

PROGRAM PLANNING AND PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: A STUDY

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Abstract: Programmes for early childhood education have been greatly impacted by the shifting social, political, economic, and demographic landscapes. It used to be thought that a person's early years, from pregnancy to age five, set the stage for the instillation of information and abilities in them. It's also thought that the youngster picks up these abilities and knowledge from the customs and values of the family.. The present study has been carried out to discuss the program planning and practices for effective early childhood care and education in general in the Indian context. To conduct this study the researcher has followed the secondary sources of information. The research comes to the conclusion that well-planned programmes may support children's healthy development, and those children's healthy growth and development would effectively contribute to the advancement of not only their families but also the society and country.

Keywords: Childhood, Growth, Physical, Psycho-Social Environment.

Introduction:

A child's first six to eight years of life are forever! Known as the early childhood period, these years are recognized worldwide as being the most crucial for lifetime development because of how quickly growth occurs during this time. "Experience-based brain development in the early years sets neurological and biological pathways that affect health, learning, and behaviour throughout life," according to compelling evidence from recent neuroscience studies. Mustard (2007), p. 40 These formative years are crucial for the development of a number of cognitive, social, and psychomotor skills, all of which have a major impact on future success in life. The likelihood of a child's brain growing to its full capacity is significantly, and often irreparably, decreased if these crucial times are not supported by, or ingrained in, a stimulating and rewarding physical and psycho-social environment. According to this study, a significant portion of children living in poverty, especially those in developing nations, are "at risk" for having poor life prospects. According to The World Bank (2005b:132), "by the time poorer children in many countries reach school age, they are at a significant disadvantage in cognitive and social ability." Early childhood development is crucial because it lays the groundwork for the lifelong instillation of social and moral ideals as well as personal behaviours. It makes sense that these are the years to invest in in order to guarantee that every kid grows up in an atmosphere that is supportive of them and provides them with a solid foundation for life. In addition to being a child's right, this will have a long-term effect on the calibre of human capital that India, a nation whose key future asset will be its "youth power," has access to.

Statement of the Problem:

The rationale behind the significance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes for children between the ages of 0 and 6 stems from these changes in social, economic, and demographic contexts over the past few decades, which have frequently left homes unfit for providing the best possible childcare. Examining India's historical cultural legacy reveals that, historically, the early years (from pregnancy to age five) were seen as the critical era for instilling fundamental morals and social skills in children. The scriptures support an attitude of lalayata, or indulgence, as the ideal manner of child upbringing at this period, as opposed to a more disciplined approach for the elder kid! It is thought that these values are ingrained from the family as the "sanskaras"! Grandmothers' tales, lullabies, and traditional baby games, which are passed down from one generation to the next, played a major role in the informal early care and education of the child within the family. With the emergence of more contemporary child care options and changing societal circumstances, this plethora of developmentally appropriate childcare practises is slowly disappearing.

Significance of the Study:

ECE is seen as being very important. Everyone in the community, regardless of their origins or jobs, is aware of this. The first three years of a person's existence are thought to be very important. The youngster is now making the connections that will help them progress. Regardless of the parents' educational background, it is essential that they have effective understanding about how to use growth and development functions and understand the value of education. They will be able to make a meaningful contribution if they are knowledgeable about different child development practises. Children's operational growth and development are mostly the responsibility of their parents, who bear a great deal of dedication to this regard. Children are devoted to their mothers up to the age of three, and they rely on them to carry out all tasks and responsibilities (Warren, 2007). Since early childhood education (ECE) is considered as a crucial field not only in India but globally, the current research is sufficiently important. The primary aim of policies, programmes, and plans established in India is to enhance efficiency, competency, and proficiency in this domain. Preschools with cutting-edge infrastructure, facilities, teaching tactics, and sophisticated and inventive ways of instruction have been established in metropolitan regions in the modern era. Nonetheless, pre-schools and rural education institutions need attention and development. Government policies, programmes, and processes have been promoted in an effort to advance this sector.

