

Volume 6 | Issue 2 | DECEMBER 2025

*A New wave in Education*

# EdCLAN

Empowering Educators and Families Globally

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Health: The Asset we  
Trade for Convenience

Smart Parenting: A Call from the Classroom

Why Emotional Strength  
is Your Future's Most Crucial Skill

Innovative Classroom Practices  
in Early Childhood Care and Education

In the Middle Lies the Magic-  
The Value of Doing With, Not To.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Identifying and Addressing Bullying in the Early Years



## **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)-2014**. **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**

To bring all Preschools, NGO's, Children Activity Centres, Parents, Educators, Balwadi's, Anganwadi's, Corporate entities, 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 Care and Education. It is a platform where we ideate, initiate, innovate and implement the best practices in ECCE. The Forum essentially endeavours to assist children from the economically challenging sections of the society, both from the urban and rural areas, in attaining quality early childhood education and care.

### **MISSION**

To empower **EDUCATORS, PARENTS, CHILDREN and OTHER STAKE HOLDERS** by sensitising them and then facilitating them with training programs, awareness campaigns, leadership programs, Workshops, seminars and webinars and community activities that would enable them to become positive contributors in the domain of Early Childhood Care and Education. We work 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."

Early Childhood Development interventions include sensitising, educating and supporting parents, delivering services to children, developing capacities of caregivers, teachers and children, using mass communications to enhance parents and caregivers knowledge, practices and by counselling the stakeholders. Our programs for children are center or home-based, formal or non-formal, and also include parents' education.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Any Preschool, NGO working in the domain of early years, Children Activity Centres, Parents, Educators, Corporate entities, Media Houses, Companies dealing in Children Products and anyone related to children in their early years of growing can be a member of the forum. For further details contact us at [ecdinfo2019@gmail.com](mailto:ecdinfo2019@gmail.com) or visit [www.ecdforum.org](http://www.ecdforum.org)



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From the Editor's Desk



## ED CLANNING

Hello  
Readers,

Welcome to the Winter Issue of EdClan. I am truly delighted to present this edition, which brings together articles on timely and relevant topics that deserve our attention and reflection. The second half of the year has been nothing short of a roller-coaster ride—filled with challenges, learning, and exciting milestones.

One of the highlights of this period was the Weaver Birds Children's Carnival 2025 held in Guwahati. The carnival was a wonderful celebration of creativity, learning, and joy. It was heartening to see such enthusiastic participation from children and parents alike, making the event vibrant and memorable. Alongside this, our online events continued to engage young minds and received an encouraging response, reaffirming our belief in meaningful and inclusive educational experiences.

As we move forward, we have decided that from next year onwards, EdClan will be published as a single annual issue in October, marking the month of inception of ECDF. This step symbolizes our commitment to quality, reflection, and purposeful growth.

As the year comes to a close and 2026 stands just around the corner, we take this moment to express our gratitude to all our readers, contributors, and supporters for being part of our journey.

Wishing everyone a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Happy Reading !

**Dr. Vasavi Acharjya**  
Founder & Chairperson, ECDF

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# IN THE MIDDLE LIES THE MAGIC

*The Value Of Doing With, Not To*



**Jenna Close** is a Jenna's journey in education is defined by culture, connection, curiosity, and care. Originally from Aotearoa New Zealand, and now based in Melbourne, she draws on contextual intelligence, nature-based pedagogy, neuroscience, and culturally curious approaches informed by Te Whāriki and Indigenous perspectives. With more than 20 years' experience across Aotearoa, Australia, and Africa, her path has moved fluidly through roles as OSHC Educator, Teacher, Service Director, Pedagogical Leader, and Educational Consultant, Coach and Mentor.

Currently completing a Master of Educational Leadership, Jenna focuses on coaching and mentoring educators in critical reflection, continuous improvement, and professional excellence through ako (reciprocal learning) and professional aroha (love). She has a particular passion for building leadership capacities, the first thousand days, trauma-informed practice, and the Neuro-sequential Model of brain development.

Jenna designs human-centred, neuro-affirming, play-provoking environments and leads by listening, growing leadership capabilities by influencing, motivating, and empowering others. She holds high expectations for culturally responsive, anti-bias practice and sees herself as a translator of research, frameworks, and standards, ensuring educators feel confident, valued, and inspired to lead their own learning.

Leadership in early childhood education is often described in terms of strategy, policy, outcomes and influence. Yet the most powerful change I witness begins quietly, with listening. Before any plan is drafted or a meeting convened, leadership lives in the small moments of presence, hearing the stories of educators, families, and children, and letting those stories change us.

Most weeks, I move between early learning services, sitting in staff rooms and classrooms, listening and observing. The rhythm is familiar: greetings, a cup of coffee balanced between paperwork and stories. These moments of ordinary conversation are where I begin to understand a place, the hopes people hold, the pressures they feel, and the language they reach for when they talk about change.

This article grows from my own discomfort and ways of being and doing. My personal pedagogical stance is one of both leading and following, teaching and learning, speaking and listening; there is duality and fluidity in all that I do. I struggle with “one direction,” and I struggle even more when that direction comes from the top down. I worry about what might be missed or misunderstood when a single direction defines the process or outcome and leaves no room to see and hear from the other side.

I work with a wide network of centres and, in particular, with leaders and managers. Again and again, I find myself in conversations about how to “get staff on board,” how to “get parents to understand,” how to bring everyone around to a preferred direction.

These are real concerns: policies to implement, curriculum goals to meet, cultural

change to nurture. But the language always nudges toward persuasion and conversion, as though the task is to win others over to a single “right” view: “We meet people where they’re at... and then help them understand and shift.”

The words are meant kindly. They signal care and a desire to support growth. Yet tucked inside is a quiet assumption that the “shift” must be toward our way of knowing, doing and valuing. That assumption, that others must eventually see through our lens, reminds me how easily perception can deceive us.

“Perception is not about seeing reality; it’s about creating meaning that is useful for survival. What we see is never merely what is ‘out there,’ but what our history allows us to see” (Lotto, 2017).

We believe we’re looking straight at reality, yet context bends the picture. The effect isn’t limited to ideas or relationships; even our eyes can be fooled.

### Seeing lines that aren’t there

Consider the Müller-Lyer illusion. Two lines, exactly the same length, sit side by side. One wears arrow-tips pointing outward, the other inward. Almost everyone swears the outward-tipped line is longer. Our eyes insist; our minds sign off. Only a ruler proves otherwise.

Scientists have debated why this happens. Some point to “carpentered world” experience: we grow up reading corners and depth cues in rooms and streets, so we misread the arrows as signals of distance. Others highlight the way our brains estimate midpoints and surrounding flanks. Whatever the mechanism, the lesson is clear: context changes perception.

And not just for vision. The illusion appears across cultures and even in other species, but its strength varies with the environment. We all share the same basic visual wiring, yet experience bends the way we see.

### **From optics to education**

This illusion is a mirror for our work in education and professional learning. We gather around the same 'lines' curriculum, pedagogy, policy, but the surrounding arrows of culture, history, and identity change how each of us reads them.

When I hear "meet them where they're at," I picture those arrows. Too often the phrase means: acknowledge their current view long enough to redirect them toward mine or the dominant one. It assumes our line is the measure of truth and theirs a distortion to be corrected.

But what if, as Covey (1989) suggests, we first "seek to understand, then to be understood" What if the goal is not to pull others toward our perspective, but to walk alongside and discover what we cannot yet see, the magic in the middle?

### **'Doing With' as practice**

Pelo and Carter (2018) call this stance "pedagogical companionship." In *From Teaching to Thinking* they describe leaders who "walk beside educators and children, engaging in inquiry rather than delivering mandates," cultivating curiosity and "the development of an investigative attitude towards life". They invite us to replace surface-level compliance with conversation, to make questions, rather than answers, the heart of our work.

