

# Early Childhood Education

## An Introduction



# *Do You Know*

According to the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, free and compulsory education for all children in the 6–14-year age group is now a Fundamental Right under Article 21-A of the Constitution.

**EDUCATION IS NEITHER A  
PRIVILEGE NOR FAVOUR BUT  
A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT TO  
WHICH ALL GIRLS AND  
WOMEN ARE ENTITLED**

*Give Girls  
Their Chance !*



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## Preface

It has been established by researchers that Early Childhood Education (ECE) of two to three years duration helps young children to do well in their school education and later life. It also helps to provide proper developmental opportunities to children and creates among them a readiness to learn. It requires a stress free and interesting environment for children to progress. But various schools that are providing early childhood education have been found exceeding their limits and putting unnecessary pressure and academic burden on pre-schoolers by stressing on formal teaching of reading, writing and number work. These practices appear to have encouraged parents to subject children in the age-group of 3-6 years to the pressure of formal education. It is very important for both parents and teachers to understand that they have a valuable contribution to make towards development of children at early years without burdening the young mind. It is for these reasons that parents and teachers need to have a clear understanding of the nature and quality of ECE appropriate for children at this stage.

Accordingly guidance about education at ECE stage assumes paramount significance for both teachers and parents as to when and what kind of pre-school education is needed for their children. Imparting education to young children is not only the responsibility of the school but also of the parents wherein meaningful play is necessary for the child's proper development. It does not mean that the child should be burdened through the formal kind of teaching at home.

There is sufficient research evidence available to suggest that the six years of the child's life are very important for life long learning. These years are the foundation years when young children learn to become

socialbe human beings. It has, therefore, become very necessary to sensitize parents, teachers, teacher-educators and also the policy makers about ECE. Keeping this in mind the present booklet follos a holistic approach on the crucial related to ECE and provides a realistic view of ECE for teachers and parents to meet this premise.

It should help develop an understanding among them about should and what should not constitute ECE.

It is hoped that this manual will help create proper awareness about ECE among citizens of the Country in general and parents and teachers in particular. Suggestion of the readers for further enhancing quality of this document would be welcome.

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## Early Childhood Education—A Background

The most important resource of any nation are its citizens. In the absence of dedicated and enthusiastic citizens, all the resources may go waste. For the progress of a nation, human resource development is dependent on education. It is for this reason that Article 45 under the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India, aims at the universalisation of primary education. Under Article 21A through 86th Amendment of the Constitution, free and compulsory education to children in the age group 6-14 has become a fundamental right. In addition to this, in Article 45 of the Directive Principles, early childhood care and education for children up to the age of 6 years has been recommended. Research has shown that, generally, the children who seek admission directly to Class I are not prepared for primary education both physically and mentally. Just as education is essential as readiness for life, similarly, early childhood education is necessary as readiness for formal education. Once this fact dawned on the people, their attention was drawn towards early childhood education. Today, there is universal demand for early childhood education in the whole world.

### 1.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION - THE INDIAN CONTEXT

If we consider the existing structure of Early Childhood Education (ECE), we discover that there is an abundance of privately managed nursery schools run on a commercial basis in urban areas. On the other hand, there is a lack of well-organised and

appropriately planned primary education service for the children living in rural areas and urban slums. Most of the nursery schools are functioning as downward extension of primary schools, where children are given formal education in reading, writing and mathematics. Thus, there is unnecessary burden on the children. Besides, some nursery schools try to educate children on the basis of foreign principles, which fail to integrate children with their environment and background.

Therefore, it is the need of the hour that an ECE programme is developed for the children of this age group in accordance with their needs, competencies and ability to grasp. It should also suit their environment and accelerate their growth and development.

A well-planned programme plays a vital role in emphasising and raising the standard of ECE because it enables children to acquire pre-literacy skills which facilitate further education.

The saying *As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined*, confirms that whatever values, attitudes, desired traits and habits we cultivate in a child are reflected in her/his personality as an adult. ECE is essential for human resource development. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the important role and activities of ECE and its impact on children.

