

## **Early Childhood Care and Education**

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### **Introduction**

Early Childhood Care and Education, traditionally not considered as an essential component of school education, has now been getting increased attention in recent times. ECCE was considered as the first frame work of UNESCO's Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO 2000). The framework stated that

*“All young children must be nurtured in safe and caring environments that allow them to become healthy, alert and secure and be able to learn. The past decade has provided more evidence that good quality early childhood care and education, both in families and in more structured programmes, have a positive impact on the survival, growth, development and learning potential of children. Such programmes should be comprehensive, focusing on all of the child's needs and encompassing health, nutrition and hygiene as well as cognitive and psycho-social development. They should be provided in the child's mother tongue and help to identify and enrich the care and education of children with special needs. Partnerships between governments, NGOs, communities and families can help ensure the provision of good care and education for children, especially for those most disadvantaged, through activities centred on the child, focused on the family, based within the community and supported by national, multi-sectoral policies and adequate resources.*

*Governments, through relevant ministries, have the primary responsibility of formulating early childhood care and education policies within the context of national EFA plans, mobilizing political and popular support, and promoting flexible, adaptable programmes for young children that are appropriate to their age and not mere downward extensions of formal school systems. The education of parents and other caregivers in better child care, building on traditional practices, and the systematic use of early childhood indicators, are important elements in achieving this goal.”*

ECCE was highlighted in Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation: Harnessing the Wealth of Nations (UNESCO 2010) in the following words:

*“ECCE is part of the right to education and the main foundation for holistic human development. In addition,*

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*ECCE is instrumental in poverty eradication and a critical stage to lay the foundations for sustainable development. ECCE is an investment in the wealth of nations. There is a strong knowledge base consisting of models, including at national level, of high-quality scalable provision; evidence that families and communities respond to high-quality initiatives and knowledge of how to build capacity. But we still face challenges.”*

In spite of various reports highlighting importance of ECCE, nations have failed to devote adequate resource for the purpose. UNICEF (2015, p. 65) mentioned following data on pre-primary school participation.

**Table 1**  
**Pre-Primary School Participation in 2009-12: Gross Enrolment Ratio (%)**

As per Table 1, gross enrolment ratio was 55% in case of both male and female children of the world. In case of regions, gross enrolment ratio varied amongst female children between 15 and 75 and amongst male children between 15 and 74. Variation between the lowest and the highest was nearly 5 times.

UNICEF (2015, pp. 60-64) mentioned country-wise data on pre-primary school participation. Best performance was reported in case of Ecuador: 148 for male children and 152 for female children. Data in case of high achievers are given in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Gross Enrolment Ratio (%) 2009-2012**

Country	Male	Female	Country	Male	Female
Ecuador	148	152	France	110	109
Mauritius	121	119	San Marino	106	108

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Belgium	119	119	Austria	104	103
Republic of Korea	118	117	Israel	104	103
Malta	118	113	Belarus	104	101
Chile	115	112	Czech Republic	104	101
Ghana	112	115	Denmark	103	100
Germany	113	112	Ukraine	103	100
Seychelles	112	107	Mexico	101	103
Thailand	111	113	Papua New Guinea	101	99
Cuba	110	109	Angola	70	103

The worst situation (1% for female and 2% for male children) was reported in cases of Chad and Yemen. Data in respect of poor achievers are given in Table 3:

**Table 3**  
**Gross Enrolment Ratio (%) 2009-2012**

Country	Male	Female	Country	Male	Female
Chad	2	1	Syrian Arab Republic	11	10
Yemen	2	2	Togo	11	11
Burkina Faso	4	4	Nigeria	13	13
Mali	4	4	Uganda	13	14
Central African Rep.	6	6	Senegal	13	15
Niger	6	6	Congo	14	14
Burundi	8	8	Bosnia & Herzegovina	17	16
Madagascar	8	9	Botswana	18	18
Myanmar	9	9	Benin	18	18
Sierra Leone	9	10	Kyrgyzstan	24	23
Bhutan	10	9	Lao PDR	24	25
Tajikistan	10	8	TYR Macedonia	28	29

The above mentioned document mentioned GER in case of India –male 57 and female 60.