Derman-Sparks et al. (2015) offer a parallel vision in *Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs*. Anti-bias leadership, they write, is

a "slow, continuous process that supports real human growth and builds a committed school culture". It asks leaders to stand with families and educators, recognising difference as diversity rather than deficit, and to sustain dialogue even when conflict or discomfort arises.

These thinkers converge on a radical idea: leading and learning is not about moving others toward our centre, but about co-constructing a centre wide enough for all of us.

If even our eyes can be misled by context, it follows that our relationships and the ways we think about guiding others are equally shaped by unseen cues. The challenge is not simply to see differently, but to relate differently: to replace control with curiosity, collaboration, and co-construction.

This is where wisdom from outside the professional-learning sphere offers unexpected guidance.

### **Insights from everywhere**

Parenting research echoes the same truth. In *Hunt, Gather, Parent*, Doucleff (2021) travels with her young daughter to Maya, Hadzabe, and Inuit communities and finds families raising confident, kind, and helpful children without the control battles so common in the West. Their relationships rest on trust, cooperation, and inclusion.

Doucleff realised that many of her struggles came from framing every interaction around control: either the adult is in charge or the child is. The families she met related to children on an entirely different plane, neither top-down nor permissive, but side-by-side.

Culturally curious pedagogy and andragogy

This stance aligns closely with what I call culturally curious pedagogy, an approach that begins with listening and wonder. It asks teachers and leaders to learn about, with, and from the teams, children, families, and communities they serve.

The same principle shapes adult learning. Professional development is not a staircase with an expert waiting on the landing above; it is a shared trail where each person's culture, history, and lived experience contour the path. In this space, curiosity becomes the practice, and knowledge grows through reciprocity.

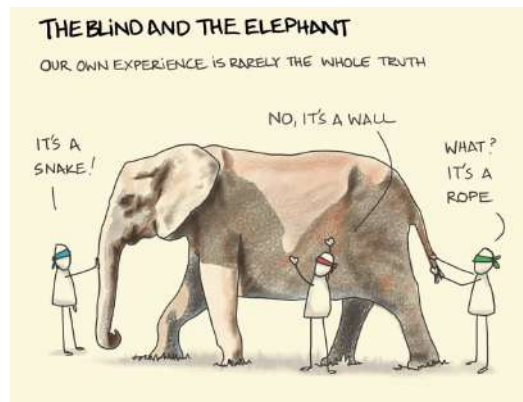
Knowledge is seen not as something people have or do not have, but rather as something people do together; "knowledge exists between people" (Burr, 1995; Lock & Strong, 2010; Moss et al., 2000).

When I facilitate a professional development session, I try to embody this by asking questions, listening for the story beneath the words, and resisting the urge to give an answer or "fix." I think of Pelo and Carter's challenge to create "communities of inquiry" where educators are valued and sustained as thinkers and researchers, and of Derman-Sparks' reminder that change is "a journey, not a mandate".

"Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1970).

### Practising the illusion

The Müller-Lyer image sometimes appears on my slides. I invite colleagues to guess which line is longer, then reveal the truth. The moment of surprise loosens something. We laugh, but the laughter carries a message: if our eyes can



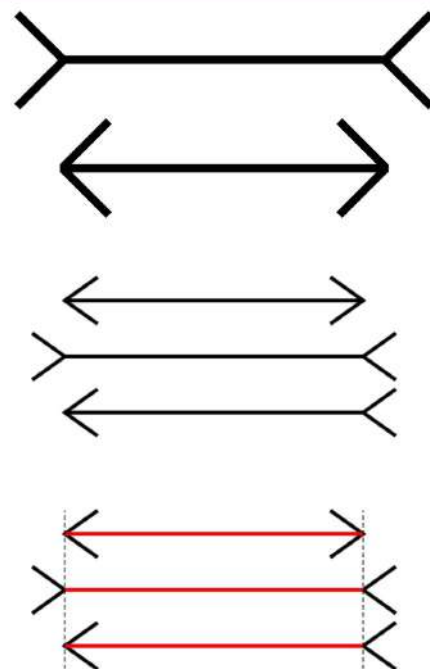
mislead us about something so simple, what else might we be misreading...about our teams and children, about families, about each other?

It's a gentle way to show that perception is not neutral. Culture, experience, and even architecture shape what we "know." And if we can be wrong about lines on a page, perhaps we can be humble about leading and learning itself.

### Walking the lines together

Side-by-side practice is neither soft nor slow in the pejorative sense. It demands more of us than

## THE LINES ARE THE SAME SIZE



top-down control: patience, humility, curiosity, and the courage to stay in disequilibrium while new understandings emerge. It asks us to risk being changed ourselves.

#### An invitation

What might we see and hear when we really look at and listen to one another? How might our invisible arrows, our culture, our histories, our certainties be bending the lines?

“Certainty closes the door to possibility. To create, we must step into uncertainty into the space where we no longer know and therefore can discover” (Lotto, 2017).

To choose a side-by-side path is to accept that none of us sees the whole picture. It is to seek first to understand, to honour the agency and wisdom in every child, colleague, and family, and to recognise that our own perception is only one of many.

Like the illusion, the work is simple to describe and endlessly complex to live. Two lines, one truth: we need each other to see clearly.

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Images that may support the theme



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*early childhood  
development forum*

## SHABISTA BAKHTIAR

A resilient lifelong learner with a deep passion for creativity began her professional journey as an Early Childhood Educator, dedicating 12 years to the field before answering a deeper calling rooted in her family's legacy of writers and artists. This led to pursuing content writing and later transitioned into the dynamic world of digital marketing. Certified NLP Master Practitioner (ABNLP), Time Line Therapy® Practitioner (TLTA), and a Funverks-certified Facilitator, contributing her expertise to renowned brands across Pakistan. Co-founder Torq Labs, a design and animation studio that has collaborated with global giants like Disney, HBO, and Burger King, and proudly represented Pakistan at Hakaya Misk 2019 in Riyadh. Latest venture, Learning Lab, offers customised personal and professional development programs for children, teens, parents, and educators, with a strong focus on inclusive, special, and early childhood education. Shabista is also presiding over the Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Korangi, for the term 2024-2026. Her facilitation skills are at their peak with event hosting for HUM TV Network's 20th anniversary, Women Empowerment and grooming session with Mac Pac and Awards Night for HBL Asset Management



# Teacher Training And Professional Development:

## The Cornerstones of Quality Early Education

Teaching has long been regarded as one of the noblest professions, yet paradoxically, it remains one of the most undervalued, especially in our region. While we entrust teachers with shaping the minds of future generations, the systemic investment in their professional development often lags

far behind. In early childhood education (ECE), where the foundation for lifelong learning is laid, this gap becomes even more significant.

As an early childhood educator for 12 years, I have witnessed how deeply the

quality of a child's early learning experience is tied to the competence, confidence, and commitment of their teachers. Training and professional development are not optional luxuries; they are essential pillars of a strong educational framework. Without them, even the most passionate teachers may struggle to meet the developmental, emotional, and cognitive needs of young learners in today's complex and evolving world.

### **The Underrated Profession**

Teaching, particularly in early childhood, is too often dismissed as a simple or instinctive something anyone with patience and affection for children can do. This misconception undermines the depth of skill, psychology, and training required to nurture early learners effectively.

In our region, this undervaluation is evident in the lack of structured professional pathways for teachers, insufficient remuneration, and the absence of ongoing capacity-building programs. Many educators enter classrooms without being adequately prepared for the realities of modern education, where children are digital natives, attention spans are shrinking, and socio-emotional needs are growing.