## **1.2 THE VIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (NPE), 1986**

‘Early Childhood’ refers to the age group of 0-8 years. It includes the period of infancy as well as pre-school and early primary years. In the Indian context however according to the National Policy on Education (1986), early childhood refers specifically to the age group of 0-6 years.

The NPE has given a great deal of importance to ECE. Emphasising the holistic nature of early childhood programmes, it has extended ECE to include the component of 'care', i.e., Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The main elements of care are – health and nutrition.

The NPE has viewed ECCE as an important input in the strategy of human resource development. It has highlighted the need for community involvement in ECCE as well as the need to establish a linkage between Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and ECCE programmes at all levels. The NPE has cautioned against the dangers of using formal methods of teaching and introduction of formal reading, writing and number work at the early childhood stage. Instead, it has highlighted the significance of playway and activity-oriented methods. The policy has also focussed on the need for early childhood care and education of children belonging to the economically backward strata of society.

### **1.3 NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK (NCF)–2005**

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – 2005 also emphasises on the importance of 2 years of ECCE and state that experiences provided during the pre-school years play a very crucial role in the development of child's personality and have strong bearing upon later education of children. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) requires that young children be provided care, opportunities and experiences that lead to their all-round development – physical, mental, social and emotional and school readiness. A holistic and integrated perspective views the health and nutritional needs of children as integrally related with their psychosocial/educational development. The curriculum framework and

pedagogy for ECCE must be based on this holistic perspective, taking into account the various domains of development, the characteristics of children at each sub-stage, and their learning needs in terms of experiences.

An enabling environment for children would be one that is rich in stimulation and experiences, that allows children to explore, experiment and freely express themselves, and one that is embedded in social relations that give them a sense of warmth, security and trust. Playing, music, rhyming, art and other activities using local materials, along with opportunities for speaking, listening and expressing themselves, and informal interaction are essential components of learning at this stage. As the children who come under the purview of ECCE are a heterogeneous group, ranging from infants to pre-schoolers, it is important that activities and experiences for them are developmentally appropriate.

The caution would be against pressurising children into the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) and the early introduction of formal instruction, i.e., against making pre-schools into training centres for admission to primary schools. In fact, the suggestion is that ECCE cover the age group 0-8 years, i.e., so as to include the early primary school years. This is in order that the holistic perspective of ECCE and its methodologies (all round and integrated development, activity-based learning, listening and speaking a language before learning to write it, contextually and continuity between home and school) can inform learning experiences of children throughout the childhood stage and lead to a smooth transition into the elementary school stage.

## Early Childhood Education – Structure and Organisation

### 2.1 MEANING OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

To understand the nature of ECE, it is essential to comprehend the meaning of child development. In fact it is even more important to clarify the meaning of the term 'child'.

A child is a complete human being who has the ability to think, feel and act differently in different situations. Development refers to the progressive changes in the child's nature, behaviour and body. Through the ongoing process of development a child learns to live and adjust to her/his environment.

Child development refers to the growth and changes during childhood. Some of the changes can be seen and measured whereas others are not.

Child development generally includes the first twelve years of life. The twelve years have been divided into the following three stages:

- ◆ Infancy (0-3 years)
- ◆ Early Childhood (4-6 years)
- ◆ Primary (6-12 years)

The following aspects are included under child development:

- ❖ Physical and Motor Development
- ❖ Cognitive/Intellectual Development
- ❖ Language Development
- ❖ Social and Emotional Development
- ❖ Development of Creative Expression and Aesthetic Appreciation

*Child Development follows  
a Definite Pattern*

Development is an ongoing process. The rate of development can be slow or fast depending on the age, but it never stops. Development takes place in stages and each stage influences the next. Each child is unique and grows and develops at her/his own pace. All the aspects of development are inter-related and one aspect affects the other. There is a particular duration for the proper development of each and every aspect. Environment and experiences have specific influence on development.

The pattern of development for children with special needs is the same. It is possible that children with special needs have a slower rate of development or their development may stop at some stage but the pattern is the same.

Environment has a profound influence on a child's development. In the past, a child lived and interacted not only with her/his parents and siblings but with



other members of the family also. Such large or joint families contributed vitally to the child's overall development.

