture, Dr. Vasavvi has made it possible for them to see their dreams come true. Every year a number of people get associated with IIFPL and has grown into a strong vibrant group of motivated edupreneurs.

Philanthropy and Community Leadership

Dr. Vasavvi has worked towards empowerment of Children and Women from the underprivileged sections of the society and has played the role of a mentor and hand holder for many.

She is actively associated with NGO's and Organizations working with children and conduct voluntary workshops with them. Through her initiative DN Acharya Foundation for Children and Women Welfare, Dr. Vasavvi along with her team members, has conducted several skill based workshops with children from the economically weaker sections of the society. Early Child Development Forum (ECDF) and initiative of DN Acharya Foundation, endeavours to bring a quantum change in the Early Childhood learning pedagogy, by bringing in the best practices in ECE and enable the stakeholders to work towards this goal.

Author

She has authored the book THE FIRST 5 YEARS ~Demystifying the crucial period of parenting, which is her debut book.

Awards & Accolades

2016: Dr. Vasavvi received the 'Women Leadership Achievement Award', conferred by World Women Leadership Congress and Awards, at Taj Lands End, Bandra Mumbai. The World Women Leadership Congress and Awards host the annual World Women Leadership Awards to identify and celebrate the outstanding leadership and achievements demonstrated by Women leaders that are reflected by the distinct innovations and initiatives brought by them in various public, private and philanthropic sectors.

2018: She was conferred 'The Exceptional Women Of Excellence Award' by ALL LADIES LEAGUE and WOMEN ECONOMIC FORUM in February, for her contribution in the domain of early childhood education.

Organisational Awards and Accolades: Tender Petals

2018: India Leadership Awards -THE BEST PRESCHOOL CHAIN OF NE INDIA

2019: Indian Education Awards- THE BEST PRESCHOOL CHAIN

2019: FORBES INDIA featured Tender Petals in their issue GREATEST INDIAN PRESCHOOLS 2019-20

Others:

An Ex Trainer at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Guwahati.

Editor of Magazines and Journals and freelance writer and blogger.

THE FUTURE IS TODAY

Creating Next Generation Doers

We are **early childhood facilitators** and the word facilitators itself clearly states –that we facilitate the development of a child by guiding them in each and every step. We cannot teach a child, we can only facilitate them to learn by steering them towards it, with our guidance. What they learn is based on their observations and their understanding of the concept and their ability to be apply it to their actual life.

Every child faces struggles while dealing with the transition from one stage to the next. Say a child, when they first get introduced to a preschool, feel a lot of anxiety from within, as for the first time they get separated from their comfort zone. As a facilitator we have to understand the child's struggles in adjusting to this new environment and use our soft skills to make them cope with the change with a positive feeling. This is how we expose the child to new experiences and learning.

To be an early childhood facilitator comes with a lot of responsibility, as these years are the most impressionable period of a child's life. If today we allow a child to have a happy and fulfilling childhood, it is ensured that the child would tomorrow shine in their own way. Therefore, it is our prime responsibility to give each child positive learning experience along with the freedom to learn at their own pace and **without overt competition, comparison, or any kind of pressure.**

It is most pertinent to remember at all times, during our interaction with the children, that whatever we do with them today (in these formative years) is how they would be shaped up the next few years, in terms of personality, character, success, and the quality of life they lead. Thus, it goes without saying that **THE FUTURE IS TODAY-** in our two hands that hold the little hands.

A doer is a person who 'DOES SOMETHING'. Doers are the ones, who act rather than merely talking or thinking and thereby creates and contribute to their domain of work. **How do we create doers and is it actually possible to**

create them? Doers are motivated and enthusiastic people, who find their purpose in life, sets goals and goes ahead to fulfill them in spite of all odds they meet in their journey.

To create a doer, we must give enough freedom to the little ones, to become independent, make decisions and lead others. They should be instilled with a sense of confidence to realize that they are contributing individuals and not just someone who has to follow instructions all the time.

Every doer possesses the ability to deal with failures. Failure is the most potent tool of learning. And the ability to get up from one failed attempt and to rise again to the challenge is what makes a doer successful. While we deal with children, we should give them many small tasks in forms of problems, puzzles, games et. al. both inside and outside the classroom settings, so that they find an opportunity to solve them and move on to the next one. If they fail, we as facilitators, without pointing out their inadequacy, need to help them overcome and try again, until they successfully complete it. The sense of satisfaction and an increased self esteem would inspire the child go to the next task without hesitation. Also, engaging children in activities, be it individual or team based would enhance different skill sets, along with their confidence.

Another quality that a doer possesses is the ability to adjust to change and stay flexible. **CHANGE IS THE MOST CONSTANT FACTOR IN LIFE** and adaptability to change with a positive attitude should be imbibed in every child **since childhood.** Dealing with transition, being able to move from one setting to the next with ease, the ability to handle stress, manage time, stay high spirited are qualities to be implanted into every child, from a tender age.

A DOER is one who contributes positively to the society. Every child should be given value education from an early age so that they develop a sense of right and wrong, be able to differentiate and choose the right path. An education without values and morals is like a giving a weapon to someone, without guiding how to use it and with what purpose.

However, while we work with children to inculcate the qualities of a DOER in them, we need to be extremely careful and not pushy or assertive. Also, it is important to understand that a doer can be a doer in any field. So as facilitators we have to assess and evaluate the children with a broader perspective and not limit them within a defined framework. Every preschool need to follow the multiple intelligence approach. Children should get the opportunity to display their own set of talents, apart from their performance in the academic subjects and this can only happen, if the facilitators appreciate all the eight intelligence that an

individual possesses, at different levels. Only then we will be able to mould individuals that are well rounded and confident, who without any qualms can move ahead in life.

Thus, we need to understand the immense responsibility our work demands and be extremely dedicated and sincere towards it. We are the shapers of the future generations and we need to know what we are doing and whether we are doing it right.

Dr. Vasavvi Acharjya Bora

“

My contention is that creativity now is as important in education as literacy and we should treat it with the same status.





DR. DNYANESHWAR MANOHAR MULAY, Member, National Human Rights Commission, served as a Diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service (1983 – 2019). A renowned Author, Motivator and former Secretary to the Government of India.

Strengths:

Extensive experience and expertise at International, National, and Local levels.
Wide ranging networks across the world
Diverse experience of working in the Ministries of Finance, Commerce, External Affairs and Cabinet Secretariat.

Multilingual: Fluent in Hindi, Marathi, English, and Japanese. Knows Sanskrit, Kannada, Russian, and Punjabi.
Well known, prolific writer and columnist.
Strong interest in philanthropic work, grievance redressal and outreach with people.

Highlights of Career:

Indian career diplomat as well as a celebrated author and columnist.

From the 1983 batch of Indian Foreign Service and served in several capacities, including the Consul General of India, New York, USA, and High Commissioner of India, Male, Maldives.

Successful writer, has written **over 15 books** which have been translated in Arabic, Dhivehi, Urdu, Kannada and Hindi. His magnum-opus – **Maati Pankh ani Akash**, written in Marathi, is immensely popular amongst the youth, and has been **prescribed** in the Arts curriculum at the **North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon and Shivaji University, Kolhapur** (Maharashtra).

Inspired several socio-educational projects including Balodyan, an orphanage in his native village.

A documentary titled ‘Gypsy’, **highlighting the life and work of Dnyaneshwar Mulay**, was produced by Director Dhananjay Bhawalekar. The film received ‘Special Jury Award’ at the Delhi Short Film Documentary Festival.

Well-known writer Deepa Deshmukh authored a book titled ‘**Dr. Dnyaneshwar Mulay – Passport Man of India**’.

The D.Y. Patil University of Mumbai honoured with **Doctor of Literature (D.Litt.)** (honoris causa) for ‘**exemplary contribution to society**’ in January 2017.

Engagement of NHRC on Child Rights by the Commission

SOME KEY POINTS

1. Neonatal Mortality

NHRC had taken suo motu cognizance of an editorial published in the English daily “The Hindu” dated 10/10/2013, highlighting that over three lakh newborns in India die on the very first day of their birth and India ranks first in terms of mortality on the first day of birth of a child. After examination of the reports received from the various concerned authorities in this regard and discussion with the experts and specialists in neonatal health, the Commission has recommended some guidelines to follow the same strictly in the States/ UTs to reduce the neonatal mortality.

2. Report of the Subcommittee on UN Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 mandates the Commission to study Treaties and other International instruments on Human Rights and to make recommendations for their effective implementation through domestic legislations as well as programmes and policies. Towards this mandate, the specialized thematic sub-committees, such as on child rights, disability, women, etc. were constituted to identify the gaps between the relevant international convention and the pertinent domestic legislations and also to

give suggestions/ recommendations in order to fill up those gaps. Accordingly, a Sub Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was constituted under the chairmanship of Smt. Jyotika Kalra, Member, NHRC.

Some of the recommendations made by the Subcommittee on UNCRC are:

- i. The mother should also be a natural guardian as is the father under the HAMA, 1956.
- ii. Independent Legislation with regard to adoption of children (in addition to HAMA, 1956) should be enacted regardless of the ethnic and religious affiliation. (Because provisions of adoption in JJ Act 2015 do not serve the purpose of adopting children who are not in need of care and protection).
- iii. All personal laws regarding adoption, maintenance and guardianship should be codified (As directed under Art. 44 of Constitution of India- Uniform Civil Code).
- iv. State as well as Central Government should run a drive (on periodic basis) to identify and register CCIs so as to ensure no child is deprived of minimum standards of care and protection (as provided under Chapter 6 of JJ Model Rules).
- v. The registration of CCIs should only be under JJ Act and the Act of 1960 should be amended to cover only such charitable institutions that do not cater to children in need of care and protection as defined in the JJ Act (If the Act of 1960 is not amended, there would remain two enactments under which CCIs can be registered, leading to confusion in both implementation and monitoring of standards of care and protection in child care institutions). To ensure minimum standards of care and protection for all children deprived of a family environment, it is imperative to have one single procedure for registration of CCIs.
- vi. The State wise data on the number of children in waiting and the number of parents in waiting should be available on the website of CARA.
- vii. Data about monitoring and follow-up (with special focus on inter-country adoptions and adoption of disabled children) as required under Section 58 (5), 59 (11) and 62 of the JJ Act should be made available on the CARA website (to make it public) for monitoring and follow-up of inter country and domestic adoption in order to ensure greater transparency and streamlining of adoption and also to prevent misuse of adoption regulations and procedures.
- viii. CLPR Act should specifically provide for prevention, identification, rescue and rehabilitation of Child labour or adolescent on the lines of Bonded Labour System Abolition Act 1976.
- ix. A check list be prepared so as to ensure, when a child is rescued, all the legal provisions are invoked.
- x. Children below the age of 14 years may be allowed to work only in the nuclear family enterprises and entertainment industry in

a manner conducive to their growth, development and safety and with all prescribed legal safeguards including the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009.

- xi. To ensure the protection under Art 21 A and Art 23 of the COI available to the children below the age of 14 years, monitoring mechanism in Child and adolescent labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 2016 should be developed at the State level by making necessary provision in the Rules/Regulation.
- xii. Children in CCIs who do not have date of birth or any other identification, it should be the responsibility of CCIs to ensure the identity proof for such children. (As provided under JJ Act Sec.94 or any other law as may be applicable).
- xiii. Special coaching should be provided in every CCI for children (who join the formal school system in order to help them cope with the school curriculum and bring them at par academically with other children in their class). At the same time viable vocational training and skill development programmes should be promoted for children who can neither be linked to the Formal Schools nor the National Open School system.

