



Other Books on Early Childhood Education

1. *Early Childhood Education Programme*
2. *Trainers Handbook in Early Childhood Care and Education*
3. *Little Steps*
4. *Fun with Art and Craft*
5. *Minimum specifications for Preschoolers*
6. *Khel-Khel Mein*
7. *Poorv Prathmik Shiksha-Ek Parichai*

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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

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Every Child Matters

A Handbook on Quality
Early Childhood Education

NCERT



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A Handbook on Quality Early Childhood Education



EVERY CHILD MATTERS

A HANDBOOK ON QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

विद्यया ऽ मृतमश्नुते



एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

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FOREWORD

India is a signatory to the Jomtien Declaration (1990). Its Article 5, '*Learning begins at birth*', led to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) being identified internationally as the first EFA goal.

Research indicates that brain connections multiply exponentially in the first three years of life, and the potential for ensuring optimal development is very high up to eight years. The quality of a child's environment is crucial for her overall growth and development. Children who participate in quality early childhood education programme demonstrate considerable gains in social, educational and intellectual spheres, distinctively different from those who do not participate in ECCE programmes. As per the Draft National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, 2012, ECCE refers to programmes that promote language, cognitive, socio-emotional and creative and aesthetic appreciation and ensure synergy with health and nutrition aspects. Accordingly the design and delivery of such programmes need to be undertaken very carefully, and as such, evaluated periodically.

The document in your hands is aimed at helping all stakeholders involved understand why early childhood education is critical and how to make early learning interesting, joyful and meaningful for children. It is hoped that teachers, teacher trainees, teacher educators, parents and other adult caregivers will find it useful. We also look forward to useful feedback from the readers and users to help us improve this book.

With best wishes for an interesting active interaction with this material.

Parvin Sinclair
Director

National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
July 2014

PREFACE

We all believe that young children deserve an enthusiastic start in life and that they need quality experiences so that they grow, learn, develop and flourish fully. Researches also say that preschool education has significant impact on school adjustments and learning levels of children in early primary grades. For achieving universalisation of elementary education, universalisation of early childhood education is a prerequisite. However, quality is an important factor in determining the impact of ECE. It is generally pointed out that many children entering school lack the fundamental skills to achieve further levels of learning. The issue of school readiness of children cause concern to parents and teachers everywhere.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) has always been an exciting and dynamic area. It is a comprehensive programme for children below 6 years of age. Quality ECE is an entitlement of every child and the responsibility of every educationist. Due emphasis on preschool education is still awaited though planners have always been careful and cautious enough to realise its importance. The increasing acceptance of Early Childhood Education in India can be observed in the form of setting up of ICDs centres and *balwadis* in the government sector and preschools in the private sector. There is no doubt that people are getting aware of ECE but still the quality of ECE programmes is generally low and there is a need for improvement to make greater advances in the future.

All of us share a common goal of strengthening the quality of early childhood education programmes. 'Quality' is a key word at the present time with phrases such as quality assurance, quality control and quality time assuming different meanings depending upon our experience and the context in which we work. In case of ECE, there is a need to identify and make provisions for such issues which contribute to quality experiences for young children and their families. Facilities for quality ECE should be made available on a large scale so that we may get maximum return from the investments made on primary and secondary school education.

The demand for quality ECE programme and its proper delivery by the preschool teachers and teacher educators provided the stimulus for undertaking the present task. This handbook is a humble effort to address the growing public demand to suggest the content and

methods of organising quality preschool education. While developing this document our major purpose has been to help preschools set up under government as well as private sectors, and their teachers in providing quality ECE programme. However it is expected to be of immense help for all those who work with young children and their families. The handbook consists of six chapters:

Chapter – I deals with what is ECE, why quality ECE is important, what are the components of a quality ECE programme and what should be the strategies to ensure a quality ECE programme.

Chapter – II discusses the designing of creative, supportive and stimulating learning environment for young children. It also contains information about activity areas in an ECE centre.

Chapter – III provides details of a quality ECE programme, along with sample unit and lesson plans for preschoolers.