Members of the family were responsible for massaging and bathing the child, singing lullabies and telling stories. The child thus inculcated the right moral values. Children sometimes became aware of their daily chores around the age of three. They learn by emulating elder members of the family. Today, because of nuclear families ECE has assumed greater importance. Some of the main reasons for this are given below:



- ◆ Results based on research show that children who have undergone ECE can grasp easily at the primary level. ECE enables them to take full advantage of education and facilitates development.
- ◆ The joint family system is fast disintegrating. Therefore, the grandparents and other family members are not available to look after the children and there is no alternative for parents.

- ◆ Parents are busy in their jobs.
- ◆ Modern life style has added to mental tensions.
- ◆ The environment in the neighbourhood is not as good as it used to be due to rapid deterioration in human values and *sanskars*.
- ◆ Industrialisation has led to migration of families to urban areas.
- ◆ The number of working mothers is increasing day by day.

## 2.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ECE is a child-centred programme in which maximum learning takes place through playway techniques. It plays a valuable role in the overall development of a child. From the point of view of development, young children (0-3 years) learn best from concrete experiences.

- ◆ ECE is meant for children in the age group of 4 to 6 years. (The age could vary depending on the local conditions but it should be for two years between the age of 3 and 6).
- ◆ ECE provides a conducive environment for the overall development of a child, i.e., language, physical, emotional and social.
- ◆ ECE prepares children for primary/formal education but it is not a downward extension of primary education.
- ◆ ECE is a programme which prepares children for learning the formal reading, writing and number work.
- ◆ Children are provided opportunities for concrete experiences through ECE. This enables them to develop learning skills.



- ◆ Children gain confidence through the experiences of ECE. This leads to increased self-discipline.
- ◆ The programme of ECE should be planned in such a way that it is flexible and balanced. It should be planned keeping in view the interests, age and level of the children.
- ◆ ECE is a programme which encourages children to participate in group activities.



- ◆ ECE is not a result-oriented programme. Here the focus is not on the end result but on learning.
- ◆ ECE tries to understand the characteristics of children in the age group of 4 to 6 and provides opportunities for their further development.
- ◆ ECE gives importance to every child and is equally important for both boys and girls.
- ◆ ECE helps to develop good qualities in children and thus help them to become socially productive citizens.

## Need and Importance of ECE

Eminent educationists and psychologists have confirmed that the rate of development of children is very rapid in the age group 0-6. This is the most suitable age for acquiring *sanskars*. If this period is not utilised properly for the all round development of the child, the damage cannot be easily rectified. Providing proper care and education to children at this stage will help the country to get capable and dedicated citizens. The need for ECE under these conditions is obvious. On the basis of various research findings there is need for providing ECE in the following areas.

### Need for ECE

- Children between 4-6 years (The age could vary depending on the local conditions but it should be for two years between the age of 3 and 6).
- Readiness for Primary Education
- Parents and the Community

### *Children between 4-6 Years*

- ◆ A large number of children in our country are first generation learners. In the absence of a stimulating and appropriate educational environment at home, it is not possible for children to get sufficient care and guidance. As a result, the children acquire bad habits and wrong

values. ECE lays great stress on observing cleanliness and acquiring healthy habits. Children in the age group of 4-6 years are at a sensitive stage and habits acquired at this stage of life are mostly permanent. Cleanliness and healthy habits can be taught very effectively at this age.



- ◆ Good habits and moral values can be developed through ECE by means of interesting, entertaining and goal-oriented play activities. Thus, we can mould children in the right direction.
- ◆ Through ECE, children can be provided a healthy and progressive environment.
- ◆ Through ECE, development of children of educationally and economically backward families can be facilitated.
- ◆ ECE helps to motivate children to learn by providing them interesting and educationally useful play activities.
- ◆ ECE helps to strengthen the feeling of security and self-esteem in children.
- ◆ It becomes easy to provide a cure to most of the ailments/weaknesses that children may have, if detected at this stage. This is possible only through ECE.
- ◆ ECE helps in developing and strengthening latent talents and skills of children.
- ◆ ECE provides the best foundation for lifelong learning.