3. Core Group Meeting on Children

A meeting of the core group on children was held on 20th November, 2018, in which agendas were took up on various child right issues, like Protection of Children from sexual abuse in the Child Care Institutions; Children's Human Rights: National and International Context – Discussion on UNCRC and Indian Laws; Rights of the Children with Disabilities and Rehabilitation of Children rescued from trafficking. The recommendations were sent to the concerned ministries and all the state governments. After due deliberations, the following recommendations emanated from the Core Group Meeting:

- i. **Mandatory Registration of CCIs:**
 - ii. As mandated under the provisions of the JJ (Care and Protection) Act 2015, all Child Care Institutions (Government and Non Governmental, irrespective of receiving grants or not) should be registered under the Act in such a manner as prescribed and it should also be linked to the Specialized Adoption Agencies. It should be ensured that timely inspections and follow up actions are carried out meticulously as per the guidelines of the Ministry of Woman and Child Development.
 - iii. Compliance of Registration formalities:
 - iv. Compliance of legal and other formalities of the proposed Societies should be ensured from the time of registration itself under the relevant Acts/ Rules. It must be made mandatory to submit a quarterly Report on continuation of those compliances and its routine evaluation by the authorities concerned.
- v. **Profiling and redundant Monitoring of CCIs:**
 - vi. The guidelines contained in the WCD manuals for Institutional Care and protection of Children should be followed by every CCIs working in the field. The monitoring and inspection of CCIs and effective functioning of the Internal Management

Committee must be ensured by the State Inspection Committee. Child Welfare Committees should also give preference to Govt run CCIs over the private run CCIs. Profiling of CCIs, random checking and routine inspections should be strictly followed as per the guidelines of MWCD. Additional mechanisms for monitoring the system and some level of accreditation or ranking may be given to the CCIs on the basis of its functioning with the required level of transparency and accountability.

- vii. Installation of CCTV Cameras:
- viii. Premises of the CCIs should be under CCTV coverage. It is an effective deterrent measure, although not a substitute for human care and accountability; therefore senior officers must be held responsible for its effective deployment, functioning, utilization and accountability.
- ix. Accessibility of help line Number 1098
- x. It should be ensured that the helpline is effectively working and is freely accessible to the children. The advantageous utility of it the same to be made known to every inhabitant of the CCI. Also, it should be ensured that the access to the phone should not be under the coverage of CCTV.
- xi. Sensitization, Early Intervention and Community based management:
- xii. Sensitization and awareness campaigns to be organized for early detection of disability among the children and interventions by the local stakeholders, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Administrators, Legislators, Doctors, Nurses, Aanganwadi, Asha workers, Paramedical workers, etc. Training programmes and workshops should be organized for creating awareness about the rights of the disabled children and to provide them with compulsory elementary education in an appropriate environment.
- xiii. Mapping and survey:
- xiv. The States/ UTs needs to undertake specific survey of the disabled children, ascertaining their special needs and the extent to which these are being met. The survey also needs to be carried out to promote and facilitate inclusive education and their empowerment from the primary level itself. Also, there should be an attempt to develop a child tracking system to keep updated information on the whereabouts of the child.
- xv. Promotion of retrofitting of environment:
- xvi. There should be initiative in creating a universal design of all products, technologies, the assistive/supportive devices with which we can help children overcome the major difficulties in their development.

4. Regional Conferences on Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

Regional Conferences on Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 were already held in three regions, i.e., Northern, Eastern and Southern region. The objectives of the Conference were three fold: (i) to raise awareness amongst all the stakeholders, (ii) to review the status of implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 and, (iii) to discuss the various issues involved in raising awareness and improving access to restorative justice. The objectives were deliberated by the Government officials from Department of Women and Child Development, Chairpersons/Members of Child Welfare Committees, Chairpersons/Members of State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights, Chairperson/Members from State Human Rights Commissions, Senior police officials, legal experts, officials from Department of Judiciary, Resource Persons and representatives from NGOs/ CSOs/ HR organizations and academic institutions.

5. Publications

- i. “Children in India and their Rights”: The National Human Rights Commission thought it apt to bring out the revised edition. It consists of milestones at the national and international levels, critical analysis of the situation of children in India, role of NHRC in protecting and promoting children’s rights and way forward.
- ii. “Children in India and their Rights”
- iii. “Bachchon ke Adhikar/ Rights of the Child”: Enlists the convention on the rights of child passed on 20th Nov, 1989 by the United Nations Organisation.
- iv. Revised booklet – “A Guidebook for the Media on Sexual Violence against Children”: A Guidebook for the Media on Sexual Violence against Children: The Guidebook developed and designed jointly by the Prasar Bharti Corporation and UNICEF aims to facilitate media intervention to protect the rights of children against sexual violence. It is meant for professionals working in the media and hopes to encourage them to address the issue of sexual violence against children in a consistent, sensitive and effective manner, consonant with the rights and best interests of children. The guidebook is the culmination of four workshops organized by the NHRC and Prasar Bharti, with support from UNICEF, for radio and television producers.
- v. “Trafficking in Women and Children”: Report on the Action research on trafficking in women and children in India: The Commission, the UNIFEM and the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi jointly conducted an Action Research to know the trends, dimension, factors and responses related to trafficking in women and children in India. The report made a number of recommendations to combat trafficking.



Atul Chandrakant Kulkarni,
Advisory Board Member ECDF

Atul Chandrakant Kulkarni is the Director of the Eurasia Special Technologies Pvt. Ltd., AVSM LOGISTICS PVT. LTD., SEAMLESS PROJECTS PVT LTD., ALLSEAS PROJECT SOLUTIONS PVT. LTD., Varti Agro Pvt Ltd., Yuva Vikas Society, Bhaskar Foundation, Indra Varun Marine Services Pvt Ltd. He is the Member of the Board of Governors/ Society of the prestigious Indian Institute of Management, Shillong. He is also a Member of the Board of Governors/ Society of the prestigious National

Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE), Mumbai appointed by the Ministry of Human Resources Development, GoI for 4 year term. He Chairs the Trust, Students' Experience in Interstate Living (SEIL). This 5 decade old Public Charitable Trust is involved in activities focusing on National Integration of the people living in the far flung border areas of India more specifically in the North East region. He is involved in activities focusing on Capacity Building and Skill Development of the youth from the region. For the activities of this trust Atul has been traveling to North East since 1991. Atul is the Working President of PIOCCI (People of Indian Origin Chamber of Commerce & Industry), a Chamber dedicated to needs and support of Indian Diaspora living overseas. He is the National Convener of Maritime Security Study Group of Forum for Integrated National Security (FINS). He is the Vice President, Yachting Association of India. He has been an advisor and Independent consultant for various organizations like the Indian Ports Association, Gas Authority of India to name a few. Atul loves travelling and likes music. Has been an active social worker since his college days and associated with many organizations.

Early Child Education: An investment in Human Capital

Early childhood education is a broad term used to describe any type of educational program that serves children in their preschool years, before they are old enough to enter kindergarten. Early childhood education consists of any number of activities and experiences designed to aid in the cognitive and social development of preschoolers before they enter elementary school.

Early childhood education can be defined as "...warm, nurturing care and enriched learning experiences designed to simulate a child's development in all key developmental areas."

Elements of an early childhood education program

Over the years, there has been much debate over what the attributes of an effective early childhood education program are, which is largely due to the fact that ECE is a relatively new field. More specifically, much of the debate has centered around what type of program qualifies as an actual educational experience as opposed to simply providing care.

Early Child education programs may be designed specifically for either three-, four-, or five-year olds, and they may be provided in childcare and day care or nursery school settings, as well as more conventional preschool or pre-kindergarten classrooms and differ in terms of their funding and sponsorship.

The other part of the equation when it comes to early childhood education is the formal education that it receives at a young age.

This stage of education typically spans years 2 to 6 of a child's life. There can be a variety of formats in which a child receives formal education at a young age, which can vary from state to state and program to program. Educational programs may be designed specifically for children at each individual age and can be provided in settings including childcare, daycare, nursery school, preschool, and kindergarten. Some of these programs are privately run, while others are operated by a local school system.

Digging deeper, there are several different facets that all combine to contribute to a child's early education. In terms of informal education, the primary source of input when it comes to a child's development is, of course, its relationship with its parents or primary caregivers. In essence, parents can be considered to be a child's first teacher. This relationship is especially critical between 0-2 years of age as the child begins to develop its sense of self and establishes an attachment with its parents. The quality of the attachment formed at this stage of life can have a significant impact on a child's future education.

There has been much debate over the years about what type of program qualifies as simply care and what type of program qualifies as education. Another concern of today's early childhood education programs is ensuring that they are of high quality.

High-quality early childhood program includes five, critical components:

- Provides a well-rounded curriculum that supports all areas of development
- Addresses child health, nutrition, and family needs as part of a comprehensive service network
- Assesses children to enhance student learning and identify concerns
- Employs well-educated, adequately paid teachers
- Provides small class sizes and low teacher-child ratios

A high-quality ECE program consists of five important components:

- It should provide a well-rounded curriculum that supports all areas of development
- It should address child health, nutrition, and family needs as part of a comprehensive service network
- It should assess children to enhance student learning and identify concerns
- It should employ well-educated, adequately paid teachers
- It should provide small class sizes and low teacher-child ratios

These five components should, therefore, be the core pillars of any quality early childhood education program. However, additional characteristics of a high-quality program include nutritious meals and snacks, a strong foundation in language development, early literacy, and math, and teachers who frequently measure children's progress.

Characteristics of a high-quality early education program are:

- A balance between individual, small group, and large group activities
- A balanced schedule that does not result in rushed or fatigued children
- A clear statement of goals and a comprehensive philosophy that addresses all areas of child development
- A strong foundation in language development, early literacy, and early math
- Access to a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment, along with the supervision and guidance of competent, caring adults
- Engages children in purposeful learning activities and play, which is instructed by teachers who work from lesson and activity plans
- Nutritious meals and snacks
- Teachers and staff who regularly communicate with parents and caregivers
- Teachers who frequently check children's progress

This education is fundamental to the development of a child and can significantly shape the later years of an individual's life.

The effectiveness of an early childhood program is dependent upon a number of factors:

- A quality staff
- An appropriate environment
- Consistent scheduling
- Parental involvement
- Proper grouping practices

It is clearly evident that early childhood education plays an important role in laying the foundation for children to succeed in the future. It seems that this industry is poised for continued growth in the years to come, based on a rapid rate of job growth and ever-increasing funding for early childhood education programs.

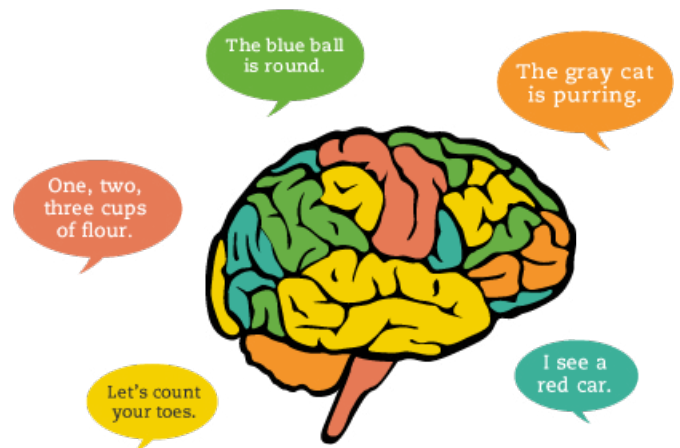
KEYPOINTS

Early childhood education

Early childhood education (ECE) is the education of children from birth through age 6. It is during this phase of life that the foundations for cognitive, physical and emotional development are built. This is a period of intense, rapid growth and development, with ECE at the helm for fostering a healthy foundation for life.

Young children generally start learning the basics of walking, talking and naming colors and shapes at home. They often begin learning the alphabet and how to count, which are foundational aspects of academic learning. But early childhood education also allows children the chance to apply what they've learned at home in a practical setting, interacting with individuals outside of their family. ECE classrooms offer young children a safe, nurturing environment for interaction, stimulation and social activity.

