

CHALLENGES IN ECCE TEACHER EDUCATION AND VISION OF NEP 2020

*Poornima Hegde**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21794693>

ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) plays a pivotal role in laying the foundation for lifelong learning during a child's most crucial developmental years. Despite its significance, ECCE teacher education in India faces severe challenges, including unregulated training institutions, widely varying program durations, and an inadequate curricular focus on developmentally appropriate practices. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to resolve these systemic gaps by envisioning a standardized, high-quality foundational curriculum coupled with stage-specific professional training and continuous development for educators. Robust regulatory mechanisms remain essential to ensure early childhood teachers are effectively equipped to nurture young learners.

KEYWORDS: *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Teacher Training, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Foundational Stage, Child Development.*

* **Dr. Poornima Hegde**, Assistant Professor (Former), M. E. S. Teachers College, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru.

It is acknowledged that learning is a continuous process that begins from birth. But the initial 6 years is the most crucial period in the child's life as the development in this period is extremely rapid. Psychologists like Bruner, Piaget and Vygotsky through their studies have shown that brain development is optimum at this stage if a stimulating environment is provided for the child. Taking care of the child with proper nourishment and education should be the priority at this stage. This stage is the foundation on which depends the next higher levels of learning. A healthy and stimulating environment is to be provided for every child so that they can grow to their fullest. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) derives its importance from this rationale. Hence this level of education has drawn attention worldwide today.

The aim of Early Childhood Care and Education is to provide opportunities for the children to grow to their full potential and lay the foundation for all-round development and lifelong learning. The aim of Early Childhood Education is to:

- help the child to develop physically with adequate motor activities.
- teach the child about the importance of personal health.
- enhance their abilities with respect to reading, writing and arithmetic.
- help them to have better communication skills with others and express freely their thoughts and emotions.
- teach them to manage their emotions.
- help them to acquire social skills.
- motivate them to attain mastery over early literacy and numeracy so that they get ready for schools.

At the early stage, children learn through senses

and stimulations. They try to know more about their surroundings and explore the environment in which they live. The play-way method of learning helps them to develop abilities like problem-solving, manipulation and experimentation. There exist individual differences in growth and development and also in learning. The experiences provided to all the levels of students must help them to be successful in later learning. Success in learning boosts their self-confidence. Early experiences provided through education should help them to develop in totality. All the domains of development i.e. physical, motor, cognitive, language, socio-personal, emotional and creative and aesthetic appreciation are interrelated and take place simultaneously.

In order to make the children successful at this stage, providing quality Early Childhood Education is necessary. One of the dimensions of quality is having trained teachers to handle children at this stage.

ECCE Teacher

The success of the ECCE program lies in the presence of an effective teacher who is trained for that particular stage. Teachers need to be adequately equipped to transact the curriculum of that stage and should be interested and motivated to reach out to the children. Her responsibilities lie in varied domains like health, nutrition, care and education. An ECCE teacher needs to:

- understand the developmental milestones of the children and handle them accordingly.
- treat children equally and with respect.
- treat children with affection, care and enjoy being with them.
- appreciate cultural, social and religious diversity of

children.

- be sensitive to the needs of a child and must provide emotional support.
- facilitate learning and provide opportunities for exploring.
- plan the play activity to promote their development.
- assess children qualitatively.

ECCE Teacher Training

Like teacher training at any other level, it is important to have trained teachers at ECCE. A teacher needs to be well-equipped with the required skills and abilities to handle the children. She should know to plan a variety of programs and to use different methods of teaching. Children need to be provided with a healthy and creative environment. Teachers at this stage need to learn to create an environment for children which is joyful, play-based and developmentally appropriate. Through well-planned teacher education programs, effective and efficient teachers can be prepared to handle the children at this crucial stage. Hence the importance is given to the training of teachers at this level.

Challenges In ECCE Teacher Education

In India, the responsibility of Early Childhood Care and Education is shared by two Ministries - Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) resulting into Inter-Ministerial convergence. As a result, there is no significant attention paid by any for the preparation of teachers to this level.

Many of the Teacher Education Institutions run without any official recognition from NCTE. Variations are seen in terms of structure, duration and nature of

certification, physical facilities, curriculum and profile of teacher educators in the institutions. NCTE prescribes a two-year duration, a certificate programme varies across institutions from a duration of 3 months to 2 years and diploma courses, even in recognised institutions, vary from one to two years.

There is wide variation in the ECCE teacher training in the country with varied curricular content. Most teacher training programs do not adequately prepare trainees to provide developmentally appropriate early education and to work competently in diverse socio-cultural settings. Teacher trainees are not exposed to a variety of ECCE settings and are not taught to address the needs of children from diverse backgrounds. Developing a sense of respect for all communities and their customs, language, and culture is very important and this component is missing in most teacher education programs. The following table indicates some of the training programs run in the country:

Programme	Eligibility	Duration
Anganwadi workers training	-	3 months
Balsevika Training	10th pass	11 months
Integrated Pre-primary and Primary Teachers' Training	12th pass	2 years
Nursery/Pre-primary Teachers' Training	10th pass	1 year
Diploma in ECCE through Distance Mode	12th pass	1 to 4 years, flexible

The Early Childhood stage includes children from birth to 8 years of age. Early Childhood Education and Development refers to a holistic and integrated program of provisions for children in this age group. The emphasis is on understanding children's developmental needs. Teacher education programs have failed to address the entire continuum, with a more specific focus on the preschool

stage.

There is a dominance of the lecture method and blackboard teaching in the classrooms in teacher education programs instead of a participatory approach. Teacher educators do not possess the required qualifications.

At present, there are no norms from NCTE related to practice teaching, a critical component of any training. Owing to a lack of regulation for the way nursery schools are established and run, including teacher education programs, many institutions get away with diluting the original vision of school internship and field experience.

Vision Of NEP 2020

National Education Policy 2020 holds the objective of providing high-quality, developmentally appropriate education for the children ranging from 3-6 years. From three years of preschool (3-6 years) to the end of Grade 2 is referred to as the critical Foundational Stage of a child's development. The policy envisions developing an integrated foundational curricular and corresponding teacher preparation for a better quality ECCE.

NEP holds the vision to prepare qualified educators for early childhood with stage-specific professional training. It also highlights upon mentoring of teacher training programs to have better quality. Teacher preparation and their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) would be the focus. The educators currently working without required training would be given an opportunity to undergo a special training program of 6 months.

With such a vision, there is a hope that ECCE Teacher Education is restructured to have uniform structure, duration and certification. Monitoring and regulatory mechanisms by NCTE would be strengthened. Curriculum would focus on developmental milestones and necessary

training required to handle the children of different age groups. There is an urgent need for thoughtful planning followed by effective implementation of Teacher Education at ECCE.

References:

1. Curriculum framework for diploma in preschool education-NCTE
2. National Policy on Education 2020
3. ICDS Mission- The broad framework for implementation- MWCD
4. National Curriculum Framework 2005
5. National Early Childhood Care and Education policy (2013)
6. National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum (2013)
Ministry of Women and Child Development.
7. Preparing teachers for Early Childhood Care and Education-
Ambedkar University, Delhi and National Council for Teacher
Education, Delhi
8. Quality in ECCE- Pictorial handbook for practitioners(2014)
MWCD, UNICEF India