Objectives:

The present study has been carried out to discuss the program planning and practices for effective early childhood care and education in general in the Indian context.

Discussion:**Learning Environment:**

It's critical to consider and accommodate the various learning styles of young children when designing a successful early childhood care and education programme.

Indoor Environment:

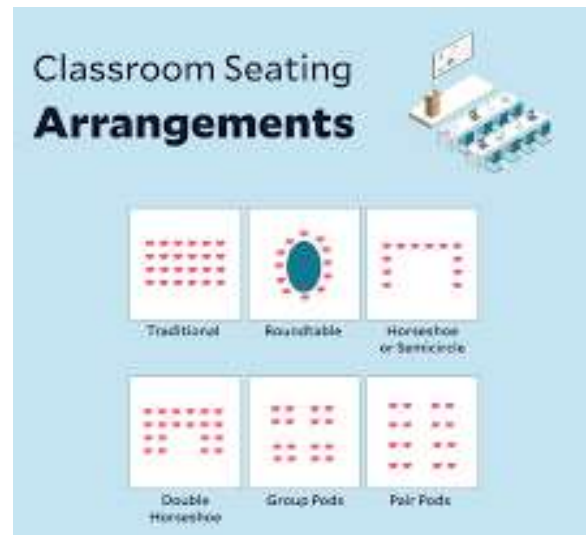
The interests and developmental requirements of young children should be taken into consideration while designing the indoor environment. A well-planned furniture and shelf arrangement may create study and activity nooks within a vast indoor area. It is crucial to remember that both the physical classroom environment and the resources offered have an impact on the degree of student participation and the quality of adult-child interactions. The next part contains further information on setting up a preschool classroom.

Outdoor environment:

Children's growth is greatly aided by the outside environment, which offers a place for play, discovery, and socialization. Every youngster must have the chance to participate in daily outdoor physical exercise. Every day, a certain time slot has to be reserved for outside play and activities as well as break time. During this time, children may play freely on the climbing frames and other playground equipment. They can also engage in more organised physical activities that require balance and mobility, or they can work practically in the gardening patch, digging and planting, etc. For both indoor and outdoor play, the sand and water play area may be set up in wheeled troughs.

Setting up classroom:

The layout of an ECCE classroom has to be adaptable in order to accommodate different lesson plans and activities, such as big groups for storytelling and singing and smaller groups for solo play, sketching and building with blocks. Additionally, it need to provide learning and activity "corners" like a game corner, book corner, and creative corner where kids may pick their own activities and play based on their interests.



Classroom arrangement during large group activities (e.g. circle time):

Make sure there is enough distance between the kids during the morning circle time. In this manner, the kids who arrive late may simply join the circle and take part in the activities with the least amount of disturbance.



Classroom arrangement during small group activities:

The ECCE instructor should be able to lead small group activities with students in the classroom that fall within that age range. Other kids may play on their own in any of the four corners during this time (free play). The students will be more involved in the learning process if they are encouraged to choose a niche of their own interest. In the meanwhile, the ECCE instructor may concentrate on leading slightly difficult activities or conversations in the small group that call for adult supervision. By splitting the kids into one big group and four smaller groups, the ECCE center's space can be utilized effectively. The ECCE instructor may work with a group of kids, so it's important to make sure she can see every child in every corner.

Displays on the walls

Children's efforts and artwork must be hung on the wall. Children benefit from this by feeling that their labour is appreciated and it helps them recall the activities in which they took part. When parents see

their kids' work on display at the facility, they become more engaged in their education and feel proud of their kids. Every display has to be positioned at a child's eye level.



Furniture and mats

If the classroom has furniture, it has to be kid-sized so that kids can work and sit comfortably on it. The furniture should have rounded edges and be positioned at a height that allows kids to sit comfortably and reach freely. It is not necessary to have furniture in preschool classes. The seating area may be designated with colour-ful matting. When choosing mats, it's crucial to take the texture into account. Kids need to be at ease when sitting on the mat and concentrating on their work.