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

Owing to the 86<sup>th</sup> amendment of the constitution, the Article 45 of Directive Principles of the Constitution states that “The State shall endeavour to provide

early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.” Hence, the nation has started giving more attention to early childhood care and education. According to the National Policy for Children 2013

(MWCD 2013a, Art 4.6 (i), p. 6), “The State shall take all necessary measures to: (i) Provide universal and equitable access to quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for optimal development and active learning capacity of all children below six years of age.” Data on child population in the age group 0-6 in 2011, as reported in Ministry of Home Affairs (2012, Table 2(1) are as follows:

**Table 4**  
**Child Population in the Age Group 0-6 in India in 2011**

India / State / Union Territory#	Child population in the age group 0-6		
	Persons	Male	Female
INDIA	15,87,89,287	8,29,52,135	7,58,37,152
A & N Islands #	39,497	20,094	19,403
Andhra Pradesh	86,42,686	44,48,330	41,94,356
Arunachal Pradesh	2,02,759	1,03,430	99,329
Assam	45,11,307	23,05,088	22,06,219
Bihar	1,85,82,229	96,15,280	89,66,949
Chandigarh #	1,17,953	63,187	54,766
Chhattisgarh #	35,84,028	18,24,987	17,59,041
Dadra & NH #	49,196	25,575	23,621
Daman & Diu #	25,880	13,556	12,324
Delhi NCT #	19,70,510	10,55,735	9,14,775
Goa	1,39,495	72,669	66,826
Gujarat	74,94,176	39,74,286	35,19,890
Haryana	32,97,724	18,02,047	14,95,677
Himachal Pradesh	7,63,864	4,00,681	3,63,183
Jammu & Kashmir	20,08,642	10,80,662	9,27,980
Jharkhand	52,37,582	26,95,921	25,41,661
Karnataka	68,55,801	35,27,844	33,27,957
Kerala	33,22,247	16,95,935	16,26,312
Lakshadweep #	7,088	3,715	3,373
Madhya Pradesh	1,05,48,295	55,16,957	50,31,338
Maharashtra	1,28,48,375	68,22,262	60,26,113
Manipur	1,70,553	1,82,684	1,70,553
Meghalaya	5,55,822	2,82,189	2,73,633
Mizoram	1,65,536	83,965	81,571
Nagaland	2,85,981	1,47,111	1,38,870
Odisha	50,35,650	26,03,208	24,32,442

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Puducherry #	1,27,610	64,932	62,678
Punjab	29,41,570	15,93,262	13,48,308
Rajasthan	1,05,04,916	55,80,212	49,24,704
Sikkim	61,077	31,418	29,659
Tamil Nadu	68,94,821	35,42,351	33,52,470
Tripura	4,44,055	2,27,354	2,16,701
Uttar Pradesh	2,97,28,235	1,56,53,175	1,40,75,060
Uttarakhand	13,28,844	7,04,769	6,24,075
West Bengal	1,01,12,599	51,87,264	49,25,335

Percentages of child population in the age group 0-6 in 2011 among the states were : Uttar Pradesh(18.7%), Bihar (11.7%), Maharashtra(8.1%), Madhya Pradesh(6.6%), Rajasthan(6.6%), West Bengal(6.4%), Andhra Pradesh(5.4%), Gujarat(4.7%), Tamil Nadu(4.3%), Karnataka(4.3%), Jharkhand(3.3%), Odisha(3.2%), Assam(2.8%), Chhattisgarh (2.3%), Kerala(2.1%), Haryana(2.1%), Punjab(1.9%), Jammu & Kashmir(1.3%), Delhi NCT(1.2%) and Uttarakhand(0.8%)..... These states may need more funds for providing appropriate quality of pre-school education and cover all the schools. They may take the model of Puducherry Union Territory which has the pre-school classes attached to primary schools.

### **Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers**

Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers and other deserving women provides day care facilities to children in the age group 0 to 6 years from families with monthly income of less than Rs.12,000/-In

addition to being a safe space for the children, the crèches provide services such as supplementary nutrition, pre- school education and emergency health care, etc. As per MWCD (2014, p. 269) during 2013-14, there were 23,785 crèches. Said document also stated that 5000 AWC Cum Crèches were to be created by end of March, 2014.