A teacher's role is no longer limited to delivering lessons. It demands understanding child psychology, managing classroom diversity, integrating technology, fostering emotional intelligence, and engaging with parents as partners in learning. Yet, without professional training, teachers are often left to "figure it out" on their own, which can lead to burnout, disillusionment, and stagnant classroom practices.

### **Why Teacher Training Matters More Than Ever**

Research consistently highlights that the teacher is the single most important factor influencing student success after the family environment. A trained teacher understands not only *what* to teach but *how* to teach, adapting practices to each learner's pace, interest, and style.

In early childhood, this skill becomes even more crucial. Children learn through play, exploration, and emotional connection. A trained educator knows how to turn everyday experiences into meaningful learning opportunities. For instance, a simple activity like block building can become a lesson in math, science, teamwork, and creativity if guided with intention and understanding.

Professional training also instils reflective practice, encouraging teachers to question their methods, update their strategies, and evolve continuously. In a rapidly changing educational landscape, where new challenges such as digital learning, inclusive education, and socio-emotional well-being are emerging, training ensures teachers remain adaptable and relevant.

### **The Role of Continuous Professional Development**

Initial teacher education lays the groundwork, but it is continuous professional development (CPD) that sustains and strengthens a teacher's capabilities. Teaching, like any profession, demands lifelong learning. However, unlike corporate

sectors where professional development is embedded in organisational culture, education often treats it as optional.

Making CPD **compulsory** is not about enforcing compliance; it is about fostering a culture of growth and accountability. Just as doctors must stay updated with new medical practices, teachers must remain informed about new learning theories, curriculum shifts, and behavioural research.

CPD also helps teachers reconnect with their passion for teaching. Regular exposure to workshops, mentoring, and peer learning revitalises their sense of purpose and equips them with new tools to handle classroom challenges more creatively and confidently.

### **Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice**

One of the biggest flaws in many training programs is the disconnect between theory and practice. Teacher education should not be confined to manuals or abstract pedagogical models. It must include experiential learning through classroom observations, simulations, role-play, and reflective journaling.

Professional development should mirror the same active learning strategies we expect teachers to use with their students. For example, instead of lecturing teachers about “child-centred learning,” trainers should engage them in hands-on, collaborative activities that demonstrate these principles in action.

Moreover, training must address the *real* challenges teachers face: classroom

management, parental pressure, large class sizes, emotional regulation, and time management. A teacher who feels understood and supported through training is more likely to implement positive change in the classroom.

### **Elevating Teaching as a Serious Profession**

One of the most significant impacts of structured training and professional development is the elevation of teaching from a job to a respected *profession*. When teachers are trained, mentored, and provided opportunities for advancement, they begin to see themselves as professionals with a defined purpose and evolving skill set.

This shift in mindset is critical for societal change. When we invest in teacher development, we signal that teaching is not a fallback option; it is a career that requires expertise, dedication, and continuous learning. Education systems that have achieved excellence, such as those in Finland, Singapore, and New Zealand, did so not by reforming curriculum alone but by investing heavily in teacher training, autonomy, and professional recognition.

### **Building a Culture of Learning Among Teachers**

Professional development is most effective when it becomes a collective culture rather than an isolated activity. Schools and early learning centres must foster environments where teachers regularly share best practices, mentor each other, and engage in peer reflection.

Mentorship programs, professional

learning communities, and collaborative workshops can play a transformative role. When teachers feel part of a learning ecosystem, they develop a sense of belonging and purpose. Such environments encourage experimentation, innovation, and mutual support qualities that ultimately enhance the learning experience for children.

### **The Ripple Effect: From Teacher Growth to Child Growth**

A well-trained and motivated teacher creates a ripple effect that touches every aspect of a child's life. When teachers grow, children thrive. Professional development equips teachers to create emotionally safe, intellectually stimulating, and inclusive classroom spaces where children feel seen, valued, and inspired to learn.

Moreover, trained teachers can identify learning difficulties, developmental delays, and behavioural issues early, enabling timely interventions that can change the trajectory of a child's future. The impact of such awareness cannot be overstated, especially in early childhood years, where brain development is at its peak.

### **The Way Forward**

To uplift the standards of education in our region, **teacher training and professional development must become institutional priorities rather than afterthoughts.** This requires collaboration between policymakers, educational institutions, and private organisations.

Some key steps include:

**1. Mandatory Certification and CPD Hours:** All educators, especially in early

childhood, should undergo regular, accredited professional development.

- 2. Incentives for Trained Teachers:** Better pay scales, recognition programs, and career progression for those who invest in learning.
- 3. Integration of Technology and Global Pedagogy:** Modern training should prepare teachers for digital classrooms and multicultural learning contexts.
- 4. Localised Training Content:** Professional development must address local cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic realities.
- 5. Public Awareness Campaigns:** To shift societal perceptions and highlight teaching as a dignified, skilled profession.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher training and professional development are not mere administrative exercises; they are transformative investments in our collective future. When teachers are empowered, respected, and continually learning, the entire education system flourishes.

In a region where teaching is often underrated, it is time we recognise educators as nation-builders. Training them is not a favour; it is a necessity. The classrooms of tomorrow will not be shaped by technology alone but by the wisdom, empathy, and expertise of teachers who are given the tools and respect they rightfully deserve.



### Dr. Vasavvi Acharjya

is an early childhood educationist with over 24 years of experience. She is the Founder and Managing Director of Inner I Foundation Pvt. Ltd. and the Tender Petals Preschool Chain, as well as the Founder-Chairperson of the Debendra Nath Acharya Foundation for Children and Women Welfare. She also leads the Early Childhood Development Forum (ECDF), a global initiative promoting early years development.

Dr. Vasavvi is the author of the parenting guide *First 5 Years ~ Demystifying the Crucial Period of Parenting*, also available in Assamese. She compiled and launched *Early Childhood Development – Universal Perspectives* by Global Experts in 2023. A TEDx speaker and former trainer at TISS Guwahati, she is a multi-awardee and a frequent speaker at national and international platforms. She is also the creator of the Peaceful Humans Pedagogy, an innovative approach to early childhood education, on which she has trained educators across India.

## Identifying And Addressing Bullying In The Early Years

### Drawing the Fine Line Between Teasing and Bullying through Love, Empathy, and Compassion

Bullying is often perceived as an issue that emerges in later childhood or adolescence. However, research and lived classroom experiences increasingly show that the roots of bullying behaviours can take shape much earlier—sometimes as early as the preschool years. While early childhood is also a time of innocence, curiosity, and social learning, it is precisely during this foundational stage that children begin

to understand relationships, power dynamics, emotions, and boundaries. Identifying and addressing bullying in the early years is therefore not only important—it is essential.

### Understanding the Difference: Teasing vs. Bullying

One of the most critical challenges for educators and parents is drawing a clear line between developmentally appropriate teasing and bullying behaviour. Teasing in early childhood is often spontaneous,

unintentional, and rooted in curiosity rather than malice. Young children may tease as part of play, imitation, or experimentation with language and social roles. When guided appropriately, teasing moments can become valuable learning opportunities.

Bullying, on the other hand, is repetitive, intentional, and involves an imbalance of power—whether physical, emotional, social, or psychological. It may manifest as name-calling, exclusion, hitting, threatening, mocking, or deliberately hurting another child's feelings. Even in preschool settings, bullying can occur when one child consistently dominates, intimidates, or targets another.

The fine line lies in intent, repetition, and impact. Early years educators must look beyond isolated incidents and observe patterns of behaviour, emotional responses, and social interactions over time.

### Why Early Intervention Matters

Addressing bullying at the preschool stage allows us to nip this poisonous bud in the bud—before harmful patterns become deeply ingrained.