### *Readiness for Primary Education*

- ◆ Children can be prepared for primary education through ECE because children seeking admission directly to primary schools are physically, mentally and linguistically not prepared for acquiring primary education.
- ◆ Many families do not allow girls to go to school because they have to stay at home to look after younger siblings. Setting up of ECE centres, enables primary school going girls to attend their own learning as they are free from sibling care.
- ◆ ECE can play an important role in universalisation of education by encouraging the education of the girl child. In other words, girls who attend ECE programmes are more likely to continue in primary school.
- ◆ Children with early childhood experiences have greater enrolment and retention.
- ◆ Proper guidance at the initial stage, helps in the child's development and in developing her/his potential. ECE also enables the child in her/his personal adjustment in the primary school.
- ◆ Children who have undergone ECE learn easily in comparison to those who do not get the benefit of ECE. Their educational achievements are increased and the possibility of failure is negligible.
- ◆ ECE increases awareness among parents and community towards education of children in the age group 4-6.

### *Parents and the Community*

- ◆ ECE programmes lay more stress on parents' responsibility, as the first teachers.
- ◆ Under ECE programmes, guardians are oriented about the importance and methods of good pre-primary education.
- ◆ Parents are given orientation, which enables them to conduct play activities with their children at home and also inculcate desirable values and *sanskars* in their children.
- ◆ ECE programmes help to develop in parents the ability to take correct decisions in favour of their children and encourage the children to acquire new skills.
- ◆ In ECE programmes, guardians' participation is needed, not only for qualitative improvement but also for running the ECE centres, collecting resources and for evaluating children's progress.
- ◆ Parents can play an important role in reducing the child's curriculum load by not insisting on the formal teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. ECE helps parents to understand that forcing the children to read and write at this tender age could be harmful for the child's future development.
- ◆ ECE helps in achieving the goal of universalisation of primary education by bringing together NGOs, government agencies, workers, parents and the community.

In short, this programme provides a perfect foundation for lifelong learning. Therefore, if the child shows good results in the future years, spending on this programme will surely seem a worthwhile investment.

### 3.1 OBJECTIVES OF ECE

- ◆ To develop healthy habits in the child and necessary skills for personal adjustment like putting on clothes, eating on his own, observing cleanliness, etc.
- ◆ To develop good social attitudes among children so that, they can participate in games and sports and other activities and be sensitive to the rights and privileges of others.



- ◆ To help children in expressing, understanding, accepting and controlling their views, feelings and emotions.
- ◆ To sharpen children's aesthetic sense.
- ◆ To arouse children's curiosity and help them to understand their immediate environment.

- ◆ To give children opportunities for self-expression. This will encourage them to be independent and creative.
- ◆ To develop in children the competence to express their views and feelings spontaneously, clearly and accurately.

### 3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN AT THE ECE STAGE

- ◆ Each and every child is unique.



- ◆ There is a definite pattern of a child's development.
  - ◆ A child's development is influenced by her/his heredity, environment and nurture.
- ◆ Children generally learn by practice and repetition.
  - ◆ Children are self-centred. They see everything from their own point of view.
  - ◆ There are individual differences in children. We should accept the right of every child to learn in her/his own pace and style.
  - ◆ Children mostly learn by imitation.
  - ◆ Children are very active and energetic. They cannot sit still for a long time.
  - ◆ Children are motivated when give opportunities and encouragement.
  - ◆ Children have curiosity and eagerness to learn and take interest in new things.



- ◆ Abstract thinking is not yet developed in children at this stage, therefore, they learn better from concrete experiences.



- ◆ Children develop and learn better by actively discovering their environment and experimenting with it, rather than by rote learning. They learn best through activities and play.
- ◆ Their attention span is short. They cannot concentrate on one activity for a long time.
- ◆ Children are not used to work in large groups. Therefore, they take more interest in small group activities and are benefitted by them.
- ◆ They like repetition.