### **ECCE Curriculum**

According to MWCD (2012a, pp.7-8), curriculum content for ECCE should include:

*Physical and Motor Development:* Gross motor skills; coordination of fine muscles with dexterity; eye hand coordination; sense of balance, physical co-ordination, and awareness of space and direction; nutrition, health status and practices.

*Language Development:* Listening and comprehension; oral skills/speaking and communicating; vocabulary development; pre- literacy/emergent literacy skills like phonological awareness; print awareness and concepts; letter- sound correspondence; recognition of letters;

building words and sentences and early writing; and Introduction to language of school transaction.

*Cognitive Development:* Development of various concepts including pre number and number concepts and operations (knowledge and skills related to comparing, classification, conservation of space and quantity, one to one correspondence; counting); spatial sense; patterns and estimations in measurement; data handling; skills related to sequential thinking, critical thinking, observing, reasoning and problem solving; and knowledge about concepts and physical, social and biological environment.

*Socio-Personal and Emotional Development:* Development of self-concept; self-control; life skills/ self-help skills; habit formation; initiative and curiosity; engagement and persistence; cooperation; compassion; social relationships; group interaction; pro-social behaviour; expressing feelings, accepting others feelings.

*Sensorial Development:* Development of the five senses through visual, auditory and kinaesthetic experiences.

*Development of Creative and Aesthetic Appreciation:* Exploring different art forms, develop dispositions, expression and appreciation for artistic, dance/ drama and musical activities.

MWCD (2012b) mentioned following non-negotiable criteria for ECCE:

- Duration of the ECCE programme should be 3-4 hours;
- 1 classroom measuring 35 square meters for a group of 30 children and availability of 30 square meters of outdoor space for a group of 30 children;
- The building should be structurally safe and within easy approach. It should be clean and should have surrounding green area;
- Clean potable water should be available;
- Separate toilets for girls and boys should be available;
- Immediate health service in terms of First Aid/ Medical Kit should be available at the centre;
- Adequate trained staff should be appointed;
- There should be provision of adequate developmentally appropriate toys and learning materials;
- Space should be allocated for cooking meals and nap time for children;
- The adult child ratio should be 1:20 for 3-6 year old children and 1:10 for under 3 year old children.

#### **Recommendations**

- MWCD (2015, pp. 29-34) gave the following recommendations:

### ***Strengthen Capacity***

- Develop District/State/National Action Plans for ECCE progressively in all districts. Teams from districts should meet from time to time for sharing of issues, strategies and orientation on need-based planning before the State prepares for APIP.
- Ensure appropriate financial allocation and timely flow of funds; provide flexibility to States/UTs on utilisation of funds as per their needs with target indicators on outcomes for ECCE.
- Strengthening Institutional capacity of NIPCCD and its Regional Centers, MLTCs, AWTCs, and partnering with SCERTs, DIETs and BRCs of MHRD to constitute ECCE Unit for training, mentoring and supportive supervision of AWWs.
- Develop a training strategy to include (a) specific skill-based in-service training in ECE with periodic refreshers (b) capacity building of AWTCs and supervisors to serve as mentors, (c) constitution of state/district resource groups in ECE.
- Qualified and trained facilitators working with children under all managements (public and private); dedicated facilitators (second worker) under ICDS to focus on ECCE implementation.
- Certification of training and career pathways for functionaries.

### ***Ensuring Quality***

- Implementation of a state level curriculum framework for ECE with contextual adaptations to address the diverse needs of areas.
- Play and learning materials to be attractive, age specific and adequate for all children.

### ***Public Private Partnerships***

- Initiate a new mass campaign for ECCE, to create local toy and active banks in all AWCs across the country through community contribution - collecting and using local stories, rhymes, songs, games, play activity materials and creative cultural expression with the involvement of parents, communities and Panchayats.
- Develop a consortium for ECCE involving NGOs, public and private sector, development partners, resource institutions as oversight body to support the State at different levels of implementation of ECCE programme. For example, State Ministry of Women and Child Development Resource Groups for Curriculum already created may be encouraged for the same; identification of resource persons and institutions and constitution of state, district/block resource groups should be explored.

### ***Advocacy and Awareness***

- Advocacy and Awareness promotion through Inter State Visits,

Annual Meet / e-platform for inter-state showcasing of good work, sharing of best practices that are relevant, sustainable and replicable with adaptations.

electronic media. - Encouraging community members as resource persons etc.

