

SUMMARY

Early childhood is a significant period which sets the base for later learning and development. The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 encourages the provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality preschool education for all children. With this view, access to equitable and early investment in quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services and programmes became vital in India. The initiatives taken by the Government of India clearly reflect the influence of and adherence to this global ECCE commitment. The surveys reveal that the quality of ECCE is at risk especially the education component for the age group of three to six years. The reasons behind this may be number of different issues which should be addressed and rectified at individual, institutional and government levels. In this lesson you learnt about the different issues in ECCE and directions to address those issues in ECCE.

ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Build Your Understanding

- ✚ There are some critical issues which were not appropriately addressed to meet the quality early childhood care and education.
- ✚ Reason behind that maybe we have compromised with the quality standards for ECCE both at the individual or the government level.

Process of Admission

- Not much clarity and transparency on the process of admission of children in ECCE centres
 - Date of admission,
 - Age for admission
 - Correct admission procedure
- Formal tests for entry in preschools lead to rejection of children which may destroy their self-confidence and self-esteem at this tender age.

DIRECTIONS TO RESOLVE ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

- ✚ Though issues exist in ECCE, it is possible to address them through combined efforts of all the stakeholders.
- ✚ These efforts will ensure accessibility of quality ECCE programmes to all children.

Process of Admission

- Though process of admission is different in different states; children with three years of age by 31 March of an academic year are ready to enter preschool.
- There should be no use of evaluation/ interview/ interaction of children and parents for entry in a preschool.
- Admission should not be denied on the grounds of religion, region, caste, race, sex, disability and socio-economic status of the family.
- Children living in the neighbourhood should be preferred.

Infrastructure, Material and Classroom Environment

- Lack in age and developmentally appropriate equipment and play materials
- Play material does not meet the criteria prescribed
- Also not well maintained
- Not even appropriately used by the teachers

Teachers

- Qualified and well - trained teachers are vital for the successful implementation of an ECCE programme
- Variations in the qualification of ECCE teachers appointed.
- In-service training of teachers is one of the vital but neglected and underdeveloped area in the whole country
- Variations in pay norms for ECCE teachers
- Student – Teacher ratio is not followed by the ECCE centres

Teaching learning process

- Teaching learning process in ecce centres must be play and activity based.
- However, most centres have very less scope for children to ask questions, experiment, explore and participate.
- Its well-known phenomenon that children learn best in their mother tongue; still most ecce centres use English as a language to teach and interact with children.
- Huge, boring and age- inappropriate

Infrastructure, Material and Classroom Environment

- Must ensure safe and adequate indoor and outdoor space.
- A minimum of 300/450 sq. Meters of outdoor space and 35 sq meters indoor space should be provided for a group of 25 children.
- Adequate number of age and developmentally appropriate teaching learning material.
- Provision adequate light, ventilation, safe drinking water, clean and child-friendly toilets.

Teachers

- XII passed with two-year diploma in preschool education recognized by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)
- Initiatives for pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes in all the States/ UTs.
- Uniformity and review of pay norms for ECCE teachers
- Maintaining teacher-child ratio; Ideally 1:20 or 1:25 is recommended

Teaching learning process

- Attention to classroom environment and setting
- Different activity areas must be designed in a way so as to provide ample opportunities to the children to explore the areas of their interest on a regular basis
- All equipment (resources) and materials in classroom are functional, easily accessible and safe.
- Teaching learning process should be child -centred.

- homework
- Inappropriate assessment procedures for assessing children's progress

- Age and developmentally appropriate activities and material to facilitate learning.
- Language of instruction in an ecce centre must be the mother tongue.
- Encouraged to be proficient in home language/mother tongue first, and then the school language may be introduced
- Any kind of homework, must be discouraged and activities to do at home in consonance with the activities already done in the preschool may be encouraged
- Children's progress should be assessed in a non-threatening manner on a regular and comprehensive basis through daily observation, play activities, interactions and anecdotes.

The curriculum

- Ministry of women and child development (MWCD) has developed a curriculum framework for ecce which places children at the centre of teaching learning process and has suggested the play way approach for organising learning experiences of young children.
- Despite the availability of such guidelines; there is no set curriculum for ecce.
- Pedagogy is not child centred.

The curriculum

- Age- and- developmentally appropriate learning experiences and opportunities
- Must be play- based, ensure continuous learning, provide opportunities for interaction, ensure involvement of children
- Should offer pedagogy covering all domains of development
- The emphasis must be given on concrete experiences

Inclusion and Gender Equality

- An inclusive preschool environment consists of an equitable and respectable environment for all children despite the existing differences among them.
- Unaware and untrained teachers to handle gender and inclusion issues at ECCE centres

Inclusion and Gender Equality

- Diversity in the classroom must be respected to promote equality
- Facilitate education of children with special needs
- Carry out the early developmental screening of all children so that timely intervention may be provided
- To break the gender stereotypes through inclusive and gender sensitive curriculum.

Administrative/ Management Issues Monitoring and Supervision

- No clear monitoring and supervision mechanism for ensuring the quality of ECCE centres at macro and micro level.
- The stakeholders are not aware of these mechanisms and their role at different levels.

Regulatory Framework

- In order to ensure the quality of ECCE centres and minimum standards of quality ECCE, a robust regulatory framework is imperative.
- No well-defined regulatory framework available both at the national and the state level

Convergence/Coordination

- Lack of a strong and consistent convergence/ coordination between governments

Administrative/Management Monitoring and Supervision

- Must focus on finding out the issues concerning ECCE and devising solutions to the identified problems.
- The stakeholders should be aware and trained about these mechanisms and their role at different levels.

Regulatory Framework

- Formation of standard regulatory framework for institutions offering ECCE programmes
- Constitution of a dedicated agency to monitor implementation of standards
- National ECCE council formulated by the MWCD, should be fully functional

Convergence/Coordination

- The government must work to build a strong and consistent convergence with different programmes, institutions and concerned ministries to address multiple needs of children such as education, health, nutrition, safety and protection.
- Coordination among different stakeholders

EVALUATE YOURSELF

Q1. From the perspective of a teacher discuss the various issues related to the teaching learning process in ECCE.

Q2. Write a report on 'Inclusion and Gender Equality' in the light of Government initiatives.

PRACTICE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Visit ECCE centre in your surrounding and discuss at least five critical issues which are not appropriately addressed by ECCE centre. Give suggestions to resolve those issues.