## Methods of Early Childhood Education

ECE takes into account the characteristics of children in the age group of 4-6. It follows the playway approach which include the following activities:

- ◆ Play (free and structured)
- ◆ Rhymes/songs
- ◆ Story telling
- ◆ Conversation
- ◆ Puppet play
- ◆ Doll's play
- ◆ Experiments at the child's level such as water play, etc.



- ◆ Dramatisation
- ◆ Nature walk
- ◆ Music and rhythmic exercises
- ◆ Language and cognitive activities with manipulative material
- ◆ Indoor and outdoor games



#### 4.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF PLAY IN ECE

- ◆ Playway method is mainly child-centred. It takes into consideration the individual needs, interests and competencies of children.
- ◆ Play is natural to children. They cannot sit quietly whether it is the playground, home, market or any other place. They begin to play with whatever they get, it could be a pebble, a leaf, or anything. They love to play and enjoy it thoroughly.



Most of the people believe that play is a waste of time. Quite often parents are afraid that play may lead to a quarrel. What is the use of play? If the child reads or writes at least she/he will learn something. Parents don't give enough opportunities for play. Infact, for children, play and work mean the same. In the early childhood years, play is the only mean of learning.

Children can express their ideas and feelings through play. Besides, they can observe and understand the world around them. It also helps to build social relations and healthy habits among children. Play is thus valuable in promoting the all round development of a child. Play becomes an effective medium for imparting ECE. Knowledge acquired by means of play will always stay with the child.

- ◆ Play is helpful in developing the five senses of a child.
- ◆ Play involves the use of senses and limbs. Their muscles become firm and strong, their understanding increases and they gain confidence.



- ◆ Children gain concrete learning experiences through play. The child participates actively in the 'Learning by Doing', process.
- ◆ Play provides a balanced and process-oriented programme, which fulfills all the developmental objectives. It nurtures development of learning processes like observation, experimentation, problem solving and creativity in children.
- ◆ Play helps in maintaining a balance between physical and mental activities.
- ◆ Play activities help to bring out the overall development of a child irrespective of their cultural background but keeping in mind their interests and skills.

*Children, who do not play and are not encouraged, their development gets hampered.*

#### **4.2 PROGRAMME PLANNING IN ECE**

The child's needs, age level, interest and aptitudes are the basis of a pre-primary education programme. ECE programme should be planned on a long-term



as well as on a short-term basis. A long-term plan is made for a full academic year. While planning such a programme, children's developmental level, social background, cultural traditions and local conditions should be kept in mind.

Based on the long-term plan, short-term planning must be done. Short-term planning means drawing up a monthly or weekly plan, which should include objectives and specific activities for each of the days of the week. The long-term plan should be drawn up at the beginning of the academic year whereas the weekly plan could be prepared before the new week commences. It should be ensured that the plan should help in achieving the aims of ECE.

The following aspects should be kept in mind for the holistic development of the child under the ECE programme.

- ◆ Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- ◆ Physical and Motor Development
- ◆ Cognitive Development
- ◆ Language Development
- ◆ Development of creative expression and aesthetic appreciation.

The teacher/worker should prepare a daily programme, which should include play activities related to the above aspects. For this purpose, the use of an integrated approach is desirable.

### *Theme-based Weekly Plan*

Under programme planning, activities are planned after selecting a particular theme. The main topic/theme must be selected on the basis of the child's age-level and environment. The theme can be based on topics like family, animals, flowers, fruits, vegetables, plants, trees, homes, cleanliness, festivals, etc.

Activities related with a theme can be planned for a week or two. (It depends on the content of the theme. As far as possible all the daily activities should be related to the chosen theme and its extension.)

### *Necessary play Material for ECE Programme*

Children are active. They like to be busy doing something or the other. They gain variety of experiences through these activities. For this, different



kinds of toys/play materials are needed for children at ECE centres. Child-centred enjoyable teaching methods and interesting learning materials make the school environment attractive and interesting. This increases the enrolment, retention and achievement of children. For organising useful and interesting activities it is not necessary that expensive materials be used. However, some basic equipment and materials are necessary in order to make the activities effective.

