

## EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMME: A WAY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract:

The essential basic messages of this paper are high quality, comprehensive, and multispectral early childhood care and education (ECCE) lays the foundation for children's long-term development, wellbeing, learning, and health. It builds the competencies, skills, and values that enable children both to make a successful transition into more formal education and as adults, to be healthy, earn an adequate livelihood, continue to learn throughout life, interact more successfully with his/her environments, and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Keywords:** childhood, Skills, Livelihood, Sustainable Development etc.

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### Introduction:

This National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower. The Policy envisages that the curriculum and pedagogy of our institutions must develop among the students a deep sense of respect towards the Fundamental Duties and Constitutional values, bonding with one's country, and a conscious awareness of one's roles and responsibilities in a changing world. The vision of the Policy is to instill among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.

Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development. Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India's continued ascent, and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, national integration, and cultural preservation. Our country's rich talents and resources for the good of the individual, the society, the country, and the world. India will have the highest population of young people in the world over the next decade, and our ability to provide high-quality educational opportunities to them will determine the Universal high-quality education is the best way forward for developing and maximizing the future of our country. The global education development agenda reflected in the Goal (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 - seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. Such a lofty goal will require the entire

education system to be reconfigured to support and foster learning, so that all of the critical targets and goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be achieved.

#### **Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE):**

The term ECCE comprises of three key terms: - ‘Early Childhood’, ‘Care’, and EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION. Early Childhood Care and ‘Education’ is the period from birth to six years. According to the National Policy on ECCE, 2013, there are three sub-stages of early years, each with its own age-specific developmental priorities. These sub-stages are: (a) conception to birth (b) birth to three years and (c) three to six years. This is the most important period of life characterized by rapid growth and development. By ‘Care’ we mean providing love and affection and ensuring a healthy, hygienic, protective and stimulating environment for all children. ‘Education’ is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and values through exploration, experimentation, observation, participation and interaction. All such experiences help children learn more about themselves and the world around them. Thus, ECCE refers to providing care including health and nutrition as well as early learning opportunities to all young children. A protective and stimulating environment consisting of play-based and developmentally appropriate activities are vital for children’s physical-motor, cognitive, socio-emotional and Early childhood refers to the early years of life starting from birth to six years. These years are called the formative years as the foundation for physical, cognitive, socio-emotional and language development is laid during this period. Researches in the field of neuroscience have established the importance of these years as growth and development of the brain takes place at a very fast pace. Early care, stimulating environment and optimum learning opportunities have a lasting impact on the lives of young children. This can be done by ensuring quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for all children during their formative years. Any kind of deprivation may have an adverse impact on the development of children. Thus, it becomes imperative to understand the meaning and significance of ECCE. Learning outcomes. Language development. Hence, ECCE forms the basis for overall development, later learning and wellbeing of children.

#### **Sustainability:**

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) described sustainable Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to needs their needs” (1987, p.87). Unlike ideas of human development as mainly about economic growth that ignores or diminishes social and environmental dimensions - sustainability is a holistic concept that considers social, economic, political, natural dimensions. In particular, sustainability recognizes that there are ecological limits to growth and that these have been overreached. While no one knows what living sustainably might look like, it is clearly recognized that it is everyone’s business and that education has an important role in its achievement.

#### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are integrated they recognize that action in one area will affect

outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Countries have committed to prioritize progress for those who're furthest behind. The SDGs are designed to end poverty, hunger, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls. The creativity, knowhow, technology and financial resources from all of society is necessary to achieve the SDGs in every context.

**Research Questions:**

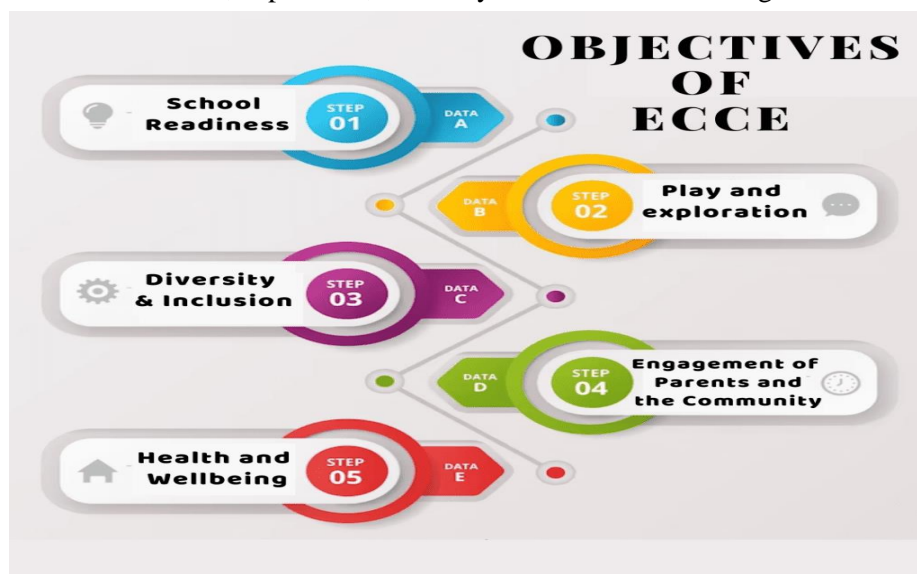
- What is ECCE Programmes? How ECCE functions?
- What are SDGs? How many SDGs are there?
- Do SDGs help ECCE programs to achieve theirgoals?
- What are some challenges in implementing ECCE programs?
- Role of teachers in ECCE programs?
- How can communities support Early childhood education?