Early childhood education develops minds at the most formative stage of life



This period of rapid proliferation paves the way for a child's brain development and provides either a strong or weak foundation for all learning later in life. ECE works to challenge, stimulate and nurture the formative early years of life to give children every possible chance for healthy development.

While many are familiar with the overarching concept of early childhood education, not many know that it comprises many different approaches and philosophies. Some preschools are constructed around language immersion, allowing young children to cultivate their language-acquisition skills and develop fluency in a secondary language. Other preschools may be faith-based, forming their curriculum around religious content. Preschools and early childhood settings vary from kindergarten in a public school setting to private preschool, child care centers, or home day care.

Speaking of benefits, ECE lays the foundation for a lifetime of learning and can have a cascading, positive influence throughout a child's lifetime. It helps prepare children to reach the appropriate academic level by third grade. Students who fall behind by third grade are more likely to drop out before graduation. And drop-out students are far more likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime, costing unfathomable amounts in lost human potential and contributing to the astronomical cost of prisons nationwide.

Long-term monetary benefits of early childhood education are plentiful also. It's been calculated that each dollar invested in early childhood education is returned four to nine times over. This is due to the fact that early childhood programs decrease the need for (and subsequently, the cost of) special education, welfare and incarceration while increasing earnings and tax revenues throughout a lifetime.

But disparities can emerge much earlier in life. Language skills as early as age 1 and 2 are predictive of a child's pre-literacy skills at age 5. This shows just how highly influential a young mind can be and helps make the case for implementing ECE programs.

Early childhood education can be especially beneficial for children who lack the resources and opportunities of their peers in early life. For children from low-income families and for those at risk for academic failure, early childhood education can be particularly powerful for their development, helping to even the playing field and ensure all children have the chance to build the skills they need to succeed in school and in life.

This education is fundamental to the development of a child and can significantly shape the later years of an individual's life. It's a chance for children to expand their worlds beyond home life, to develop critical skills through interactive play. It's a place to nurture young minds in a safe and engaging environment. It's an opportunity for children to learn more about themselves and how the world works.

The truth is that early childhood education goes far beyond finger painting and story time. This critical component of childhood sets the stage for an entire lifetime.





KRISHNANJAN CHANDA

Principal South Point School, Guwahati

Mr. Krishnanjan Chanda was born in the year 1959 in a family of educators in Guwahati. His late father has been a school administrator and mother a school teacher.

He went to school in Guwahati and had his parents as his teachers initially. He went to high school, college and university in Guwahati and completed masters I English literature from Gauhati University in 1984.

He started working as a high school teacher at South Point School, Guwahati immediately thereafter and also obtained his bachelor of Education Degree from Gauhati University and Post Graduate Diploma in English Language Teaching from Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad.

He joined the Senior Secondary School as Post Graduate Trained Teacher of English Language, specializing in Teaching Communicative English to Senior Secondary School students.

He was appointed the Principal of the school in the year 1996 and has been continuing in that position till date.

Apart from his regular responsibilities as Principal of school, he also supervises a after-school-hours teaching programme for first time learners comprising of children from slums and from below poverty line families.

As Principal, Mr. Krishnanjan Chanda has initiated inter school partnership with schools abroad, mainly in the U.K. under the aegis of British Council involving teachers exchange and collaborative projects.

He stays involved with all spheres of activities in school, both scholastic and co-scholastic, giving and taking feedback and ensuring proper environment for a satisfactory teaching-learning experience for all stakeholders.

Draft New Education Policy 2019 and Preschool Education

This year the Human Resource Development Ministry, Government of India, had come out with the draft New Education Policy for consideration to be implemented after due discussion and debate. An important and new aspect of this draft policy is to bring into framework of formal schooling system, preschool education to be imparted to 3 to 6 year old children. Though, preschooling always existed in India, especially in urban centers where job responsibilities of parents required their children to be cared for being the crèche stage with many Montessori and kindergarten schools mushrooming all over the place to provide such facilities. Training academies for teachers to take care of children in preschools through instructions employing the play way methodology also came up in cities and towns.

However, such training facilities, the instructions and the overall preschool scenario in India had remained mostly unregulated with such schools displaying various levels of competence and outcomes in their field of work. The approach of such schools had always differed in the sense that while a few would focus on holistic skill development among children of the target age group, including brain, eye and limb coordination, others would keep to academic rote learning to prepare their words to crack admission tests of elite schools of the city, resulting in the typical case of the child being neither here nor there.

The basic purpose of preschooling is obviously to prepare children below 6 years of age for mainstreaming into formal education system at the primary school level. *The child, in preschool stage, learn how to fend for themselves in a social milieu as also acquire the basic skills and confidence in entering into the next and more formal academic pursuit in life.* The exit level competence of the child at the pre-school stage is expected to merge with that of the entry level at the transition. As a too diluted curriculum with just song and dance and games and nursery rhymes will disadvantage the child in merging into the advanced mainstreaming, excessive dependence on mechanical rote learning with no real absorption of knowledge and skill will impact his seamless assimilation into the formal schooling system.

The draft New Education Policy 2019 is expected to formalize pre-school education. *This may be done by way of prescribing content, curriculum and pedagogy, having uniformity at a pan India level, but allowing for minimum localized deviations if deemed necessary.* It would then be reasonably expected that children everywhere would have a level playing field in matters academic once they enter the realm of formal primary school education.



ANUBHA GOYAL

Nonconventional and progressive, her aim as an educator has been to mould young minds into confident, responsible and competent individuals ready to face the challenges of life and serve the nation efficiently. A strict disciplinarian, firm yet loving she has been an excellent leader and an able administrator who has been efficiently guiding and motivating her teachers, staff and students alike. She leaves an unforgettable impressions in the minds of all the people she comes across.

Professional Experience

- Founding Principal of Sarala Birla Gyan Jyoti School, Guwahati- 2003 to 2014
- Principal of Royal Global School, Guwahati- 2014 till date.

Mrs. Anubha Goyal began her teaching career in 1981 and has taught in some of the best schools of the country.

Mrs. Goyal is the proud recipient of the prestigious 'CBSE Award to Mentors' awarded by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Govt. of India in 2012, in public recognition of her valuable and commendable services rendered to the community for the cause of education as a Mentor of outstanding merit.

An avid reader, a motivational speaker and a keen learner, she is open to adopting new ideas and implementing them. She has been a guest speaker in many events including the TED Talk.

A teacher who has touched hundreds of lives, she believes in "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached" as said by Swami Vivekananda.

SPEAKER

Bullies are made, not born. Its inception, perception and prevention.

Expression is the manifestation of impressions. Being ignored and ignorant equally contributes towards the complication of human persona. Bullying is a psychological warfare resulting from the imprints created through a series of unhealthy social interactions and threatening parental interventions.

Bullies are made, not born and it happens at an early age if the normal aggression of 2 years old isn't handled with consistency. Reports suggest that if an aggressive child is shown that he can be treated with respect without having pushed for it, he may be more inclined to alter his behaviour. If he can learn to depend on and trust others without having to threaten for results, he may consider that it's not actually necessary to manipulate others.

Bullying behaviour is a serious problem among school age children and adolescents; it has short and long term effects on the individual who is bullied, the individual who bullies, the individual who is bullied and bullies others and the bystanders present during the bullying event.

Bullying can be either direct or indirect, and both children and youth may experience different types of bullying. The detrimental consequences of bullying is not only limited to, neurobiological and psychosomatic disturbances, but also deteriorates psychosocial and academic performance of both the bully and the bullied. Bullying induced stress has ubiquitous effects on physiology and the brain, alters levels of many hormones and biomarkers.

Being mindful of behavioural response and biological alterations of both bully and bullied would provide better insight into prevention of traditional as well as cyberbullying. Moreover, social buffering would be a key factor in treating this maladaptive behavioural response and enhancement of progressive metamorphosis of human perception.



Dr. Mythili Hazarika is an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology, Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, Guwahati, Assam and has been in the Department of Psychiatry from the last two decades (from 2000). She had obtained her Masters from Pune University, M-Phil in Clinical Psychology from National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore and PhD from Gauhati University and Post-doctoral training in Epidemiology and Public Health from the University of Florida, USA.

She is the President of SoMHIL a Society of mental health in lower and middle income countries and has been active in community mental health programs. She has professional memberships in 16 organizations special mention Autism Board of Assam, Boards for Mental Health and Rights of Persons with Disability (RPWD) Act, Tobacco Cessation Board and associated with various forums either as a guest lecturer or in the editorial boards. She has to her credit 36 regional, national and international publications, edited one book on child and adolescents' responsive education

(CARE) and written one book chapter in the handbook of research on diagnosing, treating, and managing intellectual disabilities. She has been a guest speaker in more than 150 seminars, 66 workshops and in media (television, radio). For National Rural Health Mission programs, she has been a regular speaker on psychological issues and management of adolescent's psychological problems and have trained the MD (psychiatry) students in various mental health institutes on diagnostics and neuropsychological assessment and management as well.

She is currently engaged in four research projects on substance abuse, neurocognitive functions across life span perspectives, mental health of young children and developing a scale to assess for specific learning disabilities (SLD) in the vernacular medium schools of Assam. Moreover, she has been associated with institutions working with disability issues such as Udayachal Multiple Disability Rehabilitation Centre, Guwahati and Essah Special School, Guwahati.

Inclusive Education: A paradigm shift

"They used to teach grammar and math too. My son will never get hold of such things and they are of no use to him." – shared the mother of a 21 year old Autistic boy when asked why she gave up on inclusive schools.

"Her inclusive school was very hi-fi, expensive too, all the facilities available. But now I am searching for a small school with more caring people, infrastructure *achcha na ho toh bhi chalega*." – said the mother of a 14 year old girl with Global Developmental Delay who could afford any school but preferred a school with compassionate teachers.

"Please don't suggest me schools where they keep children with mental problems. My daughter has delays in physical development, but mentally she is all okay." – father of a 3 year old girl with Moya Moya disease (operated) expressed his concern while searching for a playschool to induct his daughter who hasn't developed walking yet.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006, "persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." The convention also recognises disability as an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers."

Social response to 'disability' in our part of the world is still not far from occasional sympathies, stigma and discrimination. This area needs meticulous planning, research, intervention in all domains and policy

level changes with special focus on human resource development. For children with any disability enrollment in academics is a major challenge among all others.

What is Inclusive Education?

Inclusive essentially means "leaving no one behind". In the context of education for differently abled people, inclusive education refers to enabling access to the existing systems. Education is what we learn to lead a meaningful life with effective participation in the society. School is an organised set up for learning, academic and social skills. The need of every child is unique and so is his or her learning style.

For children with disabilities acquiring skills to do activities of daily living could be a goal or excelling in some fields like sports or music. Disability is not a homogenous group and education needs to focus on the differences and diversity.

Emphasising the importance of “inclusive education” the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 defines it as “a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities.”

Existing systems of education for the differently abled

“My son went to special schools for years. Recently he joined an inclusive school. He was promoted to class II after the exam. For the first time I have received his mark-sheet. His father will be very happy. We will have a feast tonight.” – mother of a 17 year old boy with Intellectual Disability expressed her joy in receiving a mark-sheet on the result day.

In regular schools there are classes for integrated education or curriculum for specific learning disabilities, mild mental retardation and expressive speech problems. There are special schools, home based training, etc. Teaching styles have been innovative due to the laws and policies laid down by the UNCRPD 2006. Moreover, each of these has advantages as well as drawbacks. In Assam, the state rules based on the RPWD Act are yet to be approved and implemented.

Prerequisites of an inclusive education set up

Infrastructural needs

Access to classrooms, playgrounds, libraries, labs, etc. through ramp, special chair/table and required space; proper arrangement for health and hygiene concerns at school – accessible and spacious toilets, menstruation related hygiene facilities.