Chapter – IV gives information about the techniques of observing and assessing young children.

Chapter – V elaborates on the quality partnership between preschools, parents and community. It explains different ways to involve parents and community in early childhood education programme.

Chapter – VI describes the importance of Action Research and how preschool teachers can solve their day-to-day problems by adopting action research.

There are five annexures– Annexure A, B, C, D and E, containing child development activities, materials and equipment for different development areas, teachers’ self-assessment checklist, list of books to read to children and addresses of publishers for preschool material respectively.

We hope that the handbook will be useful for the readers, especially those actively involved in the education and development of young children. We also hope that it will provide an opportunity to our preschool teachers to re-examine their practices and share their thinking with their colleague teachers. It is expected to be of special interest for teacher trainees, preschool teachers, family workers, parents, school managers, educational advisors and primary teachers. It will be our pleasure to receive feedback on the first edition of the handbook which will be utilised for necessary improvements in future editions.

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Educate her, as She will Spread the Light of Knowledge

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Do You Know

According to the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, free and compulsory education for all children in the 6–14-year age group is now a Fundamental Right under Article 21-A of the Constitution.

**EDUCATION IS NEITHER A
PRIVILEGE NOR FAVOUR BUT A
BASIC HUMAN RIGHT TO
WHICH ALL GIRLS AND WOMEN
ARE ENTITLED**

*Give Girls
Their Chance !*



Chapter 1

QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION A CHILD'S RIGHT

“Effective preschool raises achievement goals for all children, and it offers real hope for closing the school readiness gap.”

—Jack O’Connell

1.0 Introduction

Research has shown that only quality ECCE has a strong and lasting impact on the child. Quality early childhood education can make a significant contribution to the physical, psychomotor, cognitive, social and emotional development of the child, including the acquisition of languages and early literacy. The first eight years of a child’s life is a period of tremendous growth and development. Brain connections multiply exponentially in the first three years, and the potential for ensuring optimal development is very high up to age eight. It is imperative that this true ‘window of opportunity’ is fully used and strengthened to ensure long term benefits, not just for each individual child’s development but also for the larger community. A large proportion of human brain development takes place after birth as a result of interactions with the environment – the impact of early experience has a greater influence on development than heredity. ECE has an important role in securing a good childhood for all children. Childhood years are important in themselves and ECE can contribute to many positive and valuable experiences which form a solid basis for future life and learning. The main purpose of ECE is to facilitate the all round development of the child’s personality, i.e. physical, motor cognitive, language, social and emotional, and not to follow the so-called rigid syllabus. In short no child should be denied the many benefits of good quality early childhood education.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 has given a great deal of importance to ECCE. It views ECCE as an important input in the strategy of human resource development, as a feeder and support programme for primary education and as a support service for working women from the disadvantaged sections of the society. It has also taken into account the holistic nature of ECCE and has



The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) which came into effect from 1 April 2010, has also addressed ECCE under Section 11 of the Act which states, “with a view to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide ECCE for all children until they complete the age of six years, the appropriate Government may make necessary arrangements for providing free pre-school education for such children.”

pointed out the need for organising programmes for the all-round development of the child. The policy specifically focuses on the need for early care and stimulation of children belonging to the poverty groups and from sections of the population in which first generation learners predominate.

The ratification of Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1992 by India has further affirmed the country’s commitment to children, and has resulted in the formulation of a policy framework to prepare a National Charter for Children that ensures that no child remains illiterate, hungry or lacks medical care.

The eleventh five-year plan has also acknowledged the importance of ECCE as the stage that lays the foundation for lifelong development and the realisation of a child’s full potential, and directs that “all children be provided at least one year of preschool education in the age group of 3-6 years.”

The *National Curriculum Framework – 2005* developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has also considered ECCE to be the first step in the education ladder. It further emphasises that the early childhood stage, until the age of 6-8 years, is the most critical period when the foundations are laid for lifelong development and the realisation of full potential.