- Involvement of NGOs and CBOs.

### ***Partnership Model with Community***

- Making AWCs more child-friendly through a mass campaign, like Swachh Bharat. There could be mass mobilisation and shramdaan by the community for cleaning/repairing, colourful painting of the walls of AWCs outside and with stories inside, making activity corners, fencing, kitchen gardens and safe outdoor play space, depending upon the AWC setting.
- Encourage piloting of different community-based approaches for infant care crèches-cum-AWCs, others linked to MGNREGA especially to support women working in the unorganised sector, flexibly responding to their patterns of work and time, further enabling girl child to be relieved from sibling care and attend school.
- Enhancing community awareness and involvement through:-
  - Community mobilization activities like annual AW days, shows, monthly ECCE days, etc.
  - Constituting parents' committees for local management, activating monitoring committee at all levels.
  - Regular meetings. - Use of folk and

### ***Linkage with Primary Schools***

- Possible areas of convergence could be: Joint Surveys, MDM/NSP, Joint Orientations, Annual day/festival celebrations, enrolment drives, etc.

### ***Quality of Interventions***

- Introduce a new parent education programme focusing on early stimulation of children under 3 years through a trained care counsellor, to empower parents and families for improved family care behaviours. This would also enable shared parenting responsibilities, changing gender stereotypes in child care roles and in early socialisation.
- Early stimulation, identification of children with special needs as a part of health programme for convergence and greater outreach to the community.
- Model ECCE Centres (AWCs) as demonstration centres for AWCs based on the concept of building as a learning aid for creating a vibrant ECD centre and enabling participation of children in ECCE activities. Monitoring and Supervision
- Create a demand for quality ECCE programme by launching a



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community awareness campaign to generate the need for a quality ECCE programme and involve parents, community and panchayats to ensure participation of children in the ECCE programme of AWCs.

- Development of outcome-focused system of M&E for each administrative level including registers, diary maintenance, and data records etc.”

### Early Childhood Care and Education through Anganwadis

*Anganwadis* (courtyards) are part of Integrated Child Development Services scheme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development of the Government of India. Started in 1975, this programme

is the largest early childhood development programme in the world. This programme covers expectant and nursing mothers and children up to the age of six and provides a package of services that includes medical checks, immunizations, referral services, supplementary feeding, preschool education, and health and nutrition education. According to MWCD (2014, p. 5), on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013, there were 7,067 projects and 13,41,745 AWCs “across 35 States / UTs, covering 1026.03 lakh beneficiaries under supplementary nutrition and 356.10 lakh children in the age group 3-6 years children under pre-school component.” The number of Anganwadi centres and number of children covered as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, given by MWCD (2014, p. 247) are given in the following table.

**Table 5**  
**No. of Pre-school Children in 3-6 Age Group in Anganwadis**

States/UTs (Data as on (Month/year))	Anganwadi Centres -Operational	No. of Pre-school children 3-6 years	States/UTs	Anganwadi Centres -Operational	No. of Pre-school children 3-6 years
Andhra Pradesh (03/13)	90757	1737383	Nagaland	3455	139689
Arunachal Pradesh	6028	114811	Odisha	71306	1404383
Assam	62153	1214400	Punjab	26656	434586
Bihar	91677	2245450	Rajasthan	61100	1100255
Chhattisgarh	49651	880233	Sikkim	1233	12072
Goa	1262	20462	Tamil Nadu	54439	1104148
Gujarat	50226	1420958	Tripura	9911	151715
Haryana	25905	374820	Uttar Pradesh	187659	8748683
Himachal Pradesh	18907	153417	Uttarakhand	19174	255258
Jammu & Kashmir	28594	299257	West Bengal	116390	3473177
Jharkhand	38432	115809	A& N Islands	710	4413
Karnataka	64518	1682974	Chandigarh	500	18184
Kerala	33115	440739	Dadra & NH	267	9636

Madhya Pradesh	91318	3199102	Daman & Diu	107	1819
Maharashtra	107913	2991230	Delhi	10897	383741
Manipur	9883	179522	Lakshadweep	107	2290
Meghalaya	5156	180042	Puducherry	788	1398
Mizoram	2070	821049	INDIA	1342265	36359305

Out of total number of 36359305 children in the age group 3-6 in Anganwadis, among the States, Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of children 8748683, followed by West Bengal 3473177, Madhya Pradesh 3199102, Maharashtra 2991230, Bihar 2245450, Andhra Pradesh including Telengana 1737383, Karnataka 1682974, Odisha 1404383, Assam 1214400, Tamil Nadu 1104148, Rajasthan 1100255, etc.