Human resource

Trained and efficient human resource right from the gate keeper and bus staff to the teachers and cleaners – it is everyone’s job at an inclusive set up to have proper orientation on the needs of the differently abled students.

Curriculum

Need to understand the different disability conditions and specific needs; goals and methods need to be set accordingly; use of different mediums, especially, if vernacular medium then to have assessment tools accordingly; flexibility - a 5 years old child with difficulties in fine motor skills would write the given things with crayons but he could never get a pencil to work; learning of skills in preparation towards vocational goals is the requisite factor.

Evaluation

Flexibility of timing, criteria and questions; various cues and aids should be provided.

Safety and Security

Environmental hardware – doors, machines, gates, road crossing etc.; pre-emptive measures to ensure safety from sexual harassment; preventive measures to stop bullying and teasing from fellow students; counselling from time to time; to teach by various audio visual practices about safety behaviour and practices to impart knowledge by role playing and computer generated stimulations about safety and security needs.

Attitudinal accommodation

Understanding that disability is an “evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers”; awareness and capacity building involving different agencies in essential to reduce the gap in working towards social integration in the long run.

Disability is a multidimensional concept. Its complexities lie in how one perceives and treat them. The environmental and social barriers causing hindrance needs to be addressed with a team approach.

Hence, the first step is to have awareness programs at various levels and with different kinds of disabilities and then add - Awareness building needs to bring together students, parents, teachers and community for active and efficient impart of education. Capacity enhancement of the stakeholders through timely trainings and orientations would help in building an effective connection.

Mutual trust and cooperation among the stakeholders involved is an important part of the process.

Barriers and Limitations

“I have no problem in keeping him at my school. We take good care of him. But his mother has high hopes and we are unable to fulfill those.” – shared the Principal of a playschool about a 5 year old boy with Intellectual Disability due to Agenesis of Corpus Callosum. His mother blames the teachers of inefficient attention to him as his classmates always outperform him.

“I have to think of sustaining my school. I know what is ideal. But I cannot. Other parents would complain and withdraw admissions of their children if I give admission to mentally challenged children. Children mix up well. But the parents think their ‘normal’ kids will learn ‘bad things’ from the ‘abnormal’ ones. I might lose the franchise if I don’t get enough admissions.” – owner of playschool expressed her dilemma regarding making her school inclusive.

“We can certainly give admission to everyone as it is their right. But we do not have caretakers to take them to the toilet. We also don’t know much about how to teach them.”- a teacher of a government lower primary school shared.

When the professionals come across such dilemmas the best approach is to empathize with them, but give alternative solutions to their blocks and barriers to inclusive education. Practical and multifaceted solutions are to be focused with a comprehensive management plan involving all the parents of disabled as well as non disabled ones and make a team to address this complex phenomenon.

Knowledge of what is normal behaviour and which behaviours require careful attention is essential. Some require medicines which are not preferred by the parents, but it is essential to understand some disorders from a medical model and treat accordingly. Behaviour problems associated to specific situation needs applied behaviour analyses and intervention. This need formal training in Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) for which again professionals are nearly absent. Behavioural issues with some children require careful handling. A 14 year old girl with Autism and Sensory Processing Disorder injured a 2 years and 6 months girl with Down's Syndrome while expressing love by 'touching the cheeks'. The 14 years old had a high sensory threshold and the difficulty in understanding intensity of pain or pressure. Situations like this create confusion between parents and teachers. Behavioural issues are most often seen as unsaid criteria for exclusion of students.

How do we go ahead?

For the holistic development of a child Inclusive Education is the answer. To recognise the need of this education for the children with different disabilities and enable effective implementation there are some recommendations given below-

- Awareness building.
- Capacity Building trainings, etc. in collaboration with Disability Commissionerate and Social.
- Welfare.
- Collaborations with government and non-government stakeholders working locally.
- Changes in curriculum and evaluation process.
- Advocacy.

Co writer

Devyani Borkataki





Dr. Manju Dhoundiyal

Dr. Manju Dhoundiyal is a faculty at National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, Regional Centre, Guwahati with experience of having worked across the country. This Institute works under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

Dr. Dhoundiyal is a Phd in Psychology with academic honors and distinctions conferred upon her by Punjab University, Delhi University and Jodhpur University. She is engaged in training and research in the twin fields of women empowerment and child development for the last three decades and has numerous research papers published in national and international Journals. Her paper entitled "Challenges of Working Women in the New Millennium" won the Best Paper Award in the theme "Psychology of Women" at International Conference of the Indian Academy of Psychology.

Dr. Dhoundiyal is also a Soft Skills Trainer. She has been extending faculty support to various Government and Public Sector Undertakings to explore the fields of Self awareness, Motivation, Leadership, Communication, Inter Personal Relations, Team Building, Stress Management etc.

Other subjects that highlight the academic interest of Dr. Dhoundiyal are issues related to Gender, Early Childhood Care and Education and Women Empowerment.

Apart from numerous contributions in edited volumes Dr. Dhoundiyal has also authored a book entitled "Indian Women in Modern Age".

Equity in Education:

A Step towards Fair and Inclusive Societal Setup

Backdrop

Evidence from neuroscience shows that over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6 years. This highlights the critical importance of developmentally appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in a child's early years to promote sustained and healthy brain development and growth (Draft Education Policy, 2019).

Nobel laureate economist James Heckman estimates a lifelong economic rate of return of 7 to 10 percent per year per dollar invested in quality early childhood programs. It is thus critical that education system should invest more in the early years. SDG4 also seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030.

However, a study by Save the Children documents that less than one-third of 6-year-old children from 38 countries around the world are starting primary school with mastery of the foundations in reading, counting and socio-emotional skills. India lags quiet behind.

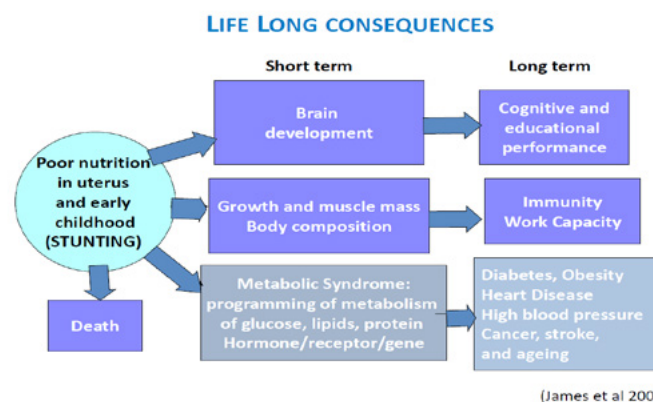
It is to reiterate that failing to invest sustainably and equitably in high quality early learning opportunities endangers the holistic and optimal development of children and thereby impacts the quality of life of a nation.

Early Childhood Care and Education encompasses the inseparable elements of care, health, nutrition, play and early learning within a protective and enabling environment.

An academic system that practices educational equity is a strong foundation of a society that is fair and thriving. However, inequity in education is challenging to avoid, and can be broken down into inequity due to socioeconomic standing, race, gender or disability. Educational equity is also based in the historical context of the location, people and structure.

Connection Between Maternal Malnutrition and Disability

Maternal malnutrition can affect the development of the foetus, cause intrauterine growth delays and increase the risk of the infant developing impairments. Researches indicate that mothers who are malnourished are more likely to give birth to low birth weight babies which is a known risk factor for mild intellectual disability. Anaemia



in the mother is also known to be positively correlated with low birth weight and traumatic delivery which can affect a child's cognitive development. Suboptimal pelvic growth in girls, which itself can be caused by malnutrition, can also lead to inter-generational problems when they reach child-bearing age. Research evidence indicates that

those Infants whose mothers were severely malnourished when they were in-utero reported to have a higher incidence of mental illness and can be up to twice as likely to develop schizophrenia in later life.

Nutritional Status of Children and Learning Outcomes

Specific micronutrient deficiencies, including lack of iodine, iron and vitamin A, and malnutrition related to lack of protein and energy, are considered risk factors for physical, sensory and cognitive impairment among children. There is also evidence to suggest that iodine deficiency may affect the motor development of young children under age four. Malnutrition can also cause structural damage to the brain and affect motor and exploratory skills as well as future cognitive development and schooling. Children with anaemia before age 2 may suffer irreversible delays even if iron is replenished at a later age. Malnourished children often score lower on language, personal, motor and social development scores. Thus, the nutritional status of children marks their learning outcomes and thus impacts the educational status of the country.

Conceptual Clarity

Children need to be given unconditional support and scaffolding to optimize their educational progress. The goal is for all children to work in their Zone of Proximal Development. Equity recognizes that some are at a larger disadvantage than others and aims at compensating for these people's misfortunes and disabilities to ensure that everyone can attain the same type of healthy lifestyle. The growing importance of educational equity is based on the premise that an individual's level of education directly correlates to future quality of life.

Equity can be described as the elimination of privilege, oppression, disparities and disadvantage that historically have excluded those belonging to particular groups. Thus, "Equity in education", is a measure of achievement, fairness, and opportunity in education. As Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) puts it, fairness means ensuring that personal and social circumstances do not prevent children from achieving their academic potential. Inclusion means setting a basic minimum standard for education that is shared by all children regardless of background, personal characteristics, or location. Achieving these standards requires looking at equity from aspects of monetary resources, academic standards and academic content and support.

UN Special Rapporteur Katarina Tomasevki developed the '4A' framework on the Right to Education. The '4A' framework encompasses availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability as fundamental to the institution of education. It is important to walk an extra mile to ensure coverage of children from poor households, migrant families, seasonal workers, institutional set-ups etc. with a special emphasis on gender perspective.

Contemplation on the Need for a Fair and Inclusive Societal Setup

Well, the time to intervene is NOW. Tomorrow will be too late for these children for whom each day matters in terms of impact of the intervention. "Sooner the better" needs to be the dictum for reaching out to children.

ECCE in the Context of Fairness and Inclusion

Levelling the play ground

ECCE - The convergent Approach

The main aim of providing quality care and education during the early years is to enable the child to develop as a holistic individual and realise his/her potential to the fullest in all the areas of development.

Care, nurture, nutrition, physical activity, psycho-social environment and cognitive and emotional stimulation during child's first six years are extremely critical for ensuring proper brain development and, consequently, desired learning curves over a person's lifetime.

Early Childhood Education requires to be responsive to diverse needs and variegated abilities of children with an equity lens. Progressive investments recognize that children don't develop in a vacuum, and engage families and communities in their learning journeys. To reach all children with the support they need, education systems must connect with children's support systems inside and outside of school.

The diversity in social contexts and family structures needs to be appropriately addressed in order to bring balanced parenting, including inputs from fathers, mothers and other caregivers in the family through enabling provisions in programmes.

High-quality early childhood program includes holistic curriculum that enhances the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional domains of each child's development; small class sizes and favourable teacher-child ratios; caring teachers and administrators; Ancillary services (e.g., professional development, curriculum supervision, and assessment and evaluation) that support children's development through curriculum implementation; Parents and caregivers working actively as partners with teachers in fostering appropriate child outcomes and programs that address child health, nutrition, and other family needs as part of a comprehensive service network.

Play is the way children explore and learn about the environment, their bodies, and their place in the world. Children should be encouraged to engage in collaborative and dramatic play using multimodal resources as they actively draw prominently from the social, cultural, and emotional roles and structures they observe and live daily. Multimodal resources include an array of visual, spoken, gestural, written, three-dimensional, digital, and other modes of communication.

Supervised play-based education, in groups and individually, is specially considered important to naturally build up the child's innate abilities of cooperation, teamwork, social interaction, compassion, equity, inclusiveness, communication, cultural appreciation, playfulness, curiosity, creativity, as well as the ability to successfully and respectfully interact with others.