Some necessary play materials are:

- ◆ Big and small balls



- ◆ Coloured beads and thread for threading beads into a string
- ◆ Equipments for balancing activities
- ◆ Used tyres

- ◆ Swings
- ◆ Blocks



- ◆ Dominoes
- ◆ Flash cards



- ◆ Puppets
- ◆ Theme-related materials
- ◆ A collection of stories and songs for young children



- ◆ Dolls and a doll's house
- ◆ Puzzles

*Toys, songs and stories can provide the basis for learning about our rich cultural heritage.*

Attractive teaching aids/materials can be made by using things available in our surroundings, e.g., clay, sand, barks, leaves, flowers and other natural things. One can make play materials by collecting things like old boxes, paper, empty matchboxes, pieces of clothes, etc.

ECE programmes should include things available in the environment and useful information about daily life.

To take the learning process forward and for its continuity there should be a linkage between the home environment of the child and the ECE programme. In ECE programme it is essential to preserve the spontaneity of the child rather than curbing her/his freedom of expression and turning the child into an artificial entity. In a nutshell, the basis of the programme plan should be such that it caters to all aspects of development—physical, emotional and social in a balanced way.

### **4.3 EVALUATION OF THE CHILD IN ECE**

- ◆ Since ECE is in essence 'development oriented' and not 'syllabus oriented', continuous informal evaluation of the child in terms of the developmental objectives, is absolutely essential.



- ◆ The evaluation of the child should be done individually and should cover all aspects of development, i.e., social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language.
- ◆ Continuous evaluation should be done mainly through observation of the child's behaviour and responses during the various play activities, e.g. through puzzles, riddles, structured language and cognitive activities, games, etc. For children, who are 4½ to 6 years, practice worksheets can also be prepared and given.
- ◆ Reading, writing, mathematics is not taught formally to this age group, so their evaluation should be based mainly on observation. Assessment of behavioural changes, attitudes and skills of children can be done through observation.
- ◆ In addition to the continuous evaluation, term-wise evaluation should be done. A report of each term's progress can be shared with the parents.
- ◆ Each term's evaluation should be based on the objectives and related programme carried out in that term.
- ◆ Through continuous evaluation, children with special needs can be identified. Special attention can be given to such children by organising activities in small groups. Small group activities can also provide children opportunity to learn and proceed at their own pace. Keeping these points in mind the teacher/worker should be able to plan the activities accordingly.

## Role of the Family and the Teacher in ECE

In a child's development, stimulation has a special significance. By stimulation is meant motivation. The child acts and reacts on getting appropriate opportunities. She/he learns from these actions and reactions, and this in turn speed up her/his development. The initial interaction of a child is with her/his parents. She/he spends most of the time with the family. We all know, that, it is the duty of the parents to bring up the child, but this should not be limited to merely providing nutritious food or clean clothes to the child. Parents often forget that they have a major role to play in the development of the child's personality.

### 5.1 PARENTS AS TEACHERS

While some young parents do not understand the importance and relevance of early childhood activities, others take to them mechanically. There are also some parents who are ignorant about such activities and thus burden the child with unnecessary formal education at home. Due to socio-cultural changes, indian mothers are gradually leaving old customs and traditions. The joint family system is fast disintegrating and families are migrating from their original place of residence. The traditional ways of bringing up children are rapidly changing. Old songs, stories, play, home made toys, which parents and grandparents, commonly used at home are now a thing of the past.

The joint family system also had another advantage. Children of close relatives lived in the joint

family. They played together, ate together and learnt from each other (peer learning). There is no such possibility in today's nuclear families.

Therefore, parents should use games, activities inherited from our rich cultural heritage, stories and songs related to child development. The child is thus guided to learning indirectly through interactions with the members of the family everyday.

Left to themselves, children will imbibe whatever they see in their environment, whether right or wrong, as they cannot discriminate at this stage. But when parents create a caring learning environment at home, the child feels secure and develops curiosity. Therefore, teachers and parents should jointly try to create conditions conducive to the child's learning and development. Parental cooperation implies, they should be involved in the planning and implementation of the ECE programmes and discharging their role to the best of their ability. These days an entrance test is being conducted even for admission to nursery classes and later the children are pressurised to learn at a very young age. Such approach not only burdens children but also the parents. The teacher and the parents have a vital role in moulding the lives of children. Parents should not unnecessarily burden the child on the contrary they should play with the child. Children learn while playing. In addition to this, the parents should collect information regarding activities that not only interest the child but are motivating.