As per MWCD (2013b, p. 3), average number of children per Anganwadi at the national level was 62.87. In case of the States and UTs the number varied from 100 (Uttar Pradesh) to Sikkim (17.57). The number in case of other States & UTs were: Meghalaya (90.99), Madhya Pradesh (90.35), Delhi NCT (83.76, Chandigarh UT( 82.56), West Bengal (77.13), Assam (70.50), Jharkhand (69.91), Mizoram (65.33), Nagaland (65.04), Gujarat (61.79), Karnataka (59.92), Chhattisgarh (58.19), Maharashtra (57.50), Dadra & NH UT(56.67), Odisha (56.65), Daman & Diu (51.90), Andhra Pradesh (51.62), Rajasthan (49.89), Goa (46.67), Tamil Nadu (45.21), Lakshadweep (44.45), Bihar (43.73), Haryana (43.03), Punjab (39.31), Arunachal Pradesh (38.56), Manipur (36.26), Puducherry (35.16), Tripura (30.37), Kerala (25.84), Jammu & Kashmir (23.76), Himachal Pradesh

(23.07), A & N Islands (20.48), and Uttarakhand (18.51). There is a wide gap between the lowest and the highest average number of children per Anganwadi. Yoshikawa and Kabay (2015, p. 19), in their paper written for UNESCO, stated that “Like most large scale and expansive interventions, the ICDS program has not been universally successful.” They also reported neglect of pre-school component and inadequate coverage of nutrition and health components.

### Pre-primary Education

Pre-school education is a significant component of early childhood care and education. Pre-school education is provided in either special institutions known as “Nursery schools”, Montessori schools” “Kindergarten schools” or as part of formal school system. There are also pre-primary classes attached to most of the English medium and private schools. Poor children also get pre-primary education in government run elementary schools of the Union Territory of Puducherry. Planning Commission (2012, pp. 57-58) gave following directions:

- Every primary school to provide pre-primary education for at least one year (5th year old child) so that by the end of the Twelfth Plan, about 50 per cent of the schools would

have pre-primary classes and priority to be given to educationally lagging States/Districts/Blocks.

- Pre-school education to be included under SSA/RTE as a separate component with a specific budget line.
- Gradual shifting of the pre-primary year from the purview of ICDS to the primary schools and mid-day meal scheme to cover nutrition component of ICDS for these 5 year olds.

Planning Commission (2012, p.56) stated that “ *Research on the impact of PTR on student learning suggests that a low PTR*

*matters most at younger ages, when children are being socialised into the process of learning, and less so in older classes. Thus, it may make sense to supplement the requirements under the RTE, for communities to hire multiple community-based teachers on contract to focus on improving school preparedness and basic literacy and numeracy for pre-school children.”*

MHRD (2014) Table B-1 gave following data on enrolment in school education-pre-primary and Table A-1 gave following data in respect of pre-primary schools as on 30th September 2011.

**Table 6  
Enrolment in Pre-Primary and Number of Pre-Primary Schools (2011  
September 30)**

Sl. No.	States/Union Territories	Enrolment in School Education-Pre-Primary Source: MHRD2014 Table B1			No. of Pre-Primary Schools: Source: MHRD 2014 Table A1
		Boys	Girls	Total	
1	Andhra Pradesh	229595	180491	410086	
2	Arunachal Pradesh	17361	14952	32313	11
3	Assam	223779	223736	497515	
4	Bihar	127	98	225	1
5	Chhattisgarh	52465	40330	92795	957
6	Goa				
7	Gujarat				
8	Haryana	70410	61345	131755	
9	Himachal Pr.	40324	35147	75471	
11	Jharkhand	92111	80799	127910	95
12	Karnataka	64311	49517	113828	1
13	Kerala				711