Early childhood is a sensitive period for brain development, emotional regulation, empathy building, and social learning. If children repeatedly experience aggression, exclusion, or fear during these years, the impact can be long-lasting. Equally concerning is the normalisation of bullying behaviours if left unaddressed. Children may grow into:

- Bullies, who learn that power and control bring rewards

- Victims, who internalise fear, low self-esteem, and helplessness
- Silent witnesses, who learn to ignore injustice rather than stand up against it

Our goal as educators and caregivers must be clear: children should not become bullies, victims, or passive bystanders.

### Teaching Love, Empathy, and Compassion from the Start

The most effective way to prevent bullying is not through punishment alone, but through proactive value-based education. Children need to be explicitly taught:

- What emotions feel like—within themselves and in others
- How their actions affect people around them
- How to express anger, frustration, and disagreement in healthy ways
- How to resolve conflicts peacefully

Love, empathy, and compassion are not abstract ideals; they are skills that can be nurtured through intentional experiences, modelling, and reflection.

When children are taught to name emotions, listen actively, take turns, share space, and respect differences, they develop socio-emotional intelligence—a cornerstone of peaceful behaviour.

### The Role of Peaceful Humans: Peace Pedagogy in Addressing Bullying

My Peaceful Humans – Peace Pedagogy serves as a powerful enabler in this journey. Rooted in the principles of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), this pedagogy addresses bullying not as an isolated behavioural issue, but as a reflection of unmet emotional needs, lack of awareness, or insufficient coping strategies.

This pedagogy focuses on helping children:

- Discover peace within—through self-awareness, emotional regulation, mindfulness, and self-respect
- Extend peace without—through empathy, kindness, inclusion, cooperation, and responsible

decision-making

The curriculum integrates peace education seamlessly into daily learning through stories, circle time discussions, role-play, music, art, movement, mindfulness exercises, and reflective conversations.

### **Practical Strategies for Educators in the Classroom**

Educators play a pivotal role in identifying and addressing bullying early. Some effective practices include:

- **Observation and Documentation**

Teachers must keenly observe children's interactions, noting repeated patterns of dominance, withdrawal, or distress.

- **Emotion Literacy Activities**

Helping children name and understand emotions builds empathy and reduces aggressive responses.

- **Role-Play and Storytelling**

Stories and puppets allow children to explore scenarios of teasing, bullying, and kindness in a safe, non-threatening way.

- **Creating a Culture of Belonging**

Inclusive classroom practices ensure every child feels seen, heard, and valued.

- **Clear, Age-Appropriate Boundaries**

Children must know what behaviour is acceptable and why, framed positively rather than fearfully.

- **Empowering Bystanders**

Even young children can be taught to seek help, comfort peers, and speak up against hurtful actions.

### **Extending Peace Beyond the Classroom**

Peace education cannot be confined to the classroom alone. The Peaceful Human pedagogy encourages educators to engage families and communities, ensuring consistency in values and responses. When parents, teachers, and caregivers work together, children receive a strong, unified message about kindness, respect, and responsibility.

Activities suggested outside the classroom—such as family reflection prompts, community kindness projects, and shared storytelling—reinforce learning and deepen understanding.



### **Building Peaceful Humans for a Better Tomorrow**

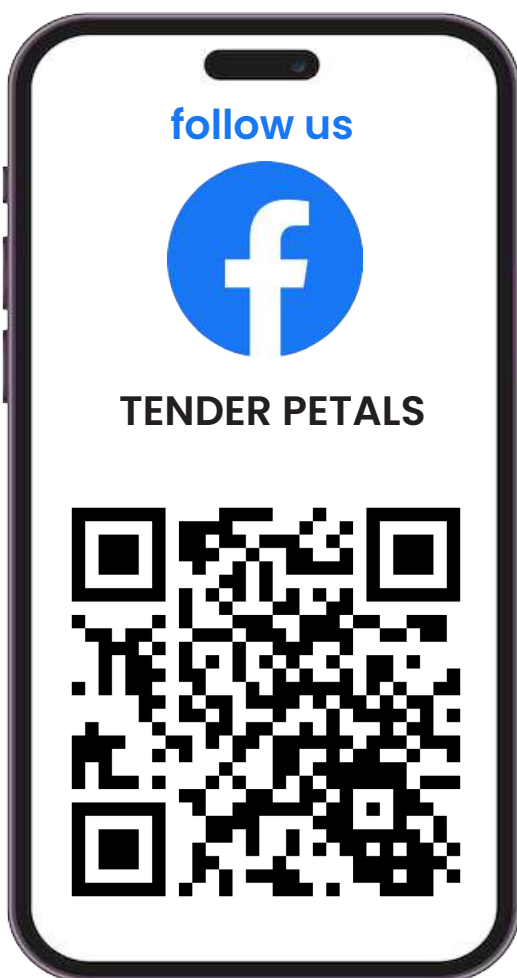
Addressing bullying in the early years is not just about stopping negative behaviour—it is about shaping peaceful humans. Children who grow up learning empathy, compassion, and conflict resolution are more likely to become emotionally resilient individuals and socially responsible citizens.

When we intervene early, model peaceful behaviour, and provide children with the tools to understand themselves and others, we create environments where bullying cannot thrive.

In doing so, we move one step closer to a world where children grow not in fear, but in love; not in silence, but in understanding; and not in conflict, but in peace—within and without.

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accomplished Early Childhood Educator with over 19.5 years of experience, specialising in Montessori pedagogy and holistic child development. She is currently serving as the Vice Principal of the Junior School (Nursery to Grade 5) in a leading, reputed school, where she provides academic leadership, mentors educators, and oversees high-quality teaching and learning practices.

With extensive certifications in Phonics, Experiential Learning, Pedagogical Strategies, and Curriculum Design, Gagandeep integrates global best practices into everyday teaching. She has conducted numerous workshops on early years pedagogy, including circle time, behaviour management, multisensory learning, literacy, numeracy, and classroom environment enhancement. Her strengths include staff motivation, innovative curriculum development, parent engagement, and ensuring developmentally appropriate practices. Dedicated to excellence, she remains committed to shaping joyful, inclusive, and meaningful early learning experiences.

# Innovative Classroom Practices in Early Childhood Care and Education

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**E**arly Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) plays a vital role in shaping a child's overall growth, influencing how they learn, interact, and understand the world throughout their lives. As education evolves, educators are moving away from rote learning and embracing creative, child-centred approaches. These modern practices focus on play, exploration, and holistic development, recognising that young learners thrive when they engage actively with their environment. Across the globe, classrooms

are using imaginative strategies that encourage curiosity, hands-on learning, and rich social interaction. Let's look at some of these impactful methods and how they are bringing learning to life for young children.

### **1. Play-Based Learning: Transforming Play into Meaningful Learning**

Play is the most instinctive way children make sense of the world. Forward-thinking classrooms use play not just for fun, but as a purposeful pathway to learning.

Example: In Ms Anita's early learning room, students created an entire city using cardboard. Some worked on designing streets, others constructed buildings, while a few used tablets to capture and play back bird sounds to make the city feel alive. Although the scene appeared busy and unstructured, every task was intentionally linked to learning outcomes measuring math, exploring sound for science, and building negotiation skills through teamwork.

<https://www.teacherstrategies.org/teaching-strategies-early-childhood/>

Impact: Play-based learning nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and cooperation. It allows children to grasp complex ideas by engaging with them in hands-on, experiential ways.

## 2. Project- Based Learning (PBL): Curiosity Comes Alive

Project-Based Learning invites young children to dive into real-life questions and work together to discover answers.