Parents must ensure the following at home in order to motivate the child.

- ◆ Spend quality time with the child.
  - ◆ Converse with the child. Provide maximum opportunity to the child to speak.
  - ◆ Make the child feel loved and secure.
  - ◆ Sing songs, recite poems, tell stories to the child and let her/him do the same.
  - ◆ Play with the child as a companion.
  - ◆ Give proper guidance to the child.
  - ◆ Avoid criticising.
  - ◆ Listen patiently to the child.
  - ◆ Take the child outdoor and make her/him aware of her/his surroundings. Draw the child's attention to the changes taking place around her/him in the environment.
  - ◆ Avoid comparing the child with others. Every child has a different potential.
  - ◆ Provide her/him games, toys, picture books and activities according to her/his age, level and ability.
  - ◆ Activities, toys and games should be meaningful for the child's development.
- Be a role model for the child.
- ◆ Respond to the child's queries and encourage her/him to explore. Avoid scolding the child even if she/he questions repeatedly.
  - ◆ Provide a tension-free environment at home so that the child feels secure.
  - ◆ Let the children learn from their own experiences by touching, smelling, tasting and examining things carefully.



- ◆ Activities and games provide children maximum opportunities for interaction with parents and other adults at home. The child benefits in the following ways by spending quality time with the elders at home :
- ◆ Feels secure.
- ◆ Becomes aware of her/his own identity.
- ◆ Learns to adjust with others.
- ◆ Reposes confidence in others.
- ◆ Becomes self-confident.
- ◆ Gets opportunities for self-expression.
- ◆ Becomes curious and motivative.

- ◆ Gets opportunities for thinking, understanding and imagination.
- ◆ Attracted to her/his surroundings
- ◆ Becomes sensitive to others



- ◆ Develops moral values and good beliefs by listening to myths and legends (like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Jataka Tales*, *Panchatantra* stories, birds and animals stories) at home.

Parents should select interesting extracts from these stories and narrate them in simple language. Even, if they don't have enough time, it is their duty to narrate stories, because children enjoy listening to these. It increases their knowledge, imagination and vocabulary. They also develop an interest in reading.

Children are delighted when parents or any other member of the family joins them in singing or playing. They feel secure. But the pace of life has become so fast these days that parents hardly get time with their children. Due to their pre-occupation with everyday chores. They are gradually forgetting their traditional role like telling stories and singing songs. We should try to revive these as they help to instill good *sanskars* in children. It is the family and parents alone who can lay the foundation for good *sanskars*.

*If children get sufficient food, love and motivation in the initial years, it will have a positive impact on their future life and education. It will also help them in achieving the desirable objectives of the Art of Healthy and Productive Living.*

- ◆ Appropriate games and activities can develop better understanding among parents and children.
- ◆ If parents help children in understanding the environment, the general knowledge of children will increase. Giving correct and logical answers to the queries of the child will help in developing a scientific outlook.
- ◆ Through appropriate stimulation activities the curiosity of the child can be aroused.

## **5.2 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN ECE**

The child is the centre of ECE and the teacher is the guide. The child on coming to the ECE centre leaves behind the secure atmosphere of her/his home. It is very important that she/he should get a similar secure and caring environment at the centre only then she/he will be able to adjust in the centre and be happy too. This will help in her/his proper development. Therefore, the teacher should

- ◆ be tolerant and patient.
- ◆ love children like a mother so that they feel safe and secure even in the absence of their mother.



- ◆ talk in the mother tongue to the child and child's parents as language is one of the basic means for nurturing and continuing culture from one generation to the other. Talking in the mother tongue is very effective in developing confidence in children and the parents.