Policy Framework for Ensuring Fairness and Inclusion in ECCE

ECCE Policy

It is necessary to make all ECCE programmes sensitive and responsive to the special needs of children, including training of ECCE teachers and caregivers in identification of needs of the children with disabilities, use of age appropriate play and learning materials, making

adaptations in the physical environment and counselling of parents.

Inclusion in the early years' implies that children with disabilities should have access to mainstream early learning environments which should accommodate them with a child centred pedagogy capable of meeting their individual needs.

From curricular perspective it is important to understand the significance of making the curriculum flexible and accessible, making adjustments in the physical environment to ensure it is barrier free, making the curriculum accessible to children with differing impairments, developing appropriate assessment and evaluation procedures. This process also sensitises typical peers to accept and learn to respect diversity.

ECCE Policy also emphasises due attention to be given to language acquisition and experiences in ECCE programmes. It also encourages male ECCE teachers so that learners will benefit from male role models.

There is ample evidence that children are more successful in school and find it more satisfying if they are taught in ways that are responsive to their readiness levels, interests and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2000).

ECCE interventions can promote gender equity by compensating for gender biases in nutrition, health care or stimulation that may occur in the home. It needs to facilitate as much active learning as possible through play and other activities which are free of gender bias. Stories, songs, activities and facilitation aids should depict girls and boys in the same roles and men and women in all professions.

The ECCE curriculum adopts a play and activity based approach in which the learning processes are based on the needs, interests, abilities and social context of the children for whom it is planned. The methodology in this approach is largely based on creating a stimulating learning environment for the child through planned activities/ tasks which are joyful, and involve active thinking/learning by the child. Children are visualised as active beings who construct their own knowledge and the process of teaching – learning is one of co-construction of knowledge, with adults as facilitators.

National Policy for Children, 2013

The State shall take all necessary measures to provide universal and equitable access to quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to all children below six years of age and ensure formulation and practice of pedagogy that engages and delights children based on the guiding principle that all children have equal rights and no child shall be discriminated against on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, class, language, and disability, social, economic or any other status

National Health Policy, 2017

The policy affirms commitment to pre-emptive care to achieve optimum levels of child health. Malnutrition, especially micronutrient deficiencies restricts survival, growth and development of children. It contributes to morbidity and mortality in vulnerable population.

During the critical period of early childhood, the consequences of deficiencies are particularly severe and many are irreversible. While dietary diversification remains the most desirable way forward, supplementation and fortification require to be considered as short and medium term solutions to fill nutrient gaps.

Policy recommends exploring fortified food and micronutrient sprinkles for addressing deficiencies through Anganwadi centers and schools. Recognising the complementary role of various nutrition-sensitive interventions from different platforms, the policy calls for synergy of inputs from departments like Women and Child Development, Education, WASH, Agriculture and Food and Civil Supplies. One of the Key Targets of the National Health Policy, 2017 is to Reduction of 40% in prevalence of stunting of Under-Five Children by 2025 and More than 90% of the newborn to be fully immunized by one year of age by 2025.

National Nutrition Policy, 1993

Protein Energy Malnutrition is the most widespread form of malnutrition among pre-school children of our country. A majority of them suffer from varying grades of malnutrition. As many as 43.8% children suffer from moderate degrees of PEM and 8.7% suffer from severe extreme forms of malnutrition.

It has been estimated in various studies that roughly 56 percent preschool children and almost 50 percent of the expectant mothers in the third trimester of pregnancy suffer from iron deficiency, which is basically due to inadequate or poor absorption of iron from a predominantly cereal-based diet. Low iron intake, coupled with hookworm infestation and infections, further aggravates the problem.

Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016

The appropriate Governments and the local authorities shall ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of eighteen years and will endeavour to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools. It shall also initiate or cause to initiate research for the purpose of designing and developing new assistive devices, teaching aids, special teaching materials or such other items as are necessary to give a child with disability equal opportunities in education.

Equity and Fairness Audit: A Long Way to Go

Attempts towards building equity and fairness into the early years of human life is a herculean task which by its very basic nature needs to catch up with changing times, emerging knowledge and growing technology on a regular basis. It needs to be an on-going process with inbuilt mechanisms for responding to variegated demands of different sections of society. Status of implementation of different initiatives will need to be continuously assessed in terms of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability of services to meet the diverse requirements of different target groups in terms of their economic status, social standing, geographical location, culture, gender roles and physical well being.



Nellie Ahmed

Nellie Ahmed is an Education Futurist and Founder, Managing Trustee of Maria's Public School, Guwahati with over 25 Years of work experience in Education Management and Small and Medium Enterprise. In 1988, she founded Maria Montessori House of Children with one child and today, Maria's Public School imparts holistic education to 2000 plus children with her unique vision of 'Learning Beyond the Classroom' and is listed in Fortune Future 50 Schools of India. With her in-depth understanding of Education system, Business Incorporation and People Management Capabilities, she developed 'The Maria's Braveheart Eco-camp' in 2015 at Gelpur, Rajasthan to facilitate Biodiversity and Environmental studies while guiding every student to stash advantageous information and broad perspective of life amongst student communities.

In recognition of her initiative and effort in many spheres of education in North East India, Mrs. Ahmed Tanweer has been bestowed with various honours by different organizations. Mrs. Ahmed has been conferred with coveted awards like Rajiv Gandhi Shiromoni Award in 2012, Best Entrepreneur Award in Northeast India by FICCI in the year 2012, the NEDFi Award 2015 for her entrepreneurial initiative in the Northeast region, 'Be the change-StreeUdhyami Award' by the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) in 2016 and Woman Achiever's Award for Education from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in 2016 and Future 50 School Shaping Award in 2017. She is a member of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and FICCI FLO

in the Northeast region. She has also been honoured as a member of the Assam Police State Accountability Commission, Government of Assam for her relentless works towards the betterment of the society.

Believing that there is little difference between obstacle and opportunity, he has led her team to make the school as one of the most prestigious schools in India with a global perspective.

Early Childhood Years: The Foundation of a Child's Life

Child Development and Early Learning

Child development refers to the changes in physical health, mental alertness, emotional and social competency. The first six years of a child's life are fundamentally important for the base development of the brain's organizational development and functioning throughout life.

Children need to receive a lot of nurturing and encouragement because this is the sensitive period where they learn the quickest. A sense of trust and security, attention and good health care needs to be provided so that they can become confident as they grow.

Understanding the stages of child development will help parents and teachers know what

to expect and how best to support the child as she or he grows and develops. In many settings, early childhood programmes support parents and their children from infancy to age 8, including the important transition from home to school.

Approach to Early Childhood Education

- i. Each child learns according to their inner timetable, and pace, so individualized learning is important.
- ii. Children are active participants in deciding what the focus of learning will be.

- iii. Self-correction and self-assessment should be an integral part of our approach.
- iv. Classroom materials and routines should support independence and create an environment that welcomes children to learn.
- v. The classroom should recreate a family structure where younger children feel supported and older children enjoy the status as mentors and role models.

transition of the children into formal education.

Pre and primary education play an important role in facilitating the learning and development of children as they are responsible for creating a congenial atmosphere engaging the children in positive learning activities.

The pre and primary teacher training like diploma in primary elementary teachers training not only equips the teachers with current teaching methodologies and latest skills, but also helps to bring in the creativity and innovation in their teaching which will shape the tender minds in a constructive environment.

Importance of Pre and Primary Teacher's Training

The field of pre and primary education has been evolving with every passing day and the education around the world are putting in a lot of emphasis on pre and primary education because it enables the smooth



Dr. Selva Kumar M.Sc, M.Ed, PhD

Founder and Director of International Montessori and Kindergarten Training Academy (IMKTA) Mysore, and Alpha National School. 20 years of experience in teaching from preschool to university and as a professor in B. Ed colleges. Brand owner of Alpha Kids Montessori. Member of Association Montessori International (AMI), Amsterdam and Joint Secretary of Indian Association of Pre School Board of Management Committee of CBSE, ICSE, State Private School Management.



Mental Health in Early Childhood

Introduction:

Mental health in early childhood means reaching developmental and emotional milestones, and learning healthy social skills and how to cope when there are problems. Mentally healthy children have a positive quality of life and can function well at home, in school, and in their communities.

As early experiences shape the architecture of the developing brain, they also lay the foundations of sound mental health. A child's relationships with parents, caregivers, teachers and peers are especially significant in providing a strong basis for later behavior, be it good or bad.

Any bad experiences predict the emergence of both physical and mental health problems later in life, such as heart disease and diabetes, as well as depression and anxiety. Furthermore, toxic stress also damages the child's cognitive, emotional, and social development, impairing his or her ability to learn and relate to others. If left untreated, this will continue to develop, leading to abnormal hormone levels that can affect school readiness and later academic achievement, as well as elevating the risk of the emergence of physical and mental problems in adult life.

Significant mental health problems do occur in young children:

Mental health problem among children are described as serious

changes in the way children typically learn, behave, or handle their emotions, which cause distress and problems getting through the day.

Children can show clear characteristics of anxiety disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, depression, post traumatic stress disorder, and neurodevelopmental disabilities, such as autism, at a very early age. Consequently, diagnosis in early childhood can be much more difficult.

Symptoms of childhood mental disorders

Symptoms of mental disorders in early childhood change over time as a child grows, and may include difficulties with how a child plays, learns, speaks, and acts or how the child handles their emotions. Symptoms often start in early childhood, although some disorders may develop during the teenage years. The diagnosis is often made in the school years and sometimes earlier. However, some children with a mental disorder may not be recognized or diagnosed as having one.

Children with mental illness may experience the classic symptoms of their particular disorder but may exhibit other symptoms as well, including

- Poor school performance;
- Persistent boredom;
- Frequent complaints of physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomachaches;
- Sleep and/or appetite problems like sleeping too much or too little, nightmares, or sleepwalking;

- Behaviours returning to those of a younger age (regressing), like bedwetting, throwing tantrums, or becoming clingy;
- Noncompliant or aggressive behaviours;
- More risk-taking behaviors and/or showing less concern for their own safety.

Examples of risk-taking behaviors include running into the street, climbing too high, engaging in physical altercations, or playing with unsafe items.

Causes and risk factors for mental illness in children

Mental disorders in children do not have one single definitive cause. Rather, people with these illnesses tend to have a number of biological, psychological, and environmental risk factors that contribute to their development. Biologically, mental illnesses tend to be associated with abnormal levels of neurotransmitters, like serotonin or dopamine in the brain, a decrease in the size of some areas of the brain, as well as increased activity in other areas of the brain. Physicians are more likely to diagnose girls with mood disorders like depression and anxiety compared to boys, while disorders like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Childhood mental illness may be a reaction to environmental stresses, including trauma like being the victim of verbal, physical, or sexual abuse, the death of a loved one, school problems, or being the victim of bullying or peer pressure.

Childhood mental disorders affect many children and families. Boys and girls of all ages, ethnic/racial backgrounds, and living in all regions.

Childhood mental disorders can be treated

Childhood mental disorders can be treated and managed. There are many treatment options based on the best and most current medical evidence, so parents and doctors should work closely with everyone involved in the child's treatment — teachers, coaches, therapists, and other family members.

Parents: Knows their child best. They can talk to the healthcare professional if they have concerns about the way the child behaves at home, in school, or with friends.

Teachers/School administrators: Early identification is important so that children can get the help they need. Work with families and healthcare professionals if they have concerns about the mental health of a child in the school.

Healthcare professionals: Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment based on updated guidelines are very important. There are resources available to help diagnose and treat children's mental disorders.