Example: In one vibrant classroom, children took part in "The Ninja Project." They explored their senses by pouring tea in the dramatic play area, experimented with motion by rolling marbles down ramps, and discussed courage after reading Frog and Toad. Each experience was woven into a broader investigation of emotions and sensory awareness. <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/strategies-for-early-learning-classroom-elizabeth-garcia>

Impact: PBL sparks curiosity and strengthens critical thinking. It helps children link ideas across subjects and apply what they learn in meaningful, hands-on ways.

## 3. Reggio Emilia Approach: Learning Through Beautiful Environments

The Reggio Emilia philosophy, born in Italy, treats the classroom environment as an active partner in learning. These spaces act like studios, inviting

children to explore through art, building, storytelling, and experimentation.

Example: During a Reggio-inspired activity, children designed and built their own treasure chests. They tested different materials, exchanged ideas, and thoughtfully discussed their creations. The focus was on the joy of the process and the expression of their ideas, not on producing a flawless final object.

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/strategies-for-early-learning-classroom-elizabeth-garcia>

Impact: This approach honours children's creativity and encourages them to lead their own learning. Teachers become co-explorers, supporting children's thinking rather than directing it.

## 4. Community: Connected Learning: Bringing the World Into the Classroom

Modern ECCE practices often reach beyond school walls, giving children opportunities to learn from their communities.

Example: Across the Asia Pacific region, many classrooms involve children in community garden projects. Young learners plant seeds, observe growth, learn about sustainability, and share the vegetables they grow with their families. Along the way, they develop an understanding of nature, nutrition, and responsibility. <https://www.earlychildhoodworkforce.org/node/1295>

Impact: Learning through community connections helps children understand their place in the world. It builds empathy, encourages responsibility, and strengthens partnerships between families and schools.

## 5. Technology Integration: Digital Discovery for Young Learners

When used mindfully, technology can enrich early learning by supporting exploration and creativity.

Example: While on nature walks, children use tablets to capture bird calls. Back in class, they listen to the recordings, compare the sounds, and even craft digital

stories about the birds they observed outdoors.

<https://www.teacherstrategies.org/teaching-strategies-early-childhood/>

Impact: Thoughtful tech use encourages inquiry and imagination. It gives children new ways to document their learning and builds essential digital skills from an early age.

### **6. Multisensory Learning:** Bringing Learning to Life Through the Senses

Young children absorb information more deeply when learning taps into several senses at once.

Example: In a hands-on science exploration, children sent marbles racing down ramps, experimenting with different angles to hit a specific target. Every roll brought excitement: the clatter of the marble, the movement they could see, and the vibrations they could feel all helped them experience basic physics in a joyful, concrete way. <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/strategies-for-early-learning-classroom-elizabeth-garcia>

Impact: Multisensory learning boosts understanding and long-term recall. It also ensures that each child, no matter their learning style, can engage meaningfully with the activity.

### **7. Storytelling and Dramatic Play:** Bringing Emotions and Ideas to Life

Stories and pretend play give children a safe, creative space to explore feelings, relationships, and cultural experiences.

Example: After reading *Frog and Toad*, the class reflected on what it feels like to be both scared and brave. In the dramatic play area, children re-enact moments of courage, pretending to climb mountains, face “monsters,” or help a friend, deepening their emotional understanding through action and imagination.

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/strategies-for-early-learning-classroom-elizabeth-garcia>

Impact: Storytelling enriches vocabulary, nurtures empathy, and fuels creativity. Dramatic play allows children to process their own experiences and build strong social and emotional skills.

### **8. Flexible Classroom Design:** Spaces That Inspire Choice and Curiosity

Progressive early childhood classrooms move beyond traditional desk arrangements, offering environments that adapt to children’s interests and needs.

Example: A thoughtfully designed classroom might include cosy reading corners, busy building areas, inviting art stations, and open outdoor zones. Children circulate freely, selecting spaces and activities that capture their curiosity.

Impact: Flexible spaces foster independence, motivation, and active engagement. When children feel ownership of their environment, they naturally take greater ownership of their learning.

## **Conclusion**

Innovative practices in ECCE are not about removing structure; they’re about reshaping it to honour the way young children naturally learn. When educators weave together play-based experiences, project-driven inquiry, Reggio-inspired environments, community partnerships, technology, multisensory exploration, and storytelling-rich interactions, they create classrooms filled with joy, discovery, and purpose.

Such approaches recognise childhood as a time of wonder, not pressure. They help children build confidence, independence, and emotional strength while also laying strong academic foundations. In these thoughtfully designed learning spaces, children don’t just prepare for school, they prepare for life. They grow into curious thinkers, compassionate friends, resilient problem-solvers, and enthusiastic learners who carry a love of exploration long after they leave the classroom.



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## ECDF INTERNATIONAL EDU TOUR 3.0 – BALI, INDONESIA

The Early Childhood Development Forum (ECDF) organised its much-anticipated International Edu Tour 3.0 to Bali, Indonesia, from 15th to 19th June 2025. The tour brought together educators, leaders, and changemakers from across the globe to explore innovative educational practices and cross-cultural learning environments. The itinerary included visits to Green School Bali, Montessori Kids, and Kipina Kids Bali, followed by the ECDF Mini Conference and the prestigious ECDF Earth Literacy Awards Ceremony.

### Learning in Harmony with Nature: Visit to Green School Bali

The first stop of the tour, Green School Bali, offered participants an extraordinary experience that redefined the meaning of education. Built entirely from bamboo and nestled amidst lush greenery, the campus stood as a symbol of sustainability and innovation. Participants explored open classrooms powered by solar energy, organic gardens that doubled as science labs, and a curriculum designed around environmental consciousness and experiential learning.

Visitors were deeply inspired by the school's philosophy of educating for sustainability. Teachers shared insights into how children learn to connect academics with real-world impact—through composting, river restoration projects, and eco-enterprise.

Many participants described the experience as transformative, calling Green School a living example of how education can empower children to become responsible global citizens.

### Montessori in Motion: Visit to Montessori Kids Bali

The visit to Montessori Kids Bali offered a glimpse into the timeless principles of Dr. Maria Montessori, brought to life in a vibrant and multicultural setting. The environment reflected harmony, order, and independence, with every material and activity purposefully designed to nurture curiosity and self-discipline.

Participants observed classrooms where children engaged deeply in self-directed learning—measuring, sorting, and creating with focus and joy. The educators at Montessori Kids emphasized respect for each child's pace and individuality, a philosophy that resonated deeply with the visiting educators.

The interaction concluded with reflections on how Montessori methods continue to remain relevant in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, emphasising the development of lifelong learners and compassionate individuals.

### Innovative Early Learning in Action: Visit to Kipina Kids Bali

The visit to Kipina Kids Bali provided participants with a glimpse into a modern, global approach to early childhood education—one that blends innovation with cultural sensitivity. The school's curriculum, inspired by the Kipinä Finnish model, emphasises play-based learning, creativity, and social-emotional growth.

Visitors were impressed by the seamless integration of technology, hands-on activities, and inquiry-led exploration in everyday classroom

routines. The learning spaces were thoughtfully designed to encourage movement, collaboration, and independent thinking—all within a nurturing and joyful atmosphere.

The interaction with the Kipina team fostered meaningful exchanges about curriculum design, teacher training, and the evolving needs of 21st-century learners. For many participants, the visit was both enlightening and motivating—a reminder that global best practices can be adapted locally to create impactful, inclusive classrooms.

The journey culminated in a Mini Conference hosted at Kipina Kids Bali, where delegates discussed global trends in early childhood education and shared meaningful perspectives on nurturing the next generation of learners. The event also featured the ECDF Earth Literacy Awards Ceremony, honouring outstanding educators and organisations championing environmental awareness and sustainability in education.

The ECDF Mini Conference brought together passionate educators, researchers, and thought leaders from across the globe — each driven by one common goal: to reimagine what early childhood education can be.