Shelves: Children may explore manipulative toys, puzzles, and other educational resources on low-height shelves. These materials need to be easily accessible to children. Learning corners may be divided with storage shelves and/or low room dividers to clearly define limits.

Essential Learning and Play Material:

Since a kid learns via interaction with his immediate surroundings in the early years, the environment should be exciting and include a range of items to spark and maintain the child's attention and curiosity while also advancing his learning. A sufficient and diverse assortment of play equipment and materials that are age- and developmentally appropriate should be available in every preschool care and education facility.

- The ECCE facility should provide playthings that are developmentally appropriate to promote all-around development.
- The materials have to be hygienic, safe, and in excellent shape. It should be readily available to the youngster and in sufficient amount for small group activity.
- The materials should support the child's exploration and discovery, including building and rebuilding, as well as the development of gross and fine motor skills. In addition to encouraging artistic expression via painting and other media, it ought also foster social connection and sensory investigation.
- Depending on the requirements and circumstances of the kids, various teaching methods and materials should be used. Materials that can be modified to accommodate a range of skill levels and many uses need to be prioritized. A variety of strategies can be used, including making instructions simpler, using concrete materials or examples, sequencing learning tasks from easy to difficult, providing opportunities for practise repeatedly, and adapting materials by making them more stable (by using Velcro), making them more accessible (by making a hand splint to hold materials, for example), improving visual clarity or distinctiveness (by adding contrast or specialized lighting), etc.
- Based on how the resources are used at home, by teachers, and by children, differentiation should be made. Materials that are adaptable to several uses need to be prioritized.
- Instructors need to be inspired to create educational materials using the resources at their disposal. To design play materials for kids, parents, neighborhoods toy manufacturers, craftspeople, and other community members may get engaged.

Partnership with Parents and Family

Planning an Early Childhood Care and Education Programme that works requires parental engagement and participation at the same level of importance. According to the programme, early childhood educators should consistently build a strong relationship with parents by communicating with them from the centre to the home. This can be achieved through sharing progress reports, having conferences, writing notes to parents, informing parents about events and activities, and other means. In order to strengthen the learning experiences that occur in the ECCE facility, ECCE instructors and carers should actively seek out parental support by demonstrating to them how they may engage with their children at home. If these procedures are followed, parents will undoubtedly feel more at ease and confident, which will motivate them to take an active role in their child's upbringing and education. Parents have a unique role in the following ways:

- Creating a loving, accommodating, and encouraging atmosphere for the best possible growth and education
- Promoting experimentation and discovery at home and making the most of the many chances for accidental and lifetime learning that arise from day-to-day activities
- Building a mutually respectful and trusting connection with the instructor
- Coordinating and planning their growth with the educators and carers of ECCE
- Taking part in open days and other community and parent-focused activities
- Respecting children's strengths and personalities, rather than pressuring them into formal study and competitiveness at such a young age.
- Learn about each family by establishing first contact and getting to know them. Acquire knowledge about the varied cultural and socioeconomic origins of children and develop communication skills with a range of families.
- At the first conference or meeting of the school year, start the process of developing a strong rapport with families. Then, throughout the year, maintain a welcoming atmosphere for follow-up parent-teacher conferences.
- Establish clear guidelines for fostering parent-teacher collaboration.
- Offer assistance and support to families and parents as needed.
- Look for methods to establish a continuous connection between the two locations by connecting with families.

Conclusion:

Advancement in every subject has resulted from the development of ideas, topics, standards, concepts, tactics, and techniques. To effect change, it is essential to comprehend the aims, purposes, and importance of early childhood education. It is the parents' responsibility to have enough awareness since they are the ones that put in the most effort and commitment to their children's development. Parents use their money to pay for their children's education as well as other necessities. In conclusion, as children are the nation's future citizens, their efficient growth and development will actively contribute to the advancement of not only their families but also the society and country as a whole.

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