14	Madhya Pradesh				
15	Maharashtra	1259699	1107107	2366806	
16	Manipur	59658	50723	110381	
17	Meghalaya	127896	124656	232552	
18	Mizoram	20884	19462	40346	
19	Nagaland	62459	54609	117068	
20	Odisha				
21	Punjab				
22	Rajasthan	368715	262021	630736	7
23	Sikkim				395
24	Tamil Nadu	401159	382958	784117	2457
25	Tripura	4973	4215	9188	
26	Uttar Pradesh				
27	Uttarakhand				
28	West Bengal				
29	A& N Islands	4249	4072	8321	34
30	Chandigarh	9828	8471	18299	1
31	D&N Haveli				
32	Daman & Diu	1888	1545	3433	32
33	Delhi	86308	79622	165930	51
34	Lakshadweep	481	589	1070	19
35	Puducherry	20303	18054	38357	550
	ALL STATES	3268983	2804519	6073502	61498

Above tables, for certain reasons do not give complete data. The tables given above give the picture that the number of pre-primary schools is much smaller in comparison to the number of Anganwadis. Most of the pre-primary schools are fee charging private schools, whereas, the Anganwadis are either run by the government machinery or by the government aided machinery and do not charge the children's parents. In Puducherry UT, the pre-primary classes are attached to primary schools and function for the same duration as provided for other

classes. Such facilities should be made available in every school, unless parents are ready to take back their children during afternoon hours. It may be helpful for the nation, especially for the disadvantaged population, if the State can divert adequate funds for pre-school education and immediately, convert all Anganwadis to pre-school classes of nearby primary schools. MWCD (2014, p. 7) stated that "Restructured ICDS envisages AWC as a "vibrant Early Childhood Development Centre" to become the first village outpost for health, nutrition and early learning."

### **Pre-Primary Schooling Facilities for Disadvantaged Population**

During late seventies, Central government had introduced pre-school education, by starting pre-school classes in certain primary schools in tribal blocks of the country. The teacher's wife was given preference to act as pre-school teacher. The scheme indirectly controlled the teacher absence. As the nation has many tribal dialects, and a number of tribal children using these dialects face difficulty when taught in the State language at class I level, pre-school education for such children can help. Pre-school education can also take care of the problem of student absence in the primary school for those remaining at home to take care of children of 3-6 years of the family.

### **Integrated Child Protection Scheme**

According to MWCD (2014a, p. 8), since 2009-10, Government of India is operating Integrated Child Protection Scheme through the State Government/UT Administrations on predefined cost sharing financial pattern. The objectives of the Scheme are to contribute to the improvement in the well-being of children in difficult circumstances, as well as reduction of vulnerability to situation and actions that lead to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and separation of children from parent. Services provided under this scheme include (a) Homes of various types for children; (b) Emergency outreach services through Child line; (c) Open

shelters for children in need of care and protection in Urban and Semi Urban Areas; (d) Family Based on-Institutional Care through Sponsorship, Foster Care and Adoptions. During the financial year, 2013-14, Ministry assisted 1289 homes, 263 Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAAs) and 205 Open Shelters through State governments/UT Administrations. Norms for this scheme has been revised from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

### **Improving Quality of ECCE in India**

In the Regional Report for Asia and the Pacific, Rao and Sun (2010, p. 73) recommended that:

*“Governments should ensure that only trained staff provides services to children and that early childhood educators are provided opportunities for refresher training and continued professional development. They must regulate the establishment and implementation of community based and centre based programmes and give adequate attention to health and safety standards, teacher qualifications and teacher child ratios. Governments should also ensure that curriculum guidelines are followed and that programmes are holistic, integrated and consistent with current professional knowledge and not merely a downward extension on primary school. The for profit sector should be regulated. To effectively monitor programmes, appropriate action must be taken when programmes fail to meet contextually relevant standards.”*

MWCD (2014b) stated following eight quality standards for Early Childhood Care and Education: 1. Interaction; 2. Health, Nutrition, Personal Care and Routine; 3. Protective Care and Safety; 4. Infrastructure/ Physical Environment; 5. Organisation and Management; 6. Children Experiences and Learning Opportunities; 7. Assessment and Outcome Measures; and 8. Managing Support Quality System. MWCD document mentioned following Non- Negotiable Indicators:

