

Early Childhood Care & Education

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ECCE-Goals set in 2000

- MDGs set by world leaders in UN Millennium Summit 2000 and EFA action framework goals set in World Education Forum 2000 heavily influenced ECCE across the globe.
- EFA goal- *Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children*, has triggered rapid growth in formal programming and policy making in the global field of early childhood.

Early Childhood & Relevance

- Early childhood - the period from conception through six to eight years of age
- lays the foundation for lifelong learning and development.
- early experiences are largely determined by supportive family and community care practices, proper nutrition and health care, learning opportunities, which in turn are dependent on enabling policies and investments for young children and families.
- ECE positively impacts attendance, retention, and learning of children in elementary and higher education

Dealing with ECCE objectives

- To ensure that children are provided with “a natural, joyful and stimulating environment, with emphasis on necessary inputs for optimal growth and development” (National Advisory Council 2011).
- It is also elaborately discussed in the National Focus Group on Early Childhood Education (2006).
- The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) states that ‘learning begins at birth’ and encourages the development of early childhood care and education.
- This was reaffirmed in the World Education Forum at Dakar (UNESCO 2000).

State Directive Principle on ECCE

- Recognition of criticality of ECCE reflected in 86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002
- New Art.45- “state shall endeavor to provide Early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of 6 years.”

RTE on ECCE

- Right to Education Act (2009) says “with view to prepare children above the age of three years for Elementary education and to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years, the appropriate Government may make necessary arrangement for providing free pre-school Education for such children” (Chapter III, Section 11).

Divergent Perception of new Art 45 & RTE on ECCE

- Art 45 specifically recognized the importance of ECCE but its non inclusion in RTE raised questions.
- The 86th Constitutional Amendment effectively releases the State from its obligation to provide care and education for children below 6 years.
- Noted as a negative development

ECCE Policy 2013

- 12th Five Year Plan of GOI placed a high priority on universalizing pre-school education and improving school preparedness— especially for socially and economically disadvantaged children
- The Government of India has brought out the National ECCE Policy framework, comprising of the National ECCE Policy, National Curriculum Framework for ECCE and Quality Standards for ECCE.

Vision of ECCE Policy 2013

- to achieve holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below 6 years of age by promoting free, universal, inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualized opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential
- to improve pathways for successful and smooth transition from care and education at home to centre based ECCE and thereafter to school.

Health Status Indicators of Children in India & Achievement of MDG target

- Children (0-6 years) accounts 13% of the total population in the Country (census 2011)
- An estimated 12.7 lakh children die every year before completing 5 years of age.
- 81% of under-five child mortality takes place within one year of the birth which accounts nearly 10.5 lakh infant deaths
- whereas 57% of under-five deaths take place within first one month of life accounts 7.3 lakh neo-natal deaths every year . Contd...

Contd...

- under five mortality rate declined to 49 in 2013 (SRS), (MDG4 target, 42 by 2015)
- 11 States have achieved the above target (Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal)
- Infant Mortality Rate currently stands at 40 (SRS 2013), against the MDG target of 29 by 2015.
- 15 States/UTs have already achieved the above.
- 13 States/UTs are near to achieving MDG4 that also includes Bihar.
- Children (12-23 months) immunized against measles has reached a coverage of 74% in 2009 (CES 2009) against a target of universal immunization against measles.

Principles of Evolution of ECCE

- 3 principles that contributed to the evolution of the programs for ECCE
- (a) Early experiences influence later interventions,
- (b) Cognitive learning is impacted by socioeconomic status through ill health, malnutrition and poor quality home environments and
- (c) Developmental gains will be optimal if interventions address the context.
- Pre-school education constitutes the backbone of the program.

ECCE Programs in India

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) play key role in imparting ECCE in India through ICDS that brings services of health, nutrition, as well as mother's health under a common umbrella.
- ICDS is a centrally sponsored and state administered ECCE program.
- The centres responsible for delivering early childhood care and education services are the Anganwadis . 1.4 million Anganwadi centres by 2011
- It covered around 38 million children.
- About 78 million people took part in health and nutrition programs at Anganwadi (MWCD, 2011), the largest numbers in the world.

Initiative for Relocation of Anganwadi Centres

- An empirical study indicating the significance of ECCE in promoting universal elementary education
- The Indian government took initiatives focusing on a smooth transition of children from preschool education to elementary education.
- These include the relocation of Anganwadi centers close to elementary schools and adoption of the same time schedule for commencing the class as that of elementary schools.
- Anganwadi centers also educate 18.4 million women who are pregnant or breast-feeding mothers in order to prevent detrimental effects of their poor health and literacy on the development of their babies (MWCD, 2011).

What are still beyond initiatives

- No doubt Anganwadi centres have greater significance for improving nutritional status and health of infants and toddlers and pregnant and breast feeding mothers
- Also no denial that a significant proportion of the people do not get safe drinking water and sufficient nutrition to lead to healthy life.
- More than 70% of diseases in children are caused due to malnutrition and no availability of safe drinking water. Contd...

...Beyond initiatives

- Still a substantial proportion of expecting mothers still deliver their babies at home and with the help of unskilled or semi skilled nurses in unsatisfactory hygienic conditions. They do not get services of qualified doctors.
- No amount of expenditure on curative aspects of health like doctors, hospitals and medicines can ensure healthy life to our children until parents economic condition improves and their basic life conditions fulfilled.
- The state of primary health centres and local hospitals are almost in shambles.

Term & Context of International Agency –an issue

- Most of the preventive measures to prevent incidence of infectious, contagious and other fatal diseases and to ensure healthy life have been launched at the initiative of international agencies at their terms and context.

Role failure of Anganwadi Centre in Pre-school Education

- Anganwadi centres are unable to play significant role in preparation of children for smooth transition to primary education.
- A large number of Anganwadi Sevikas in a state like Bihar is either semiliterate or literate.
- Those who are school passed are also unable to undertake the vital responsibility of preparatory education of the children for flawless transition to the primary school.
- The preparation of the children at early stage demands specific skills that are not possible without elaborate initial training specifically required for the purpose.

Need of Preschool system in Primary school

- There is also need to add to preparatory/preschool classes in each primary school. In most of the primary schools in Bihar children below six years of age go to school and sit either separately in the room/space provided to them or along with other children. School maintains record (Bal Panji) of such children.

Role of NGOs

- NGOs like Pratham & Save the children also provide ECCE programs as part of their social contribution activities for protecting the socially vulnerable children.
- According to government estimates, approximately 3 to 20 million children participate in ECCE programs provided by NGOs (Kaul & Sankara, 2009).
- Pratham serves as a professional ECCE organization, by providing elementary school preparatory education for 90,000 children across 12 states in India, while conducting ECCE research and surveys, and providing training for Anganwadi teachers.
- Save the Children is making good impact in ECCE in India. In 2015 it improved lives of 13.47 lakh children (Save the Children India, 2016)

Inclusion of Deprived children in Private Schools for Pre-primary education under RTE

- Section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act, 2009 provides for inclusion of children from disadvantaged and weaker sections in private unaided schools by requiring them to reserve 25% of their seats for such children at Grade 1 or pre-primary level if the school imparts pre-primary education .
- Enrolment in recognized private schools ranges from 60% to 10% in various states of India
- Inclusion of deprived children never ensured.

ECCE Teacher Education

- Inequitable distribution of ECCE teacher education institutions across states in India
- Some states particularly in the north and north east have almost no access to any teacher education institutions for ECCE
- Most of these institutions run by private sector & NGOs

Thank you