**Early Childhood Care and Education in Context of New Education Policy 2020**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Children are the future of our country. Children are the responsibility of all the stakeholders via. family community ,school and the government.Article 39 in the constitution of India states that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.To ensure survival health nutrition care and education of young children in the early years various interventions are done at national state and district levels from time to time.*

*Early childhood is a time of tremendous overall development of the children.A quality education is the foundation of sustainable development and therefore of the sustainable development goal 4 is the education goal. Itaims toensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*

*So,ensuring access by all children to equality care and early childhood development is a priority. The Government of India has initiated and implemented many policies, schemes and programs to cater to the welfare of all children.*

**Key word:** ECCE, Sustainable Development, Constitution

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**INTRODUCTION**

The importance of early childhood finds mention in our constitution. The National policy on Education 1986 expressly the importance of early childhood care and education.

The New Education Policy 2020 underlines the importance of providing care health and nutrition and early learning opportunities to all young children. More importantly the new education policy emphasizes early education and incorporates several significant improvements.

In addition to health and hygiene the policy also focuses on enhancing the mental growth of the child providing affirmation of higher learning and development of creativity to facilitate a well-rounded personality.

The policy states that education must develop not only cognitive capacities both the foundational capacities of literacy and numeracy and higher order cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and problem solving but also social ethical and emotional capacities and disposition.

Under Article 21 A through 86th Amendment of the constitution free and compulsory education to children in the age group of 6- 14 has become a fundamental right. Inaddition to this in Article 45 of the Directive principles of state policy early childhood care and education for children up to the age of 6 years has been recommended.

Early childhood care and Education is necessary as readiness for formal education.Today there is universal demand for early childhood education in the whole world.

Early childhood care and Education term has been used to refer to group settings for children approximately between 3 to 5 years of age which are deliberately designed to stimulate and support their physical, mental emotional language social development etc.

The early childhood stage is also important as a foundation for inculcation of social and personal habits and values which are known to last a lifetime. It follows logically that these years are crucial and important for investing in to ensure an enabling environment for every child and thereby a sound foundation for life.

This is not only the right of every child but will also impact in the long term on the quality of human capital available to a country like India. Whose main assets in the years to come will be its youth power.

Recognizing the holistic nature of child development viz nutrition health and social mental physical moral and emotional development, early childhood care and education will receive high priority. Early childhood care and education is the most rapid growth and development and is critical for survival.

Early childhood care and education encompasses the inseparable elements of care health nutrition play and early learning within a protective and enabling environment. It is an indispensable foundation for lifelong development and learning and has lasting impact on early childhooddevelopment. Early childhood care and education recognizes the synergistic and interdependent relationship between the health, nutrition psycho-social and emotional needs of the child.

**IMPORTANCE OF ECCE**

Early childhood care and education lay focus on a comprehensive approach towards providing a sound foundation for survival growth protection development of the early childhood.

Early childhood care and education in the Indian context is generally defined as the care and education of children from birth to eight years. The early years (0 to 8 years) are the most extraordinary period of growth and development in a child’s lifetime. The foundation of all learning is laid during these years. Getting the foundations right carries huge future benefits, better learning in school and higher educational attainment which results in major social and economic gains for society.

Pre-primary education gives children a solid foundation upon which all learning depends on making every stage of education that follows more efficient and more productive. The building blocks for all learning in a child are laid during the early years of 0 to 6 years. Early childhood education programme ensures that child has a strong foundation for future development in terms of better learning and improved outcomes at all educational levels. Early childhood care and education interventions can contribute immensely to child’s social emotional and physical development. The importance of early childhood education lays the ground work for a child’s all round development fosters lifelonglearning and impacts the overall well-being of a child.

Both the Indian Government and various models in the private sector offer early childhood care and education in India. Early childhood care and educational needs thegovernment established the Balwadis andAnganwadis which comprise the public sector early childhood education programme. There are so many terms used with respect to early childhood care and education institutions like pre-school, playschool,daycare,kindergarten and nursery. Today many more parents understand the value of and the impact of early childhood education courses can have for their child’s future learning and development.

**Early Childhood Care and Education programs in India**

Early childhood care and education is one of the most effective investments in development as it lays the foundation for a child’s lifelong learning. In India with respect to every childhood care and education institutions used so many name.

