

# Early childhood Care and Education in NEP 2020

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## **Abstract**

Early childhood covers the period from birth to eight years of age. Early childhood care and education aimed to physical, mental, cognitive, emotional and social development of children before they enter primary schools. NEP 2020 is the first education policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. NEP 2020 emphasizes on the education of our young generation. ECCE visualizes the nurturance and promotion of holistic growth of all the children under the age of 6. The care and nurture that provided to the children in the young age have a significant impact on their growth to adulthood. So realizing the importance of ECCE, the study focusses on the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education and the reflection of Early Childhood Care and Education in NEP 2020.

**Key words:** Early childhood, care, education, NEP2020.

## **Introduction**

NEP 2020 is the first education policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The policy aims to bring India into a “Global Knowledge Superpower”. NEP 2020 have five pillars i.e. Access, Equity, Equality, Affordability and Accountability. NEP 2020 aimed to make education more inclusive, flexible and interdisciplinary to meet the needs and challenges of future. The National education policy visualizes the nurturance and promotion of holistic growth of all the children under the age of 6. Early childhood covers the period from birth to eight years of age. The early years of a child’s life is very critical because in this period the brain development is rapidly occurred. Early childhood care stage helps to ensure opportunity for holistic learning. The early six years of life are critical years of human life because the rate of development in these years is more rapid than any other stage of development. Article 45 of Indian Constitution as amended in 2002 stated that “The state shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they completed the age of six years.” Early childhood care and education aimed to physical, mental, cognitive, emotional and social development of children before they enter primary schools. It is preparatory stage for primary education. ECCE requires for all round development of children.

In new 5+3+3+4 structure of education proposed by NEP 2020 is a strong base of ECCE from age 3. The foundational stage of new structure of education by NEP 2020 consist of five years i.e. 3-8 years.

## **Objectives of the paper**

1. To study the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education.
2. To study the reflection of Early Childhood Care and Education in NEP 2020.

### **Importance of Early Childhood Care and Education**

Our country always gives values in inculcating “sanskaras” to our young ones. The ‘sanskaras’ or basic values were previously delivered within joint families and in the forms of traditions and they were commonly shared and passed on from one generation to another. A child requires a safe and nurturing environment for his or her growth. In India, traditionally child care practices are shared by all the members of the family especially women. In the modern homes, there is no one to look after the young children. In the last few decades it has been observed that due to women’s education, employment and urbanization, the family structure changed into nuclear family system. In recent times the children whose both parents are working or sometimes even those whose parents willingly want to pursue early education and care of their children outside the home in child care centers, preschools and other community based early learning centers are receiving early care and education. So, ECCE is now universally recognized for the overall development of the children.

ECCE focuses on establishing guidance for childcare and education. The first six years of life of human being are very crucial as growth takes place rapidly in these period. ECCE significantly contributes to the long- term growth by providing encouraging and stimulating environment. ECCE enhances children’s cognitive skills, social attitudes, behavior and personality. The programme also helps the young ones to control and express their emotions in an acceptable manner. Adjustment with the people and stimulations outside the home is very crucial for a young child. ECCE gives more emphasis on it. ECCE enhances the child’s self- esteem and self- confidence. Positive interaction with the people of his or her’s surroundings contribute to cultivate constructive, well- being oriented perspective towards others and one self.

National Education Policy 1986 realized that health, nutrition and nurturance are the strong early indicators for the children’s growth and development. So, realizing the significance of proper human development, National Policy on Education 1986 recognized ECCE as an essential programme for universalization of elementary education.

ECCE helps in reducing poverty also. Because it provides free meals, immunization and free education at its centers. Parents need not spend on children’s feeding, education and health. Moreover, those children who get the opportunity to engage his or herself in the programme can comfortably progress in their primary classes.

The care and nurture that provided to the children in the young age have a significant impact on their growth to adulthood and it influences the development of their ability to adjust and regulate emotions. ECCE emphasizes on the nurturance and promotion of holistic growth and active learning capability of all children under the age by 6.

### **Early Childhood care and Education in NEP2020**

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasized on holistic development of students and identified the crucial role of early childhood care and education. NEP 2020 realized the significance of ECCE as a foundational pillar for the children aged 3 to 8 years. The ages between 3 to 8 years can have a deep impact on child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth and development. So, NEP 2020 emphasis on fostering positive learning environment for the children aged 3-8 years.

### **Recommendations of NEP on ECCE**

- 1. Universal Access-** For universal access of ECCE, NCERT and SCERTs will prepare a 3 month play based school preparation module for all first graders.

2. **Foundational Stage-** The foundational stage has a span of five years i.e. 3 to 8 years.
3. **Anganwadi Centre-** For the universal access of ECCE anganwadi centres would have better facilities, playground equipment and qualified teacher should have arranged.
4. **Balvatika-** Professional trained teachers would have engaged for the child of age 5. ‘Balvatika’ focuses on development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities, literacy and numeracy. ‘Balvatika’ is also known as “preparatory class” before grade I.
5. **National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education –** NCERT developed the National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education. It has two parts. One is for 0-3 years and another one is for 3-8 year old children.
6. **Gender Equality-** ECCE promotes gender equity by compensating for gender biases in nutrition, health care and wellbeing.
7. **ECCE for Socio- Economically disadvantaged-** NEP 2020 strongly believes that there is a need to provide ECCE on the location which are socio- economically disadvantaged.

### **Main objectives of curriculum of ECCE**

ECCE identifies that children learn best through play way and activity based learning. Thus ECCE curriculum adopts play and activity based approach of learning. NEP 2020 aims to providing an inclusive, child centric, enriching learning environment for the students. Some of the main objectives of curriculum of ECCE are as follows-

- a. **Universal Provisioning-** By 2030 universal provisioning of quality early childhood development, care and education must be ensured to all students.
- b. **Holistic development-** NEP 2020 aims to nurture the holistic development of young learners. It seeks to develop in cognitive, emotional, physical, social and creative aspects of the learners.
- c. **Activity based learning-** The early childhood care curriculum emphasizes on activity based learning for the young learners. Activity based learning provide learners with hands- on experiences on experiences, exploration and active participation in their learning.
- d. **Equity and inclusion in learning-** The early childhood care and education 2020 focuses on equal access for all learners to curriculum and programming within a educational setting.
- e. **Health and well being-** The curriculum for early childhood care and education encourages the young learners to maintain their health and well being in every aspects such as physical, mental, emotional and cognitive well being. ECCE encourages the overall well- being of learners.
- f. **Integration of different aspects-** The ECCE in NEP 2020 emphasizes on integration of cultural and local knowledge, traditions, customs and languages.

### **Integrated Child Development Services in ECCE ( ICDS)**

ICDS is the programme initiated by the Govt. of India and represents a unique and world’s largest programme for early childhood care and development. It is the commitment to its children and mothers. The scheme takes the challenge of providing pre- school and breaking the continuum of malnutrition, child morbidity and mortality. The beneficiaries under the scheme are children between the age 0-6 years, pregnant and lactating mothers.

### **Conclusion**

To promote a nation’s human resource development ECCE is the most valuable investment. ECCE helps

children live their lives. For a child's long term development ECCE makes a significant contribution by facilitating and stimulating environment. ECCE focuses on providing guidance for childcare and early education. Nutrition, health, safety and care are to be ensured through ECCE. ECCE promotes the holistic growth and active learning capacity of the children.

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