Early Childhood Mental Development leads to prosperous and Sustainable Society

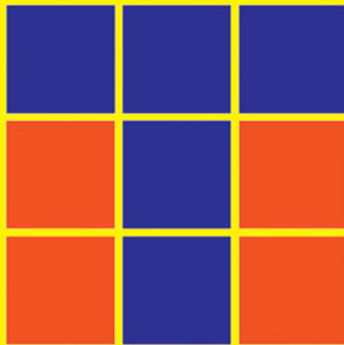
The first years of life are important, because what happens in early childhood can matter for a lifetime, in order to promote their healthy development. Stable, responsive, nurturing relationships and rich learning experiences in the earliest years provide lifelong benefits for learning, behavior and both physical and mental health.

Cognitive, emotional and social capacities are inextricably intertwined throughout the life course. The brain is a highly integrated organ, and its multiple functions operate in a richly coordinated fashion. Emotional well-being and social competence, provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities, and together they are the bricks and mortar that make up the foundation of human development. The emotional and physical health, social skills and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important prerequisites for success in school and, later, in the workplace and community.

Stable, caring relationships are essential for healthy development. Children develop in an environment of relationships that begin in the home and include extended family members, early care and education providers, and other members of the community. Studies show that toddlers who have secure, trusting relationships with their parents or non-parent caregivers experience minimal stress hormone activation when frightened by a strange event, and those who have insecure relationships experience a significant activation of the stress response system.

Balanced approach to emotional, social, cognitive and language development will better prepare all children for success in school and later in the workplace and community.

From pregnancy through early childhood, all of the environments in which children live and learn, and the quality of their relationships with adults and caregivers, have a significant impact on their cognitive, emotional and social development. A wide range of policies, including those directed toward early care and education, primary health care, child protective services, adult mental health and family economic supports, among many others can promote the safe, supportive environments and stable, caring relationships that children need.



TOPCEM

CEMENT

Mazbooti ka bharosa...hamesha



Smruti Sweta Samantray

Climate Leader, Writer, Feature Editor, & Freelance Brand Consultant

Smruti has been working in the genre of Corporate Communication for more than 8 years now (specialization: Green PR). Hailing from a background of English Literature-Mass Communication, MBA and PR, she has been imparting training sessions to the college students (including engineering, management/ IIM students) on various related topics. She has had an opportunity to work on some stories with an array of international and national media, including CNN-IBN, NDTV, Door Darshan, Al Jazeera English, Finland Times, etc. She is also a Climate leader (India), trained by Al Gore, former Vice President of US and a Nobel Laureate, who is also the founder of The Climate Reality Project.

She has been actively volunteering for various social & environmental causes, in association with different organizations, NGOs, clubs, individuals, etc. and has also been a part of several workshops on Energy Access, Biodiversity Analysis, Renewables, SDGs, and more. As a part

of her volunteering activity, she has also mentored several school children, college students, and office goers on the allied issues. She was also one of the participating writers among many from all over the globe for “Become a Negotiator Tracker at COP 22” Campaign (2016) - Makkarech. Among all her activities, she was also a part of the Climate Walk in New Delhi to showcase solidarity for COP 21.

She is also volunteering for Walk for Water, a Hyderabad based NGO, as the State Campaign Head for Assam, to promote various ways of conserving water and reduction of water wastage. Having the knack of branding, marketing communication strategies, in her DNA, she keeps herself upgraded and abreast with the happenings around the world, specifically related to the start up ecosystem, media, and news related to brands. Hence, she also works as a freelance Communication & Brand Consultant for some start ups.

New Ed Approach: Combining Sensibility with Sustainability

Change is the only constant element of time; hence, it is imperative to change with the changing era. As much as change for good is required that much necessary it is to look at its long-term impacts. This necessitates the evolution of strategized education. And, this is where a combined approach of sustainability and sensibility is required. Inculcating sustainable approach and habits from the early phase itself, and educating for sustainability means making them sensible towards nature and the creation of a greener planet.

With the present level of expansion of pre-schools, play schools and kindergartens across the globe,

and the heat of the situation that demands attention towards children's health issues and nature's declining position; if we don't look at the issues at the bottom level (of pyramid) now, then when? Securing the future of the planet along with ours is of major concern. By starting with sustainable education from the beginning phase of the children, we are giving them abilities for developing perceptions that will benefit the green quotient. Starting from switching off the lights when not using them is a way of saving power, and they should know why.

Dimension 1: Preschoolers

The initial years of a child's life play a key role in building the foundation for his or her future development, providing a sturdy base for lifetime learning and learning abilities, including cognitive and social development. Building relations with parents and educational professionals isn't just enough. Children must learn the values of connecting with nature and building a strong relationship with it, and learn the art of how to co-exist. Preschools follow a different method and syllabus to teach students. However, tweaking it the green and sustainable way is much needed.

Tweaking Syllabus For Preschool – Sustainable Way

The learning should be much more than just the crafts of recycling and reuse. It should pitch on responsible behaviour towards nature; encouraging the art of co-existence (flora-fauna-human); and daily habits among others. “The Pampered Earth” scheme is the way out.

The Pampered Earth (TPE) is a syllabus booster or a top-up that can be implemented in the pre-schools as a part of their daily study routine that works on the simple concept of pampering our planet Earth. And, the learning in this part should utilize the four major tools among others: Audio, Video, Activities and Nature-Participation with strategic and supervised learning. The following points need to focussed at, while doing so:

- Getting children close to nature
- Disaster preparedness
- Imbibing the essence of sustainability and the sense of implementing it

Dimension 2: Primary and Secondary Education

The TPE scheme of study can further take up a larger role in the institutions that provide primary and higher education. However,

here, the rate of teacher-student-parent participation has to be on equal levels.

Students being older than the preschoolers serves as an advantage for the implementation of the scheme rigorously. The targets should be on the following:

- Syllabus
- Visits, Workshops and Activities
- Innovations and Leadership (I&L)
- Faculty Training Sessions (FTS)
- Orientation of the parents

All of this can be operational under the Holistic Education Cell (HEC) conceptualized for this purpose. The idea is to create a lasting and positive and fission impact by addressing the core values of real education while also keeping a hold on the curriculum.

The full paper will discuss the entire concept and operations of the cell. The USP of this option is to stick to simple and doable options. Sustainability is not about just attaining it, we must sustain it.

PANELIST

Vinayak Sudhakar started his career taking on administrative roles and teaching Business Studies and Mathematics at an international School in the United Arab Emirates. He returned to India and worked in a Chartered Accounting Firm specializing in Institutional Accounting and Colleges in audit practices. Mr. Sudhakar in his previous role as Senior Manager, worked with an Assessment Board for over 15 years, which was a leading provider of International examinations for ages 5 to 14 years.

In his previous role in School Development, he has supported over 500 International Schools in implementing international assessments and qualifications, networking schools and training teachers to share best practices. He has visited schools in several countries including Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Germany, Malaysia, UK and the UAE supporting teachers and students. He has a Master's Degree in Commerce and recently completed a programme on strategic leadership for schools in a changing environment from the IIM, Ahmedabad. Vinayak Sudhakar, based in Mumbai, works for the International Baccalaureate as the Development and Recognition Manager for India.



Rythm Aggarwal

Rythm is the Co-founder and Director of The Atelier with branches in Guwahati and Bangalore. Her strong belief that learning environments should be driven around the value of respect, collaboration and research, led her to conceptualise The Atelier in the year 2013.

Prior to this, Rythm was working in the field of actuarial consulting for the first phase of her professional career. She is an associate member of the Institute of Actuaries of India.

In her spare time, Rythm likes to satiate her curiosity about the human mind through attending workshops, reading books and writing and believes in being a lifelong learner. She also loves adventure travelling and exploring remote, natural places.



The Purpose in Play

Young children, the world over, across cultures and across generations, speak the common language of play.

Children have many questions about the world around them - they have questions about families and the roles of each member, they have questions about nature - about the leaves on a tree, about the line of ants they see, about the rain, the sun, the rainbow and all their mysteries. They wonder about the machines we use in our everyday lives like cars, fans, grinders, vending machines and form theories about how they work.

How are these many wonderings answered?

This happens through a process of experiencing, observing, discovering, creating, testing, constructing, dismantling, collaborating, recreating - what we adults call "play".

Play is the language that children use to make sense of the world around them.

When play takes the form of pretense

For a group of children, pretend play takes centre stage for a period of few months - with complex plots, long term engagement with the same theme and collaborative narratives.

Over 4 months, the main pretend play themes include - a hospital to

begin with, which later turned into a cake shop, and then turns into a birthing centre with the cake shop inside it. Many decisions are taken, many problems solved and many roles played.

This play comes from a need to relive past experiences, understand and process them better, and most importantly to feel in control of the creation of the context, the space and the roles.

The play consists of a partnership between all the children involved - a division of roles - cleaning, baking, making bills, taking orders, making the menu, deciding on which flavour of cake would be available, etc.

The children develop the ability to understand instructions from a pretend customer, remember the information, recollect it and create accordingly.



Setting up, stacking the display counters with freshly baked cakes, cleaning up, switching on the laptop, getting the menu ready - the children multi task throughout their time at the cake shop.

Image 1: The oven where the cakes get baked (which also serves as a display counter) - conceptualized, designed and created by 4.5 year olds.



Image 2: one of the many cakes designed by the children

When play means constructing

Materials of any kind, form, texture can take any shape when left in a child's skillful hands.

Children use materials to give form to their ideas, to create both what they have seen before and what nobody has seen. Their constructions involve ideas of symmetry, balance, force, gravity, measurement, dimensions and spatial notions.

In images, 3 and 4, a four year old constructs a tower with ramps - he is creating a team game where each team bounces ping pong balls off the tower.

Image 3



Image 4



In both the above instances, the children work from an intrinsic sense of motivation, wanting to grow and learn. They challenge themselves by directing their own learning. They make mistakes and try again.

Most importantly, their play has a strong sense of purpose with goals and objectives, and strategies to achieve them. As adults, all we need to do is to provide an environment and play the roles of observers and facilitators.

Children are capable, intelligent, and resourceful enough to find their own purpose in play.

For children,

- play is hard work
- play is lots of practice
- play is meticulous
- play is social
- play is experimental
- play is fun
- play is confusing
- play is movement
- play is challenging
- play is learning

Play is the way to cognitive, emotional and physical growth.

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Reshma N C Shah

Education Consultant and Co-founder, Rivers Education Foundation.

She is a Sociolinguist from JNU and an early childhood expert with over 20 years of experience in the field. She promotes creative thinking through her Creativity@work series of teacher training and personal development workshops. Ms. Shah is an advocate of equal opportunity in education and her award winning budget preschool has provided affordable preschool education to children for the last 5 years. She is also an invited speaker and has conducted sessions at Don Bosco Institute, Handique Girls College and Holy Child school to name a few.

Socio-Emotional Learning: From a nation at risk to a nation of hope

India is a nation with the youngest age group in its population growing every day. This young population will become the country's competitive advantage. Indian can enjoy this demographic dividend when the country has higher productive and economic activity because the proportion of working people is higher. This assumes that the young population will be able to contribute to the growth of the country.

For a young child growing up in the India of the 21st century, the possibilities are endless. As young citizens of the country they live in a society that has diverse ethnicities, races, religions, languages and cultures. Children in India perhaps encounter and engage with more plurality than a child of the same age in a country in Europe, Africa or the Americas. Children in India are born into a legacy of wisdom, scientific knowledge, art and culture that is thousands of years old.

Like children around the world, Indian children intuitively make friends and engage with the 'other' when left undisturbed to explore such opportunities. This is both an enabling and empowering experience. When they go to school their universe expands. It is crucial at this stage for them to be prepared adequately to deal with anxiety, meltdowns and emotional upheavals that threaten their sense of security and their idea of self.