Daycare- provides childcare services for children of ages 1-6. They provide a safe environment for children to stay during the day when parents are engaged. As they do not follow a kindergarten or school schedule they tend to be open most of the year and for longer hours. Some pre-school also offers day care as an additional service if you would like your child to stay on beyond school hours. The daycare may have qualified teachers along with caregivers. Most commonly in India daycare are either private chains standalone or home-based. Day care activities ideally focus on improving the child’s motor control through art craft and play.

Playschool: these care groups focus primarily on social interaction involving a lot of playtime for children of pre-nursery ages 1.5 years to 3 years. Most play school are based on a specific preschool curriculum or pedagogy. Someof pedagogies followed include Montessori,Waldorf,Reggio,Emilia,play-way and multiple intelligence to name a few.

Kindergarten is a specialized space regarded as the first step towards formal education. An early childhood education programe for children of ages 3-6 years, kindergarten in India consists of the Junior/Lower kindergarten (Jr.KG/LKG) or the senior/upper kindergarten (Sr.KG/UKG).Apart from being an important part of regular schools where they are at times referred to as a nursery. All kindergarten teachers are required to be certified in elementary education.

Junior/Lower Kindergarten (Jr./KG/LKG): Caters to children of ages 3-4 years. This early childhood education programme focuses on teaching the letters of the English alphabet and basic numbers.

Senior/upper kindergarten (Sr.KG/UKG): the pre-school curriculum in this level builds reading and writing skills of children ages 4-5 years through more structured and creative ways. Theteaching at this level focused on easing the transition to and prepares the child for grade 1.

In addition to the regular curriculum these preschool classrooms include different hands on activities that help them develop social emotional and physical skills. These sensorial and multidimensional activities, which involve art and craftwork singing dancing and playing help improve the child’s motor language and cognitive skills.

Today, in addition to the many institutions that offer preschool teaching to children of ages 6 and below.

**ECCE POLICY IN INDIA**

The National Education policy 2020 has laid importance on the universalization of early childhood care and education with a 2030 target to ensure thatall students entering Grade 1 are school ready. In the ages of 3 to 6 years,pre-schools will provide basic education to children, to prepare them for formal education from Grade 1 onwards. The policy also advocates the overall aim of ECCE to focus on attaining optimal outcomes in the domains of: physical and motor development cognitive development of communication and early language literacy and numeracy.

Here some policy is discussed which emphasized on ECCE.

The National Policy on Education,1986: The Government of India had formulated the National policy on Education in 1986 to promote education for the welfare of all its citizens. The policy focuses on the overall development of young children and visualizes ECCE as an important factor strengthing primary education in the country.

National Nutrition policy 1993, Adequate and healthy nutrition is vital for holistic development of children. The policy was formulated by the Government of India to tackle the problem of under nutrition and malnutrition in the country thereby aiming to improve the nutritional status across society. It implies that mothers be given proper support and information on effective nutrition for the growth of their children.

The National policy for children 2013, The Government of India adopted the first National policy for children in 1974 as one of the major initiatives for the wellbeing of children. The policy declared children assupremely importantassets for the nation. The NPC ,1974 was revised in 2013 reaffirming commitment tohealthy development and protection of all children.NPC 2013 identifies survival,health, nutrition development education protection and participation as the undeniable right of every child.

National Early childhood care and Education policy,2013: The Government of India approved the National Early Childhood Care and Education policy in 2013.The policy commits to universal access to quality early childhood education to all children under six years of age.

The vision of the policy is to achieve holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below six years of age by promoting free universal inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualized opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential. The policy recognizes that young children are best cared for in their family environment and thus strengthening family capabilities to care for and protect the child will receive the highest priority.

ECCE in the 12th Five Year plan (2012-2017). The five year plans have also acknowledged the importance of ECCE for laying the foundation of lifelong development.

Sustainable Development Goals,2020(SDGs): The 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015; There are 17 sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries developed and developing in a global partnership. Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

**CONCLUSION:**

Article 45: The state shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years. So we can say that Early childhood care and education encompasses the inseparable elements of care, health, nutrition, play and early learning within a protective and enabling environment. It is an indispensable foundation for lifelong development andlearning and has lasting impact on early childhood development.

Truly said by The Kothari Commission (1964-66) is that “The destiny of India is being shaped in her class-room.”So Early Childhood Care and Education is best for shaping the future of our children and therefore the future of our nation

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