Hosted with warmth and enthusiasm by Sneha Singh, student of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Delhi, and proud member of the ECDF Youth Squad, the conference began on an inspiring note. “We’re here today to exchange ideas, celebrate innovation, and foster collaborations that inspire real change,” she shared, setting the tone for a morning rich with dialogue and discovery.

## **The Spirit of ECDF**

The inaugural address by Agnivh Prakash Bora, Head of the ECDF Youth Squad, highlighted ECDF’s mission of building a more inclusive and innovative educational ecosystem. He spoke passionately about youth engagement and the power of collaboration in shaping the future of learning.

This was followed by an engaging presentation from Ms. Elvira Morante, Principal of Kipina Kids, Bali, who introduced the audience to the Kipina model of early education — a blend of nurturing care, creativity, and experiential learning. Her words reflected a deep commitment to holistic growth and inclusion, reminding educators that “children flourish when they feel seen, heard, and supported.”

## **Voices of Change: The Speaker Sessions**

The heart of the conference lay in its speaker sessions, featuring a remarkable lineup of experts exploring diverse dimensions of early learning.

- Dr Kathryn Murray — “Preserving Childhood” — capturing the essence of letting children experience the joy of curiosity, play, and wonder without premature academic expectations.
- Ms Smruti Samantray — “Strategies & Impact Communication on Sustainability for Educational Institutions, NGOs & Corporates” — weaving environmental consciousness into the fabric of learning.
- Dr Vasavvi Acharjya — “Peaceful Humans: Cultivating a Culture of Peace from Early Childhood” — emphasising empathy, mindfulness, and emotional regulation as the foundations of compassion.
- Ms Amrit Nagpal — “Rethinking Assessments in Early Childhood Settings” — urging a shift from standardised testing to reflective, observation-based understanding.

Each speaker left the audience with renewed purpose, reinforcing the belief that early education is not just about preparing children for school, but preparing them for life.

## Honoring Excellence

The mid-morning session transitioned into the Memento Presentation, where distinguished speakers and contributors were honoured for their valuable participation. This was followed by the much-awaited Awards Ceremony, celebrating visionaries who have made significant contributions to the field of education. The awards were presented by Dr. Vasavvi Acharjya, acknowledging excellence, leadership, and innovation across various domains:

- Ms Elvira Morante – Best Principal
- Dr Kathryn Murray – Innovation in Early Childhood Learning
- Dr Mayuri Dutt – Best Principal – K12 School
- Ms Amrit Nagpal – Outstanding Mentoring in Teacher Training & Storytelling Innovation
- Ms Smruti Samantray – Woman of Influence in Climate Literacy, Storytelling & Impact Communication
- Ms Vidyalaxmi Ramaswamy – Best Educator
- Parisar Asha – Best Curriculum for Early Years (Organisational Award)

## Closing with Gratitude

As the day drew to a close, host Sneha Singh extended heartfelt thanks to all participants and contributors, expressing pride in the spirit of learning and collaboration that defined the conference.

Delivering the Vote of Thanks, Ms. Amrit Nagpal, one of the awardees herself, reflected on the importance of community in the world of education. “When educators come together to learn, share, and grow, change becomes inevitable,” she remarked — a fitting conclusion to a day that celebrated shared purpose and lifelong learning.

## Towards a Brighter Tomorrow

The ECDF Mini Conference was not just an event — it was a reaffirmation of faith in the power of education to create peace, sustainability, and joy in the world. The sessions, discussions, and awards all pointed toward one enduring message:

**“The journey to a better tomorrow begins in the classrooms of today.”**

With renewed commitment and collaboration, ECDF continues to light the way — shaping futures, one child at a time.







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## Experts Speak



**Meena Aggarwal** is a seasoned foundational years educator and creative facilitator who brings nearly thirty years of experience to her work. She looks forward to crafting poetic, NEP-aligned learning experiences that integrate movement, storytelling, and the arts. Her approach celebrates empathy, emotional resonance, and inclusive pedagogy—making every classroom a canvas of connection. She strives to make every interaction inspiring, inclusive, and emotionally resonant. Let's co-create education that uplifts.

# SMART PARENTING: A Call from the Classroom

**A**s a foundational year's teacher, I assert here with utmost sincerity—intelligent parenting is no longer an option, it's a priority. In this age and time, when both parents have long work hours, I witness children being raised by grandparents, nanny-like caretakers, or day care centres. What they think in their minds during these early years is hard to pin down, but deeply sensed. Since a very early age, they learn that their needs and desires are to be fulfilled by others. The void is subtle but deep.

At Parent Teacher Meetings, I would ask parents just one question: Do you read your child a bedtime story? The response, most times, is a sigh. They are exhausted. The day has exhausted them. The story is yet to be told. I have students who hardly ever see their fathers—men who get home late and out early. One little girl recently told me, "My papa is always in meetings." Another mother, a lawyer

establishing her career, informed me that her child lives with a caretaker while she works on "laying her foundations." What about the foundation of the child?

### Why Wait? A Wake-Up Call to Parents

So, here's my question to every parent: Why wait for formal teaching to start? The first three years of a child's life are not only foundational—they are transformational. These are the years when your presence, your words, your gestures, shape the very architecture of your child's mind and heart. Yes, your child will learn to read and write in school eventually. But will they learn to listen with compassion? To communicate with confidence? To show joy, curiosity, and awe? That starts at home.

I ask parents frequently: Do you read to your child? Do you read them a story before

bedtime? The responses are mixed, but the trend is clear—exhaustion, distraction, and the quiet wish that school will pick up where they leave off. But no school, no teacher, no nanny can take the place of the individual bond a parent feels with their child. It is replaceable. It is a sacred bond. Your job, as a parent, is not to give—it is to inspire. To foster language, to demonstrate communication, to provide a safe and nurturing environment where your child feels seen, heard, and valued.

So, question yourself: Have I made my child a reader and a listener? Have I prioritized stories, songs, and silences? Have I spoken for my child, or have I helped them find their voice? Because in the end, it's not about grades. It's about building a child who feels like a winner—expressive, confident, and intensely connected.

To conclude, I would like to express an emerging concern—one which resonates along classrooms all over the world. The children of today are confronted by mounting behavioural

problems, screen addiction, and the loss of love for learning. These are not disparate problems; they are manifestations of a broader change in the way we interact with childhood itself.

As teachers, particularly in the early years, we give our love, patience, and imagination to the development of each child. But this path cannot be traversed by ourselves alone. Respect for teachers must be counter-balanced by responsibility from parents. The child's development is not the exclusive responsibility of the school—it is a mutual calling. No application, no guardian, no curriculum can ever take the place of the sound of a parent's voice or the love of an adult presence. When parents and teachers unite, education is not only productive—it becomes joyous, purposeful, and permanent.

*Let's raise not only achievers—but joyful, expressive, and compassionate hearts.*

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**Neha Mital** is the Co-Founder, the Chief Creative & Curriculum Officer of Infinite Learning Room Pvt Ltd. Neha Mital is a mother of two delightful kids and, professionally, a strategic graphic designer. After the birth of her son, she seemed to have birthed a new self too; she founded the Learning Room. Her intense and enriching journey raising a child with special needs led her to her ikigai, of sharing with the world that ‘the key to our world lies within us.’ This realisation led her to pivot into workshops that enable self-awareness and self-management, for children. Today, InfiniteLearning is an enthusiastic team of passionate parents, educators, psychologists and counsellors committed to creating an innovative, purpose-led platform for holistic child development.