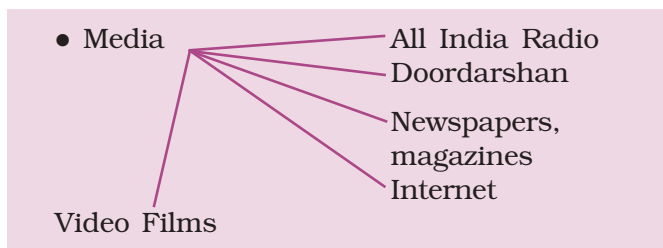
- ◆ use various locally available resources to provide a suitable learning environment.
- ◆ should trust the child's ability and competence and help her/him grow and develop her/his own emotions.
- ◆ provide opportunities to the child to find her/ his own solutions and let the child grow at her/ his own pace.
- ◆ address the child by her/his own name to impose confidence in her/him.



- ◆ present ideal ways of conversation before the child.
- ◆ respect children in order to develop their self-confidence.
- ◆ use encouraging words and actions.
- ◆ accept the child as she/he is.
- ◆ let the child know her/his capabilities. Encourage her/his efforts. Praise the child on her/his achievements.
- ◆ stress on the child's abilities, competences and capabilities rather than finding faults with the child.
- ◆ praise the child for doing a thing properly even if it is a minor thing.
- ◆ teach the child the difference between right and wrong. It is necessary to know this for the development of healthy habits and social interaction.

## Recommendations

- ◆ Acknowledging that ECE must come before primary education, every primary education centre, must set up at an early childhood centre.
- ◆ Teachers specially trained in ECE should be preferred.
- ◆ (a) There should be coordination between primary schools and ECE centres.  
(b) The element of child stimulation should be added to all training programmes related to primary and early childhood education.
- ◆ It is necessary to develop literature and training materials in the area of ECE, as there is a paucity of the same.
- ◆ Every child seeking direct admission to Class I should get the benefit of a school readiness programme. It should be made an essential component of the Class I syllabus.
- ◆ ECE is a special type of education and is different from education at all other levels. Therefore, the following organisations/ departments/associations should cooperate actively in order to make it more effective and help it growth.
  - ❖ Gram Shiksha Samiti
  - ❖ Nursery School
  - ❖ Mahila Mandal
  - ❖ Social Worker
  - ❖ Parents/Community-Contact Programme



Other media such as charts, posters, plays (*nukkar nataks*), etc., should also be used.

- ♦ Children in the tender age group of 3 to 4 are subjected to an entrance test for admission to nursery schools. ECE is the beginning of education. We should not expect any previous knowledge from a child seeking admission to ECE. Therefore, there should be no entrance test for such young children.
- ♦ A lot of stress is given to learning of formal reading, writing and learning work in the nursery classes.



Instead in ECE, we should prepare such young children for formal learning of reading, writing, mathematics e.g., before a child begins formal writing, we should provide writing readiness activities like stringing beads, joining dots and strokes (straight and slanting). We should not consider ECE to be a

downward extension of primary education and consequently attempt to teach the formal reading, writing and learning work at this stage.

Children are by nature curious and like to explore. Hence, we should provide them an appropriate environment for getting different kind of experiences themselves and help them to draw their own conclusions.

- ◆ It is incorrect to give homework to such small children. The aim of ECE is to make the school environment interesting and enjoyable. 3 R's should not be given importance. Therefore, there should be no homework.
- ◆ It has been generally found that many nursery schools run ECE programmes as they like. Instead of a readiness programme, formal teaching of 3 R's is still done. This harms the children instead of benefitting them. We should frame a law so that only teachers trained in ECE can teach the nursery classes.



- ◆ ECE programmes need related literature and teaching learning materials. There is a need for preparing a kit containing play materials required for all the aspects related to overall development of the child. The kit should be reasonably priced and made available to all concerned.

- ◆ For uniformity there should be a common daily and annual programme of ECE to be followed by all the schools dealing with ECE.
- ◆ ECE methods should also be used in Classes I and II.



- ◆ Teachers, teaching Classes I and II should follow the child-centred approach and adopt interesting teaching methodologies. They should be trained for this purpose.

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