It is universally acknowledged that the early formative years are the best time to teach children socio-emotional skills. Socio-emotional learning is generally defined as the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills that a child develops in order to engage productively with others and contribute to society. A child who is socio-emotionally developed will be able to face challenges in the class, manage stress at school and at home, deal with conflict and respect the others' point of view. They develop the mental stability to solve problems on their own instead of simply reacting to adversity.

Early childhood caregivers often agree that children in the age group of two to five years throw tantrums in school or get into fights if they are not socio emotionally developed. Children learn to love when they receive love, they learn to trust when they see their trust in others being fulfilled and

they learn to be compassionate when they receive compassion from adults and others. Conversely, they learn to bully, hate, ridicule or become selfish when they are the victim of such behaviour or see their role models (parents, teachers, and their favourite role model) engaging in such negative behaviour.

Children today are exposed to images and discourses that create the notion of the 'other' as one that is threatening their perfect world. A recent book brought out the ugly truth of how children in even so called premier schools of Delhi had communal tendencies and looked at their classmates from another religion as untrustworthy or not worthy of becoming their friends. These children picked up myths and perceptions based on what they see and hear and treat that as the reality. This puts them at risk of having a wrong perception of the 'other'.

These children are born with a 'digital' spoon in their mouth, so to speak. Many of them own a mobile phone, have an Instagram or tiktok account and have followers for whom they post daily updates. They live a digital life that consumes most of their waking hours leading to a digital addiction that is fast becoming a menace. Consequently, they are completely stressed when no 'like's show up on their latest posts or they get trolled on social media. This leads to self doubt and there have been tragic incidents of children attempting self harm because they were unable to handle rejection.

On the other hand the pressure to perform in academics, sports and the arts and bring home accolades creates stressed and high strung children who are at great risk of having a melt down at the slightest provocation. Many parents fail to recognise this and put more pressure, especially if the child underperforms.

There is therefore an urgent need for educators, caregivers, teachers and society at large to recognise that unless children are socio-emotionally healthy, they will not be able to grow up as model citizens of the country. The first step, naturally, starts at home. Caregivers, especially parents must ensure that young children feel secure emotionally. Physical

and verbal abuse, belittling a child in front of others, punishing a child in a manner that is vastly disproportionate to the fault and neglecting the child's need for the parents' time and attention are common parenting blunders that hinder the child's socio emotional development. Parenting techniques must be adaptive and accommodating. It is better to have an emotionally strong child than to have a child that is a bundle of nerves.

Early childhood educators and caregivers must be trained to deal with children labelled difficult, stubborn and troublemakers, to understand what makes them so. Labelling at school can work in both positive and

negative ways. Similarly, interactions, whether in a group or on a one-to-one basis must have the element of mutual respect that we usually do not bestow on young children.

If India wants to become a nation of hope, she must first acknowledge that children are at risk of growing up to become addicted to social media, bigoted in their outlook, having lower levels of cognitive and social skills and remaining social-emotionally immature. A country

with such citizens cannot dream of becoming a world leader. It is time to take action now for the sake of the future of the country's young citizens.

SPEAKER



Dr. Sangeeta Goswami is the first Counselling Psychologist to have set up an independent counselling clinic in North East India in 1996. She is the founder member and President of MIND India, Institute of Positive Mental Health & Research at Guwahati, Assam, India. MIND India is an endeavor dedicated to the cause of ushering in the benefits of positive mental health & wellbeing to the general population, especially young people and women at a national level more specifically in the North East region of India, comprising of the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.

Understanding the need for trained manpower in the area of mental health and wellbeing at the grass root level, Dr. Goswami developed a short 12 days course on Barefoot Counselling for facilitators and animators working with children, adolescents and women.

Her interest in life skills for young people, which started as her Thesis topic was translated in the field to empower adolescent girls in the tea gardens of Assam through life skills Training. This endeavor was supported by UNICEF from 2012 - 2015

She is also involved as an independent consultant, trainer and subject matter expert in areas of mental health, school mental health, women & violence, child rights and child protection, counselling skills, soft skills, Life Skills, social behavior change communication and manpower development programmes for schools, Government & Non-Government Institutions and organizations and corporates.

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Thresa Reddy, M.A. and B. Ed has been a teacher for the past 38 years. She taught 3 years in Little Flower School, Imphal (1981-1984); and 35 long years in Don Bosco School, Guwahati (1984-2019). She served as an Editor for the School Magazine of Don Bosco School, Guwahati. She is the Council Member of St. Joseph's Church, Panbazar.



“Moral education in the early years. Building up a generation that is more human.”

Society today is not the same as it was 30-40 years ago. Children today are growing up in the most challenging of times. They are surrounded by advanced means of communication and technology and other negative influences. To survive in this environment and combat the challenges and temptations they need to be morally strong and emotionally balanced or else they would become easy prey to the evils that surround them. This can be done and must be done from a tender age when the young minds are ready to accept guidance and advice.

The early childhood is the most impressionable stage. Once we sow the seeds of moral values in the tender minds, they will remain there and guide the child as he grows. Moral education in early years is very essential. Now, what is Moral Education? Moral Education refers to helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them live good lives and be useful members of this community.

As children are the future of our nation, they have to be nurtured in such a way that they become productive and contributing individuals. This can happen only if human and moral values are imported to them at an early age. Some common values that should be taught to children are – always tell the truth, be kind, courageous, respect public property, keep your promise, do not cheat, treat others as you want to be treated, be grateful etc.

All these values should be taught through stories and anecdotes. Children love stories and stories help the listeners identify themselves with the message. Here, I must admit the fact that I had wonderful parents and equally wonderful teachers who instilled moral values in me. I still remember my school days when our day started with the moral period which was taken by teachers who were exceptional. The values learned in the moral period in the primary school have not been forgotten. Instead they have taken deeper roots over the years. We learned many other subjects but the lessons and values learnt in morals' class has helped me to be confident and conscientious citizen.

Now, the question arises as to who can give moral education to children in their early childhood. Parents of course are there, but considering the lifestyle of modern parents with their busy life, there is a big question mark as to how much of guidance they are giving

their children. Parents should make a conscious effort to spend quality time with their wards and teach them some lessons of life.

When it comes to school, it is my personal opinion that only well-trained and amiable teachers impart moral education. Our children are watching us, they are listening to us. They are watching and listening even when they seem to be occupied in their play. The way, we adults treat our fellow beings or the comments we make about a particular community or religion or an individual are all absorbed by the young minds who are around us. If they see gentleness and kindness, they imbibe such qualities. If they hear unfavourable comments about a particular community or individual they develop certain prejudice for that community or individual.

Actions speak louder than words. So, it is very essential that parents, educators or people in authority are cautious and conduct themselves responsibly and exhibit strong moral character. Theodore Roosevelt has very rightly said, “To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace for society”. Here, I would like to narrate a short story recounted by PadminiMuthuswami, a social worker. She found a crippled boy in a slum and took a keen interest in him. She wanted to see him walk. So, she consulted some famous orthopaedic surgeons in Vellore and they graciously offered to help the child. After several surgeries and a lot of treatment, they boy could walk, run and play. Then she paused and told the audience – the little boy is a man now – Can you guess where he is and what he is doing? Several guesses were made – “He is a doctor, a social worker, a priest, an industrialist. Then Padmini said - “You are all wrong. He is in the Central Jail serving a life-term for murder. We spent all our time and energy teaching him how to walk but failed to show him which path to take”.

We may give the best of education to our children but if we fail to give moral values, then all our efforts would go in vain. Education is complete only when it is accompanied by moral values. Without ethics, knowledge would be applied inappropriately. Our ultimate aim should be to build up individuals who are more humane and altruistic. Only then, we can hope to have a good society, a good state and a good nation.

ROLE OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR TO EMPOWER YOUNG MINDS

Early childhood educators are leaders in their own rights and have a profound love for children. They have experience and patience, are organized and flexible. They can communicate effectively with children, teachers, parents and the community. An Early Childhood Educator works with young children and their families from age 2 to 6 in child care centers, school-based programs or other educational settings with typically developing children and children with developmental delays and disabilities.

The Early Childhood Educator must be a person who functions as a member of a team and is often the team leader. In general, they engage children in a variety of activities that are developmentally appropriate and look out for every child's well being. However, the early childhood educator has many other duties that must be fulfilled to be successful in their role.

Some of the roles of an early childhood educator are

Enthusiasm for Children

Enthusiasm and passion for children and enjoying being with them is the most important characteristic for an early childhood educator. They should try to make a difference to each and every child and must be able to unlock every child's door to learning and overcome any obstacle.



PRANEETA GOGOI
SPEAKER , ECDF NATIONAL
COMMITTEE MEMBER

- Educator at Don Bosco School
- Former School Coordinator, UK, India Education Research Initiative, British Council
- Joint Secretary, SPICMACAY, NE CHAPTER
- Junior Red Cross Counsellor
- IT Book Editor

Patience and Humour

Working with young children all day needs a lot of patience. The nature of their age makes young children have short attention spans and little self control. Every child being different makes the job even more challenging. After a long, tiring day full of challenges, the educators of young children come back and meet the same and new challenges the next day. A patient nature, combined with a sense of humour, helps educators take the ups and downs of every day in stride, while focusing on the end goals.

Communication Skills

Educators must have effective skills to work with young children and be able to communicate with them at their level. They should also be able to communicate with the parents of the child about his needs,

skills, problems and achievements and his progress by observing his behavior and development. The educators must also communicate with the other educators who may be teaching the child's classes well as the head educators and administrators. The more the educator can communicate with all involved, the more rewarding and positive the job will be.

Respect of Differences

Every child has a unique personality and learning style. Educators must respect these differences and work out with the learning style of each child instead of forcing them to adopt another style. In this way, they will be able to reach out to each child and teach them effectively. Our society has many ethnicities, cultures and traditions. So, in an early childhood multicultural classroom, these differences must be embraced, which will create an open and exciting learning atmosphere.

Creativity and Flexibility

Creativity is required to plan lessons to engage young children and educate them at the same time. Flexibility is also required to adapt lessons to individual leaning styles. An educator needs to be flexible to handle any problems during the day. She may be organized or planned the day, but she must be able to change the plans and ideas as needed. A successful early childhood development educator should use creativity and flexibility to make every day a positive one.

Develop Schedules and Enforce Routines

Daily routines and activities keep the children occupied and productive and help them learn to function in a structured environment. Young children need to follow a strict schedule to include daily routines like going to the restroom, washing hands, eating lunch and snack, and participating in reading and music activities. An early-childhood educator must develop a schedule that also allows for rest time and unstructured outside play.

Maintain a Safe and Comfortable Environment

An early-childhood educator should inspect the children's environment to ensure the safety of equipment and materials and remove or repair any item that pose a threat to the children. A safe and comfortable environment must be created through clear, positive and encouraging words and actions to help the children feel comfortable and confident within their surroundings.

Supervision and Discipline

A duty of an early childhood educator is to diligently supervise students in the classroom during break time or on the playground or field trips. A child should be disciplined in a firm but fair way when he misbehaves or breaks a rule. But no form of physical, verbal or emotional abuse must be used as a method of discipline.

Planning lessons

A 3 to 5 year old child learns through both play and structured experience. These help to develop the child's language, motor and social skills. So lessons should be planned in such a way that it includes both teacher-initiated as well as child-initiated explorations.

Conclusion

Educators play an important role in fostering the intellectual and social development of children during their formative years. The education that is imparted to a child plays a key role in determining their future. Early Childhood Educator must also create a positive environment and detect behavioural or cognitive difficulties in their students so that the necessary corrections or teaching methods can be applied. As an early childhood educator, there will be challenges to find new experiences to share with the children. Every childhood educator must become a partner in learning and encouraging children to find their own answers instead of providing the answers for them. By facilitating learning and supplying a developmentally appropriate environment, interesting materials, and adequate time to explore, play, and interact, children find learning easy and fun.

find us on



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Hands on Learning:

An Integral part of the Early Childhood Learning Process

Hands on Learning, Experiential Education, these are buzzwords that we hear all the time today. What do they actually mean, and how do they really translate in the Early Years curriculum and classroom? The more I thought about this, faces of children I had taught, interacted with and learned from floated into my awareness.