**Objectives of Early Childhood Care and Education:**

The aim of ECCE is to provide quality care and learning opportunities to all children during their formative years for their overall development. National ECCE Curriculum Framework, 2013 has defined the objectives of ECCE. In the light of this document, let us understand its key objectives.

**ECCE aims to develop the following:**

- Ensure that children feel safe, secure, respected and develop a positive self-concept
- Provide an enriching, appropriate, inclusive, and child-centric education that prepares students for lifelong learning and success
- Enable a sound foundation for physical, motor, language and cognitive development of each child
- Imbibe good nutrition routines, health habits, hygiene practices and self-help skills among children
- Foster effective communication, expression, creativity and social skills among children



(<https://setu.etutor.co/blog/early-childhood-care-and-education>)

**Methodology:** This researcher has used an Evaluative and Descriptive research methods and analysed data for said research project.

#### **Role of NEP-2020 on Early Childhood Care and Education:**

Early Childhood Care and Education is the foundation for learning. The new National Education Policy -2020 informs the following about Childhood Care and Education.

- By the first six years, a child's brain is 85 percent developed. Nearly one crore children in India are away from Early Childhood Care and Education. Early Childhood Care and Education help children to participate and develop in education. Universal provisioning of Child Development, Care and Education 2030 or so should be achieved as soon as possible.
- It develops social competencies, good behavior, ethics, teamwork and cooperation. As well as physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-moral development, cultural/artistic development and communication and early language, literacy and numerical development.
- NEP-2020 develops the National Curriculum and Pedagogical Framework (NCPFCCE) for children up to 8 years of age in two parts. They are 1. Sub-framework for children 0-3 years, 2. Framework for children 3-8 years. Many of the great indigenous traditions of India, especially those developed over millennia in the Early Childhood Care and Education that includes art, stories, poetry, games, songs and more, are also aptly embedded. NEP-2020 serves as a guide for parents and child care and educational institutions.
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#### **ECCE Paves the Path for SDGs:**

##### **Role of SDGs in Early Childhood Care and Education:**

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** play a significant role in **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**. These goals emphasize both ECCE and lifelong learning, recognizing the crucial link between ECCE, equity, productivity, and sustainable development. By prioritizing ECCE, we pave the way for a positive and successful future for our children<sup>1</sup>.

**SDG 4:** SDG 4 specifically focuses on education. By 2030, the goal is to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education<sup>2</sup>.

**Equity and Sustainability:** ECCE plays a vital role in achieving other SDGs related to equity, productivity, and sustainable development. It provides a foundation for lifelong learning and positive outcomes<sup>3</sup>.

##### **Identifying the Challenges in Early Childhood Education**

Despite the immense benefits of early childhood education, several challenges hinder its progress:

##### **Lack of Adequate Funding:**

One significant challenge is insufficient funding for early childhood education programs. Many programs struggle to secure the necessary resources to provide high-quality education and support services to all children,

especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Insufficient funding leads to limited access to early childhood education and compromised program quality.

Investing in early childhood education is essential as it yields long-term benefits for individuals and society. Governments and communities must prioritize funding early childhood education to ensure every child has an equal opportunity to thrive.

#### **Inadequate Training and Professional Development:**

Providing ongoing training and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators is crucial for ensuring quality education. However, many educators lack access to comprehensive training programs that equip them with the knowledge and skills to teach young children effectively.

Investing in professional development for early childhood educators is essential to keep them abreast of the latest research, teaching methodologies, and best practices. Continuous learning opportunities will empower educators to provide high-quality and developmentally appropriate instruction. Collaboration between educational institutions and early childhood education programs can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise. This partnership can create opportunities for educators to receive specialized training and gain insights from experienced professionals in the field.

Incorporating technology into professional development programs can enhance accessibility and provide educators with innovative teaching strategies. Online courses, webinars, and virtual conferences can offer flexibility and convenience, allowing educators to grow professionally at their own pace.

While early childhood education faces various challenges, addressing these issues is crucial for providing every child with a solid foundation for lifelong learning. By investing in adequate funding, attracting and retaining skilled educators, and providing comprehensive training and professional development opportunities, we can overcome these obstacles and ensure high-quality early childhood education.

#### **The Role of the Teacher in the Implementation of the ECCE:**

- Teacher classroom wise give priority in the curriculum. sports, activities and Arts
- The teacher should constantly strive in the skill development of the child.
- The teacher must design the curriculum for the holistic development of the child
- The teacher should organize sports competitions, dance competitions, drama competitions, painting competitions in the school.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Child development is a continuous process, welfare measures given for the children of early childhood period, has begun to be accepted as investment for basic education and life-long learning.
- Also ECCE programs work toward reducing disparities by ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized groups have equal opportunities to participate.
- ECE helps for individual child's future, families' upliftment in terms of Literacy, women employment, enhanced educational status of the child and nation's development.

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) play a crucial role in shaping early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs worldwide.
- By aligning with SDGs, ECCE programs strive to provide high-quality learning experiences that foster cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.
- SDGs emphasize the importance of equitable access to ECCE for all children, regardless of their background, socioeconomic status, or geographical location.
- Governments, international organizations, and researchers collaborate to set standards, define and monitor ECCE, and invest in national monitoring systems.

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