## THE UNSUNG HERO:

# Why Emotional Strength Is Your Future’s Most Crucial Skill

**A**s the founder of an initiative dedicated to building an emotionally strong generation, I often reflect on the true measure of success in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Is it merely a child’s grasp of phonics and numbers? Or is it something more profound—their ability to manage a big feeling, bounce back from a little setback, and connect genuinely with peers? And what about success in their future life? In today’s complex world, I firmly believe it is the latter.

The time has come for us to see a comprehensive Mental and Emotional Health curriculum not as an optional add-on, but as the foundational pillar of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in India.

### Navigating the VUCA World

The current and future landscape is often described by the acronym VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity.

The traditional career path, characterised by linear growth and predictable steps, is dissolving.

In this environment, emotional strength acts as a sophisticated internal gyroscope, stabilising us when external conditions spin out of control. It's the jugaad for the soul—the innate resourcefulness to handle whatever life throws at you.

## **Beyond IQ: The Digital Divide of the Soul**

While AI is rapidly conquering tasks based on Intelligence Quotient (IQ)—calculation, logic, and information processing—it remains fundamentally inept at genuine human emotional experience. This creates the most significant competitive advantage for humans. Our ability to empathise, collaborate, and show sustained grit is what the market of tomorrow will value most.

## **Sustaining Mental Wellness**

The digital age brings with it an epidemic of burnout and mental exhaustion. The constant connectivity, the comparison culture of social media, and the always-on work cycle create a profound tax on our psychological well-being. Investing in emotional literacy early on is a necessary countermeasure, a preventative health check for the mind.

## **The Intertwined Roots of Learning and Well-being**

For too long, we've operated with a compartmentalised view of development: academics here, and 'soft skills' somewhere else. However, decades of brain science now decisively prove that social, emotional, and cognitive development are deeply intertwined. A stressed, anxious child cannot absorb information optimally; their emotional state directly hijacks their capacity to learn.

A landmark 40-year longitudinal study from Dunedin, New Zealand, tracked over 1,000 children from birth into adulthood. The striking finding was that emotional intelligence (specifically, cognitive control—the ability to manage emotions and impulses) was the No. 1 predictor of future financial and life success. It surpassed academic performance (IQ) and even parental wealth and education levels.

## **The ECCE Imperative**

If emotional strength is the critical skill for the future, its foundation is laid during the first five years of life. This period is not merely a prelude to school; it is the most rapid phase of brain development, a time when the neural architecture for stress regulation, social connection, and learning is being permanently wired.

To treat Emotional Intelligence (EQ) as a skill learned later in life is like waiting until a building is half-finished to install the foundation—it's costly, difficult, and compromises the structure's eventual height and stability. The future demands individuals with robust internal systems, and those systems are built in childhood.

When a child learns to manage their emotions—to identify, label, and regulate their feelings—they are not just becoming a nicer person; they are becoming a more resilient, less stressed, and more empowered learner, ready to thrive and succeed. This process, often framed as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), is what establishes the protective factors that shield young minds from future risky behaviours and mental health challenges. These are the life skills—motivation, communication, self-discipline—that genuinely translate into positive life outcomes.

## **Redefining the Educator's Role**

We, as educators, must evolve our role. We are no longer mere deliverers of information; we are guides, relationship builders, and well-being advocates. In an age where knowledge is instantly accessible, students need educators who teach them how to learn and how to thrive. Our goal must be to facilitate learning through respect-based relationships, prioritising student well-being alongside academic success.

## **Bridging the Gap: Empowering Community Resilience**

In the context of India, professional mental health support is often scarce. This resource gap is precisely why our focus must shift to Stage 1: Wellness & Prevention, as outlined in the mental health spectrum. If professional help is scarce, the solution is to empower the entire school community—teachers, parents, and children—with the tools for emotional strength and resilience.

A robust early childhood mental and emotional health curriculum acts as a primary prevention strategy. It equips children with the basic literacy to navigate their internal world, reducing the load on crisis care down the line.

What does this curriculum look like in practice?

- Emotional Literacy: Teaching children to use vocabulary beyond “happy” and “sad,” connecting feelings to bodily sensations, and understanding their triggers.

- **Mindfulness and Regulation:** Introducing simple breathing exercises and grounding techniques as daily routines, not just for crises. This is about learning to press the ‘pause’ button.
- **Empathy and Relationship Skills:** Structured activities that build respect, foster a sense of belonging and connection to school, and teach collaboration.
- **Teacher Well-being:** Training educators to manage their own stress, recognising that a regulated adult is necessary to regulate a child.

By integrating these practices, we are creating safe, supportive environments that promote inclusion. We are not asking teachers to become therapists; we are empowering them to become skilled architects of emotional health.

## The Future Imperative

The technical skills the future demands—problem-solving, collaboration, and critical thinking—all rely on a stable emotional core. A brilliant but emotionally volatile individual will struggle to lead a team, negotiate complex deals, or persevere after a major professional failure.

The task of building emotional strength is a shared responsibility of parents, caregivers, and the early childhood education system. It involves simple, deliberate practices:

- **Validating Feelings:** Acknowledging a child’s emotion (“Acha, I see you are angry that your toy broke”) before addressing the behaviour.
- **Modelling:** Adults demonstrating healthy emotional regulation by naming their own feelings calmly (“I am feeling a bit frustrated right now, so I’m going to take a deep breath”).
- **Teaching Emotional Vocabulary:** Giving children the Hindi or regional language words, along with English, to label their internal states (happy, sad, frustrated, disappointed, or gussa, dukhi, pateshaan).

The investment in a child’s emotional development during these formative years is the single most effective way to secure their long-term well-being and prepare them to be resilient, empathetic, and successful citizens in an unpredictable world. Emotional strength is not a luxury; it is the must-have survival skill for the next generation.



**Mrs Ranjana Choudhary** is a dedicated education professional associated with IES Public School, with rich experience in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). She strongly believes that early childhood is the most sensitive and impactful stage of learning, where the right guidance can shape a child's personality for life.

Her professional journey reflects a deep commitment to child-centric, experiential, and joyful learning. She actively contributes to curriculum planning, teacher mentoring, and the effective implementation of innovative classroom practices that support the holistic development of young learners. Her core strengths include teacher training, academic coordination, classroom management strategies, and designing developmentally appropriate learning environments.

## Empowering Early Educators: The Role of Teacher Training and Professional Development in ECCE

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) lays the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, and wellbeing. The quality of early education largely depends on the quality of educators who guide young learners during their most formative years. Teachers in the early years are not merely instructors; they are facilitators, caregivers, observers, mentors, and role models. Therefore, continuous teacher training and professional development are not optional but essential for ensuring meaningful and

effective early childhood education.

### Why Teacher Training Matters in ECCE

Children between the ages of 0–8 experience rapid brain development. Their emotional, social, cognitive, and physical growth occurs simultaneously. Teaching at this stage requires specialised skills, patience, a deep understanding of child psychology, and developmentally appropriate practices. Without proper training, even well-intentioned educators may unknowingly adopt unsuitable teaching methods that hinder natural learning.

Professionally trained teachers understand:

- How children learn differently at different stages
- The importance of play-based and experiential learning
- Emotional and social needs of young children
- Classroom management through positive guidance
- Observation-based assessment rather than rote testing

Teacher training ensures that learning remains child-centric, joyful, and purposeful.

## Core Components of Effective Teacher Training

A strong ECCE training program must cover multiple dimensions of teaching and child development. Key components include:

### 1. Understanding Child Development

Teachers must be trained in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development milestones. This helps them identify each child's unique pace of learning and recognise early signs of learning difficulties, behavioural challenges, or emotional distress.

### 2. Play-Based and Activity-Based Learning

Modern ECCE rejects rote learning. Teachers need hands-on training in:

- Learning through play
- Storytelling
- Music and movement

- Sensory activities
- Hands-on exploration

Training helps teachers design purposeful play experiences that support language, numeracy, creativity, and problem-solving.

