



Qualitative ECCE is the need of the Hour

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It has been accentuated by many research studies that qualitative Early childhood Care and education (ECCE) is a foundation stage for lifelong learning as it establishes physical cognitive, mental development of a child to create a strong coping mechanism for formal education. The provision of Early childhood Care and education has been incorporated under Article 45 of the Constitution of India which is coming under the Directive Principles of State Policy for the all round development of the Children. Early Childhood Care and education (ECCE) is internationally & rapidly used terminology acknowledged everywhere and a subject matter of immense importance for the child. ECCE, as a Critical stage of human development positively affects to the cognitive and intellectual development of the child and thereby to the learning outcome of the child.

Early Childhood is defined 'as period from birth to 6 years old; a time of remarkable brain development. Here, the quality ECCE helps in reducing the dropout rates, wastage and stagnation etc at primary stages and results in higher School attainment and occupational status. Thus ECCE helps in the development of

children in a variety of ways that improves group socialization, infusion of healthy habits, and stimulation of creative learning process.

Post 2000 Development of ECCE in India

The rights of the young children are well recognized in our constitution. The important development in post 2000 in our country in the context of child education is incorporation of Article 21(A) to provide Free and Compulsory Education to the age group of 6 - 14 years of children and enactment of Right of the children for Free and compulsory Education Act -2009. But the lack of provision for Early childhood education (Pre School Education) under RTE is an area of concern that needs Research and debates. The adoption of 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 is a phenomenal in the history of the Constitution of India. State is under constitutional obligation to devise a legal framework in order to ensure the mandate of Article-21 (A) for providing free and compulsory education to all children in the aged of 6-14 years.

Further, India's acceptance to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child and World education for all declaration, Millennium Development



Goal etc, is a clear reflection of the commitment of the Govt. towards the children. ECCE has invariably been used in the documents of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), UNICEF & World Bank. Law brings accountability. If a legal frame work is delivered or, statute is brought out there will be more accountability and same will be delivered in the right based approach.

Research in India also provides an evidence of effect of Early Childhood Care and Education programme on enrollment levels and academic preparedness of children for formal schooling. A longitudinal-cum-cross sectional study conducted by NCERT in eight States (Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, & Goa) indicate distinctly better rates of retention in children. Further, the findings of National Evaluation of ECE programmes of ICDS conducted indicated the positive role played by early childhood education in promoting enrolment, retention in dropout and greater retention in primary schooling.

ECCE in Constitutional Frame work and Judicial Prouncement:

Since the enforcement of the Constitution, the Govt. of India has made numbers of efforts to bring improvements in educational planning, development and systems. In course of the development, a good number of policies have been developed on the recommendation of the Education Commission. At the same time

the verdict of the Supreme Court also showed keen interest of the judiciary in making education as a fundamental right. The Supreme Court delivered a historic judgment in 1992 in the famous case of Mohini Jain vs. State of Karnataka where the judiciary hold the view that “the right to education” springs from Right to Life and is a concomitant to Fundamental Rights enshrined the Constitution that “every citizen has a right to education under the Constitution’.

Presently, under Article 21-A of the Constitution, every child between the ages of six and fourteen years has a fundamental right to ‘free and compulsory education’, which the State shall provide ‘in such manner as the State may, by law, determine. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (R.T.E) Act, 2009 does not take a comprehensive approach to early childhood care and education.

But Article-45 of the constitution of India reads, “The state shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of 0-6 years of age.”

ECCE in various National Five Years Plans

Although the national strategic planning process was started in 1952, programmes for childcare did not appear in the first three successive Five Years Plans (1951-66). But the Fourth Plan (1969-74), for the first time, laid focus on accelerating the provision of basic



services for children, and provided a platform for the adoption of a National Policy for Children in 1974. Subsequently, child welfare programmers have been incorporated in national planning. The Fifth Plan (1974-79) saw a shift in focus from child welfare to child development and an emphasis on integration and convergence of social inputs for the well-being of infants, children, and pregnant and lactating women. Later on this was reflected in the launch of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in 1975, which aimed to enhance the holistic development of the child through the involvement of a community based volunteer called an Anganwadi worker. The Sixth Plan (1980-85) provided for the expansion of ICDS projects and implementation of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The Seventh Plan (1985-90) set out a strategy for early childhood survival and development. The Eight Plan (1992-97) viewed children as the nation's future human resource and investment in child development services as an investment in the country's future. The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) laid emphasis on three major areas of child development - namely, health, nutrition

and education. The Tenth Plan (2002-07) viewed "Development of Children" not only as the most desirable social investment for the country's future, but as the right of every child to achieve his/her full development potential. The 10th Plan was committed to adopt a Rights-based approach to the development of children. Eleventh Plan (2007-2012) is the most significant, for two reasons. First, to a great extent, the objectives of the plan are intertwined with the principles of the CRC. The Plan strives to create a protective environment, which will ensure every child's right to survival, participation, protection, and development. Secondly, the plan reflects the 86th constitutional amendment Act, which altered the statutory basis for elementary education and early childhood care and education. The plan recognizes the UEE and proposes that services should reach all categories of children including children with disabilities, who are discriminated against the education system.

Importance of ECCE In Global Perspective:

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, (UNCRC) by UNO on November 20, 1989.



- ❖ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- ❖ The World Declaration on Education for All.
- ❖ The World Education Forum held at Dakar Senegal on 26-28 April 2000 where 164 countries together reaffirmed their commitment for achieving Education for All by 2015.
- ❖ The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966. Recognized the right of everyone to education.

and the Countries like Australia, officially referred as Common Wealth State, United Kingdom a country of Continental Europe, Thailand, The People's Republic of China, The Republic of the Philippines, The Republic of Srilanka, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Arab Countries are giving maximum emphasis on the importance of qualitative Early childhood care and Education .

Conclusion:

In terms of international human rights instruments, ECCE is considered an integral part of the child's right to education. Unfortunately this was not the approach of 86th Constitutional Amendment Act. The RTE Act does not take a comprehensive approach to early childhood care and education. Even though Section-11 of the Act says about early childhood care and education, this does not mandate the state to make provision for delivering the service. Thus, it is the need of the hour to recognize the importance of Early Childhood Care and

Education and to inculcate under fundamental Rights Category.

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