- An ECCE programme of 4 hours duration with snack/break time of half an hour;
- 1 classroom measuring at least 35 square meters (carpet area) for a group of 30 children and availability of adequate (at least 30 square meters) outdoor space for a group of 30 children;
- Adequately trained staff;
- Age and developmentally appropriate, child centric curriculum transacted in the mother tongue/local vernacular;
- Adequate developmentally appropriate toys and learning materials;
- The building should be structurally safe and within easy approach. It should be clean and should have surrounding green area;
- Adequate and safe drinking water;

- Adequate and separate child-friendly toilets and hand wash facilities for girls and boys;
- Separate space allocated for cooking nutritionally balanced meals and nap time for children;
- Immediate health service in terms of First Aid/ Medical Kit available at the centre.
- The adult/ caregiver: child ratio of 1:20 for 3-6 year old children and 1:10 for under 3s should be available at the ECCE Centre. Children should not be unattended at any given point of time.

UNICEF India Country Office (2014, pp.95-99) listed following 8 National Quality Standards for ECCE:

### **Standard I: Interaction**

#### ***Teacher/ adult - child interaction***

- All children are treated equally and with respect, affection and care.
- Caregivers do not use physical punishment or verbal abuse to discipline children.
- Caregivers appreciate the cultural/ social and religious diversity of the children and promote tolerance and unity.
- Children with special needs are encouraged and enabled to participate in the learning environment. 2.1.5 Children approach the teachers/ caregivers freely at any time.

***Child - child interaction***

- Meaningful interaction between peers during meal/snack time.

***Child environment/ material interaction***

- Locally made learning materials available and used by children.
- Children take care of the material and put the material back at the designated spot.

***Staff- family interaction***

- Teachers/ caregivers visit children's homes to maintain good relationship with parents/ family members.
- Teachers/ caregivers have regular meetings with parents, conduct parenting education sessions and take feedback from the parents.

**Standard II: Health Nutrition, Personal Care and Routine**

***Health (checkup, first aid, immunization, handling illness)***

- Children's height and weight is measured regularly to identify malnourished children.
- Children are immunized at regular intervals and records maintained.
- Routine health check-ups are conducted for children and referrals provided, when required.

***Nutrition***

- Caregivers have adequate knowledge about balanced and healthy diet for children and encourage the same at the center.

***Hygiene***

- Classrooms as well as toilets are clean and hygienic.

***Habit formation***

- Teacher/ caregivers inculcate habits in children such as washing hands before and after meals, putting materials back in their place after using them etc.

**Standard III: Protective Care and Safety**

***Adult supervision***

- At least 1 adult for every 20 children in 3- 6 years age group and for every 10 children under 3 years.
- Socio/ Emotional protection Teachers/ caregivers are sensitive to the children's needs and are able to provide emotional support to children, when needed, particularly those who are facing deprivation.
- Physical safety / availability of first aid kit for children, in case of an emergency.
- Center has preventive measures, in case of fires and other natural disasters (fire extinguishers, sand buckets etc.)

**Standard IV: Infrastructure/ physical environment**

***Space, building, outdoors (size, ventilation, light, disabled friendly)***

- Provision of adequate light and ventilation in the rooms.

- ECCE center is disabled- friendly and allows easy access for children with special needs.
- Our ECCE center has shelves or a place for children to keep their belongings.
- Adequate space available for children. (1 classroom measuring 35 square meters (carpet area) for a group of 30 children and availability of 30 square meters of outdoor space for a group of 30 children) Availability of equipments for outdoor play/ activities for all children.
- Allocated space for cooking meals, storage of food items, hygienic kitchen and nap time for children.
- Availability of shelves or a place for children to keep their belongings.

#### ***Aesthetics, cleanliness, green area***

- Clean surroundings in and around center.
- Designated area for garbage disposal, dustbins, brooms etc.

#### ***Safety and approach***

- No hazards, such as uncovered drains/ wells, around the ECCE center.
- ECCE Centre is located in a safe place.
- Safety level of building is adequately maintained.
- ECCE center building is maintained in a good condition.

#### ***Water facility***

- Availability of adequate, clean and potable water for all children.
- Toilet facility, availability of water and soap in the toilet.
- Separate toilets for girls and boys, which are safe and hygienic.

### **Standard V: Organization and Management**

#### ***Programme philosophy and methods***

- Children are NOT left unattended at any point of time.
- ECCE programme is conducted for 4 hours daily with children (with ½ hr snack/break time).
- Centre does not conduct rote-learning activities or formal teaching of 3Rs (reading, writing & arithmetic).
- Activities for development of reading, writing & number readiness are planned and implemented according to children's needs.