### 3. Classroom Management with Compassion

Young children need structure with warmth. Professional training equips teachers with:

- Positive discipline strategies
- Conflict resolution techniques
- Emotional coaching
- Building safe and inclusive classroom environments

These skills help create classrooms where children feel respected, secure, and confident.

### 4. Inclusive Education and Diversity

Every classroom includes children with diverse abilities, backgrounds, and learning needs. Teachers must be trained to:

- Address learning differences
- Adapt activities for children with special needs
- Promote equality, empathy, and respect
- Avoid labelling and comparison

Training in inclusivity ensures no child feels left behind.

### 5. Assessment and Observation Skills

In ECCE, assessment must be continuous and child-friendly. Teachers should be trained in:

- Observational assessment
- Anecdotal records
- Portfolio-based evaluation
- Developmental checklists

This helps in understanding progress without pressurising the child.

### Importance of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Pre-service training alone is not sufficient. Education is constantly evolving with new research, technology, and social needs. Teachers must continuously upgrade their skills through professional development programs.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) allows teachers to:

- Stay updated with modern teaching strategies
- Learn new classroom methodologies
- Improve communication and leadership skills
- Use digital tools effectively
- Reflect on their teaching practices

Workshops, webinars, refresher courses, peer learning sessions, and mentoring programs help teachers grow personally and professionally.

## Technology and Teacher Development

With the integration of digital tools in education, ECCE teachers now require basic technological proficiency. Training in educational apps, digital storytelling, smart boards, and online resources enables teachers to make learning more engaging and accessible.

At the same time, teachers must be trained in balanced screen usage to ensure that technology supports learning without replacing real-life interaction and hands-on play.

### Emotional Wellbeing and Teacher Support

Teaching young children is emotionally demanding. Teachers often act as second parents, offering constant care, affection, and emotional support. Professional development must also focus on:

- Stress management
- Emotional burnout prevention
- Work-life balance
- Mental health awareness

A happy and emotionally healthy teacher creates a positive learning environment for children.

### Building Leadership in Teachers

Teacher development should not stop at classroom teaching. Teachers must be encouraged to grow as:

- Mentors
- Coordinators
- Academic leaders
- Curriculum developers

Leadership training empowers teachers to take initiative, solve problems independently, guide peers, and contribute meaningfully to institutional development.

### **Role of Institutions in Teacher Development**

Educational institutions play a crucial role in supporting teacher growth. Schools must:

- Organise regular training programs
- Encourage innovation and experimentation
- Provide constructive feedback
- Recognise and appreciate teacher efforts
- Create a culture of continuous learning

When teachers feel valued, they perform with greater dedication and confidence.

### **Challenges in Teacher Training**

Despite its importance, several challenges exist in teacher training:

- Limited access to quality training in remote areas
- Lack of time due to workload
- Financial constraints
- Resistance to new methods
- Inadequate mentoring systems

These challenges can be addressed through online learning platforms, government initiatives, affordable certification programs,

and school-based training modules.

### **The Future of ECCE Teacher Development**

The future demands teachers who are:

- Adaptive
- Emotionally intelligent
- Technologically aware
- Research-oriented
- Child-centred in their approach

Professional development will move toward blended learning models, mentorship-based growth, reflective teaching practices, and international exposure.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher training and professional development are the backbone of quality Early Childhood Care and Education. A well-trained teacher shapes not only academic growth but also emotional strength, social confidence, and lifelong learning attitudes in children. Investing in teachers means investing in the future of society.

When teachers grow, children flourish. When children flourish, nations progress. Therefore, strengthening teacher training and professional development must remain a top priority in ECCE.

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## YOUNG VOICE



**Agnivh Prakash Bora** is a Humanities stream student at The Assam Valley School, Assam, and serves as the Head of the ECDF Youth Squad. An articulate MUN speaker and debater, he is also a dedicated taekwondo enthusiast.

In recognition of his impactful contributions to social work, Agnivh was honoured with the prestigious Telegraph Edugraph 18 Under 18 Award 2025. Curious and reflective by nature, he has a deep interest in understanding life beyond the obvious and enjoys reading and playing games in his leisure time.

## Health: The Asset we Trade for Convenience

In today's fast-paced world of instant Swiggy, Zomato and Blinkit deliveries, the countless Eateries and Cafes opened up after every few meters, the instant dopamine hits after turning on one's favourite game, the luxury of sitting on one's bed under the AC and working from home, we often forget how this lifestyle might be affecting our health.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) or lifestyle diseases, account for approximately 71% of all deaths globally. Nearly 15 million people die from an NCD each year between the ages of 30 and 69, with over 85% of these "premature" deaths occurring in low- and

middle-income countries as they adopt a more "Westernised" lifestyle.

The cost of adapting to the modern world comes with the consequence of having to jeopardise one's health. In earlier days, the facilities for luxuries such as cafes and delivery websites did not exist or were close to zero; therefore, people had nothing to spoil themselves with. But with events such as I mentioned above, people have nothing to restrict them but their own conscience. And unfortunately for us, our brains at times work against us. Through ages and ages of hunting and gathering and living nomadic lifestyles, human brains have been genetically coded to eat as much as possible if they find a source of nutrition, this

would have been useful say we lived in the stone age and say a tree with fruits, eating the fruits then and there would be a better option or there might be a risk of other animals finding the same. But in today's time, the same mechanics don't apply; say we see a jar of cookies, the logical response would be to have maybe have a few, but that genetic coding through generations is what leads to us finishing the jar at one go.

But now that we know that we cannot use that as an excuse for eating any and everything, the solution to this problem is simple but strong- "BEING MINDFUL". One has to understand the importance of health- we all know the proverb "Health is Wealth", but how many of us actually implement this in our lives? Every day we have the opportunity to choose between cooking something healthy or ordering from outside, going out for a run/walk or watching Netflix, to take care of our health or forsake it. The choice is ours: do we take the hard but right path or the easy but harmful path?

The effects of living healthily don't just affect one's physical health but also have psychological effects. Exercise is often described as one of the most effective non-pharmacological treatments for mental health issues. A 26% lower risk of developing major depression was found in individuals who ran for 15 minutes a day or walked for an hour a day. A large-scale study of 1.2 million adults in the US found that among those who exercised, the number of poor mental health days dropped by more than 40% per month. Participants in regular exercise programs consistently report an increased sense of control, coping ability, and self-esteem due to the feeling of achievement and improved body image.

The sense of satisfaction that taking the hard but right path is far greater than the quick dopamine hits one gets from ordering food or sitting at home watching Netflix.

I hope this article has helped you realise why "Health is the most valuable asset". Now the choice is yours: will you pick the hard but right path or the easy but harmful path?



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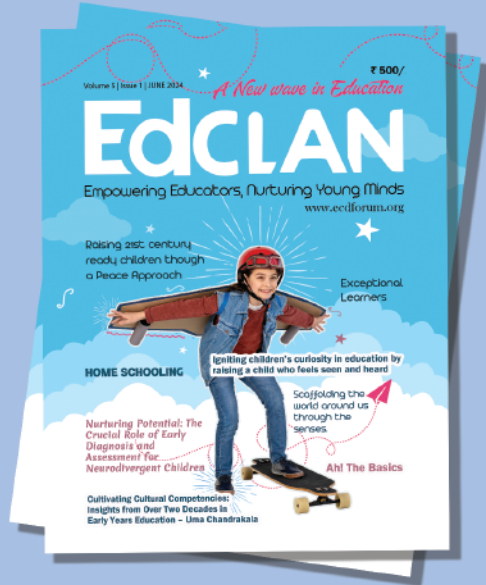
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