Let me introduce you to them.

Harsha is a happy little fellow, who loves getting his hands dirty. When he is squishing mud or dough, or out for a “hunt” in the school grounds looking for red or insects, maybe handling shapes or blowing bubbles, he will suddenly give a whoop of joy, do a little jig and go, “balle, balle!”

Amyra is an active young lady. She accepts changes, often adapting what she was doing to accommodate the new situation, such as using only two colours to make her pattern if a third is not available; or challenging herself to create as many different patterns as she can use only those two colours.

Nikhil is a master at negotiation! His logic is often very sound. His interactions with peers and adults alike are polite, he will wait to take his turn after having come to an agreement. He has quickly learned that cooperation is a surer way to get to do what he wants to, be it using materials in class or a turn at the ball. He loves exploring sound- using found objects, or simply his body. He is discovering the joys of sequencing- creating sounds that go from loud to soft and vice versa, or a pattern using drum beats.

Dolly is an irrepressible little girl, sensitive to the feelings of others. She almost intuitively identifies her own and other's feelings, is able to express them in positive ways. She is the one you will see sharing her snack with a classmate or consoling an unhappy friend. She is quickly learning that relationships are about give and take.

Selma loves solving problems. Her eyes light up, her hand shoots up, “I have an idea!” she calls out. She gets actively involved, tries to consider different solutions. She is able to compare, sequence, organize.

Omar is an observant young man. He notices small changes in his



Sonia Kullar BA(Ed Hons), B. Ed, M.Ed, is a gifted and versatile facilitator with over 25 years experience. She has worked with practicing and potential teachers, preschoolers, primary school level, children with special education needs, parents and young professionals. Her areas of expertise include teacher development, curriculum design for the primary and pre primary years, and phonics. An alumnus of Loreto House, Kolkata, she has been associated with The Shri Ram School and SRF Foundation for 15 years, where she conceptualised, designed and executed the Enhancing Early Education Programme a nursery teacher training programme. She was also Head of Curriculum (Pre Primary) at Shiv Nadar Schools for almost four years. Her delight and passion in her work is very inspiring.

environment and is quick to point out, “why have you put bubble wrap on the floor?” “there are basins of water in the classroom!” “look, the sand pit has shells in it today.” He then fearlessly takes the initiative to explore it giggling delightedly as he walks on the bubble wrap and shares his reflections: “it’s squishy, it tickles, the paint under it is getting mixed up, see, blue and yellow made green!”

Nitin loves to investigate, hypothesise, prove- which will roll faster, a block or a sphere? How many cups of rice do you think this bag contains? How many steps will you take to reach the toilet from the classroom? He will estimate, experiment, assess before coming to a conclusion.

Lipi uses simple and effective words to communicate her thoughts and ideas and is quick to remember and use new vocabulary. She loves sounding-out and word-builder games.

Ena comes into school with a sense of purpose, often has a plan of what she wants to do and quickly collects her material and settles down to work.

Allen is meticulous about whatever he chooses to do, paying close attention to detail. He takes delight in placing objects neatly, adding small drawings to his designs.

Rita has a remarkable memory, is able to remember and recall

interesting facts, apply what she knows to new situations. “Yesterday we mixed blue and yellow. It became green. Today I will add red.”

Nupur loves using her hands estimate which bag of objects has more, or is heavier, or dipping into a bag of familiar objects with her eyes closed to identify what it contains. She is developing a sense of time; “I can reach school fastest by bus and slowest if I walk.”

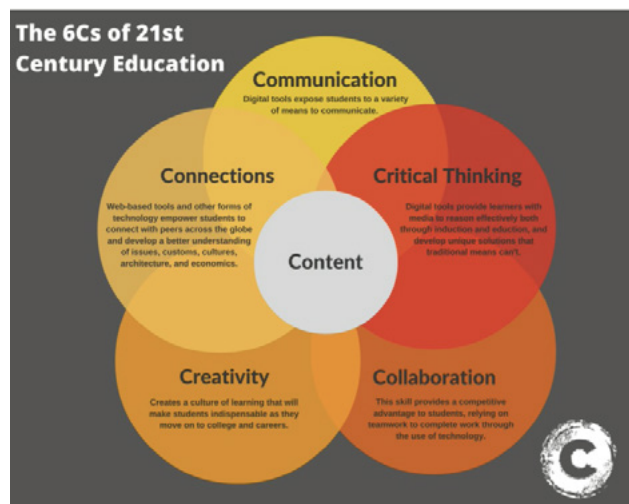
Ishan carefully tries different ways of doing an activity before deciding on the one he likes best such as using a cup to fill sand in a bucket. He listens intently to a friend’s point of view, and confidently explains his own. If it appeals to his logic, he might then act on the suggestion.

Neela often takes the lead in undertaking an activity, almost effortlessly organizes her friends in the playground so each is busy and happy and gets a turn at the equipment. Her friends call her “boss”.

Garima is highly creative, giving wing to imagination and fantasy. She creates alien worlds, super beings, imaginary gadgets and machinery.

I wonder if you realized that the first letters of their names spelled out **H-A-N-D-S O-N L-E-A-R-N-I-N-G!** All my years of working with our littlest learners has taught me that the more they do with their hands, use their senses, touch, feel, explore and discover, the more they learn.

We speak of the Twenty First Century Skills, of the 6Cs in Education: Creativity, Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Connection and Content.



When children are given opportunities to discover, to construct, to be involved in their own learning, to share and discuss and form connections, they are, at this very early age, already garnering these skills. Consider the skills each of the little learners described above was using, displaying, honing.

So, I end with an invitation to each one of you: go out- and play!

SPEAKER



Kauser Jamil Hilaly lived and studied in Shillong and obtained an MPhil degree in Political Science. Joined the Assam Civil Service in 1992 and have served in various capacities across the state. He has served as Registrar of the National Law University Assam, Staff Officer to the Chief Secretary Assam, Managing Director of the Assam Small Industries Development Corporation and Managing Director of the Assam Tourism Development Corporation among others. He has been working as Commissioner for Disabilities since July 2018. He has recently taken charge as the Nodal Person for the State Resource Centre for Women Assam.

Kauser has trained at the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University Atlanta and the IIM Kolkata. He was deputed as an Observer during the 2010 elections in Sri Lanka as part of an international team.

THE QUINESSENTIALITY OF “WALDORF PEDAGOGY” IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

KTAS JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Traditional Education through the years has followed a regular pattern that has remained unchanged. It has followed and continues to follow the essence of passing on knowledge. While there are people with knowledge and experiences on one hand, there are people, invariably children who are keen to learn.

Getting educated means that our children need to learn what we are teaching them. In fact, our benchmark for good quality education has always been measured with the child's ability to reproduce the content that is being taught. Hence, it is time to introspect whether we have attained our benchmark in education, especially the bedrock of **“Early Childhood Education”**.

One of the most ignored segments in school education in India is “Early childhood Education” and not much is contributed by the stakeholders in achieving excellence in this stream. In this scenario **“Waldorf” or “Steiner Education”**, based on the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, who was the founder of Anthroposophy can be a game changer.

Though there are a few preschools and schools which have adopted Waldorf curriculum, they are few and far between. Waldorf Pedagogy strives to develop pupil's intellectual, artistic and practical skills in an integrated and holistic

manner. The cultivation of the pupil's imagination and creativity is a central focus.

In Waldorf Pedagogy, tools or toys for every concept are used as conduits to provide an experiential learning to the students on knowledge, skills and values from direct experiences outside a traditional academic setting.

The fulcrum of Waldorf pedagogy is that Music, Dance and Theatre, Writing, Literature, Legends and Myths are not simply subjects to be read about and tested. They are experienced. And that experience gives a deeper, profound understanding of concepts.

Professors who have taught Waldorf students across multifarious academic disciplines and across a wide range of Campuses – from State Universities to Ivy League – note that Waldorf graduates have the ability to integrate thinking; to assimilate information as opposed to memorizing isolated facts; to be flexible, creative and willing to take intellectual risks; and are leaders with high ethical and moral standards who take initiative and are passionate to reach their goals.

Ultimately, these experiential modes of learning will enhance not only our students' academic choices, but also their vocational choices when it comes to decisions related to career choices.



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- *We believe in imparting quality education and our franchisees are our partners with whom we work together towards this goal.
- *We understand that our partners look for quality service and therefore we provide a 24x7 support system.

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- Upgradation of Lesson Plans
- Innovative Teaching Methodology
- Curriculum Implementation
- Annual Carnivals, Awareness Campaigns, Mega Events, Parent Workshops and Seminar Modules
- Guidance on Conceptualization and Ideation of various co curricular activities

- Market Survey
- Location Evaluation
- Recruitment
- Centre Set Up Support
- Training
- Enrolment Support
- Operational Support 24X7
- Marketing Support
- Quality Maintenance Support

- Loan Support
- Business Growth Support
- Upgradation Support
- Business Expansion Support



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An initiative of DN Acharya Foundation for Children and Women Welfare

The Early Childhood Development Forum (ECDF) launched in 2019, is an initiative of the DN Acharya FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN WELFARE (DNAF). ECDF endeavours to work towards empowering children from all cross sections of the society and create a bonhomous environment for children in their early childhood years, so that they grow up to be sensible, happy and confident individuals. Early Child Development Forum family believes that it can be done only, if all the stakeholders work in a synchronised way towards this goal.

Vision

Is to bring all Preschools, NGO's, Children Activity Centers, Parents, Educators, Balwadi's, Anganwadi's, Corporates, Media Houses, Companies dealing in Children Products and anyone related to children in their early years of growing, to come together to Brainstorm, Advocate, Interact, Exchange Ideas and to bring about a coherent change in the domain of Early Childhood Education and Care. It is a platform where we ideate, initiate, innovate and implement the best practices in ECE. The Forum essentially endeavors to assist children from the economically disadvantaged sections of the society, both from the urban and rural areas, in attaining quality early childhood education and care.

Mission

ECDF aims to empower EDUCATORS, PARENTS, CHILDREN and OTHER STAKEHOLDERS by sensitising them and then facilitating them with training programs, awareness campaigns, leadership programs, workshops and seminars, community activities, that would enable them to become positive contributors in the domain of Early Childhood Education and Care. The forum works towards capacity building of individuals, organizations and communities in delivering early childhood development and care programs.

Goal

Early childhood education can be defined as '...warm, nurturing care and enriched learning experiences designed to simulate a child's development in all key developmental areas.'

The Goal is to strive for ensuring stress free early childhood years where children enjoy all the rights they are entitled to and are allowed to grow up to become a well developed individual.

ECDF members want to touch the lives of all those who touch the lives and learning of children.

"Early Childhood Development interventions include sensitising, educating and supporting parents, delivering services to children, building capacities of caregivers, teachers and children through its different workshops and seminars, using mass communications to enhance parents and caregivers knowledge base, bring about innovative and the bset practices and by counseling the stakeholders. Our programs for children are center or home-based, formal or non-formal, and also include parents' education. ECDF primarily focuses on children from the economically disadvantaged sections of the society, in enabling them to attain quality early childhood education and care.", says Dr.Vasavvi Acharjya Bora, Founder Chairperson, ECDF.

Membership

Any Preschool, NGO working in the domain of early years, Children Activity Centers, Parents, Educators, Corporates, Media Houses, Companies dealing in Children Products and anyone related to children in their early years of growing can become a member of the forum. For further details contact us at ecdfinfo2019@gmail.com



DN ACHARYA FOUNDATION
FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN WELFARE



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