#### ***Documentation and records***

- Documentation/Portfolio of each child's performance and progress is done and available to families and staff. 2.2.3
- Records of children's attendance, leave, and absence are kept and regularly updated.

#### ***Programme planning***

- Balance of age-appropriate structured, guided activities and free play for children provided.



- Display of materials, children's artwork and handicrafts on the walls at the eye level of children or on a table.
- Flexible seating arrangements and layout of the class according to activities available.

***Parent involvement***

- Parents and children are provided information on nutritionally balanced diet and health education. 4.5 Parents encourage children at home to practice good habits that are modelled and practiced at ECCE center.
- Parents and community members also share their abilities and skills at the ECCE center.
- Teachers/ caregivers hold regular consultation with the community on ways to support and improve the ECCE center.

***Staffing (adequacy, professional qualifications, professional development opportunities, reflective practitioners)***

- Staff have the appropriate education and qualification/ experience.
- Professional development program with ongoing support of coaching and mentoring is provided.

**Standard VI: Children Experiences and Learning Opportunities**

- Provide opportunities for exploration, experimentation Adequate developmentally appropriate toys and

learning materials available for children to play and gain mastery and success.

- Opportunities are provided for play/ exploration with other children and adults.
- Encourage child to make choices and participate in play learning centers/ corners are used for children to play according to their interests and choose their activity.
- Foster child's language and literacy abilities teacher uses the language understood by children for interaction within the classroom.
- Promote each child's physical abilities Outdoor equipments are used for large muscle development where necessary.
- Nurture development and maintenance of relationships Provides opportunities to work and play in groups
- Cultivate enjoyment of and participation in expressive arts teacher encourages self-expression in arts & craft activities & appreciation with guidance.

**Standard VII: Assessment and Outcome Measures**

***Assessment methods***

- Caregivers are sensitive to and are able to understand factors that may be affecting children's progress/ performance.

- Teachers/ caregivers observe children's learning and development and keep a record of how progress is made towards the goals.
- Teachers/ caregivers in our ECCE center attend relevant training to build their knowledge and skills in child development.

#### ***Assessment reporting***

- Maintain portfolios of all children, containing anecdotal records, developmental checklists, samples of drawing, writing and other activities, observation notes and parent teacher meeting notes.
- Parent- teacher committee supports staff development and upgrading of professional qualification of teachers/ caregivers.

#### ***Facilitating development through assessment***

- Use information to identify children's strength and weaknesses and plan accordingly.
- Caregivers are prepared to deal with emergencies and disasters.

#### ***Staff assessment and development***

- Staff is regularly updated about recent information and practices around ECCE.
- Teachers/ caregivers get regular mentoring support from Supervisors/ Head teachers. Supervisors visit the ECCE centre regularly and demonstrate good practices.

#### ***Programme assessment (staff meeting, parent feedback)***

- Teachers/ caregivers share strengths of the children with parents and identify areas of improvement on a regular basis. They also partner with parents to work on these areas.

#### **Standard VIII: Managing to Support Quality System**

***Teacher education and on-site professional development, opportunity for capacity building at all administrative levels, career path for the staff***

#### **ECCE in Private Sector**

Private sector plays a vital role in providing ECCE. ECCE not being a state controlled system, in addition to high quality ECCE being delivered by reputed schools, there are abundant low quality ECCE being delivered by many profit making private schools. Manji et al. (2015, p. 35) stated that

*“In terms of social factors related to parental choice, the recent IECEI study, which analyzed social indicators related to participation trends in ECE programs in three states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Rajasthan) on a sub-sample of 2323 four year olds, demonstrates a significant preference of the higher socio-economic status families in the rural sector for private schooling.”*

## Conclusions

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, is yet to develop appropriate mechanism to monitor process of delivery of ECCE programmes. In order to do this, it has to establish adequate numbers of Model ECCE centres by adequately upgrading selected Anganwadis. Like District Institutes of

Education and Training of MHRD, MWCD may go for District Institutes of ECCE and restructure its National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development to function as National Resource Centre for ECCE. This strategy is essential to give justice to the stipulations for ECCE provided in the constitution.

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