Neuroscientists, economists, ECE educators and social scientists also strongly argue that the ECE programme which promotes growth and development of children, aged between 0-6 years, is the best investment for developing the human capital necessary for economic growth and a poor ECE programme may have no impact, resulting in waste of resources. Further, poor ECE programme can even have negative consequences for the child. Every young child has a right to quality ECE in a pressure free environment and it is our responsibility as practitioners, care-givers and ECE educators to improve our knowledge of child development in order to understand our children better and contribute in bringing quality in the area of early childhood education. Quality ECE is the right of every child and this will also impact, in the long term, on the quality of human capital available to the country.

This chapter primarily concerns itself with questions such as –

- What is Early Childhood Education?
- What is the normal development pattern of humans up to six years?
- What are the essential components of quality Early Childhood Education?
- Why is it important to provide Quality Early Childhood Education?
- What are the essentials to ensure quality ECE programme?



1.1 Early Childhood Education : Meaning and Objectives

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the Indian context is generally defined as the care and education of children from birth to eight years. It includes:

- Early stimulation programmes through crèches/homes stimulation for 0-3 year olds.
- Early childhood education (ECE) programmes for 3-6 year olds (as seen in anganwadis, balwadis, nurseries, preschools, kindergartens, preparatory schools, etc.).
- Early Primary Education Programmes as part of schooling for 6-8 year olds.

ECE centres are often part of a primary school. ECE is a child-centred programme and strictly warns teachers, parents and other care-givers about the risks of early formal learning. It follows a play based developmentally appropriate programme and focuses on all-round development of the child by providing activities, experiences and opportunities for cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical and motor development. Under quality Early Childhood Education Programme, age and developmentally appropriate activities related to different aspects of Child Development and School Readiness are provided in an innovative and flexible manner to prepare young children for the primary grades in a stress free, enabling and stimulating environment. Quality ECE is designed to improve later school performance and it includes much more than just school readiness as it targets the whole child.

Objectives of Early Childhood Education

The broad objectives of ECE programme, as described in the *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66)* are to:

- develop in the child a good physique, adequate muscular coordination and basic motor skills;
- develop in the child good health habits and to build up basic skills necessary for personal adjustment, such as dressing, eating, washing, cleaning, etc;
- develop desirable social attitudes and manners to encourage healthy group participation and to make the child sensitive to the rights and privileges of others;
- develop emotional maturity by guiding the child to express, understand, accept and control his feelings and emotions;
- encourage aesthetic appreciation;
- stimulate intellectual curiosity and to help him understand the world in which he lives, and to foster new interests through giving opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment;



- encourage independence and creativity by providing the child with sufficient opportunities for self-expression; and
- develop the child's ability to express his thoughts and feelings in fluent, correct, clear speech.

1.2 Characteristics of Early Childhood Development

The developmental research has provided us with a picture of the normal development of children. Although individual child develops at her own pace, yet all children pass through an identifiable sequence of developmental stages, i.e., physical, cognitive, and emotional growth and change. Within these stages, they often share characteristics common to many children of the same age. The teachers and parents need to know these characteristics in order to meet their needs adequately and appropriately. The Early Child Development (ECD) fact is based on the proven fact that young children respond best when pre-school teachers, parents and other care-givers use specific techniques and provide appropriate activities and experiences to encourage and stimulate progress to the next level of development. Knowledge of developmental characteristics of young children helps pre-school teachers to plan age- and developmentally appropriate programmes that would improve children's capacity to develop and learn.

Table 1.1 shows the chart of Normal Development. It describes the pattern of development of motor skills, socio-emotional skills, cognitive skills and language skills in young children. Although skills are acquired in a predictable pattern, it is important to remember that they are not achieved at the same time by all children.

Let us see how two to six year olds develop as it will help planning the ECE programme in a better way.



Table 1.1 Normal Development Chart

	2-3 year olds	3-4 year olds	4-5 year olds	5-6 year olds
Motor Skills Gross Motor Skills	Runs forward well. Walks on tiptoe. Claps with music. Walks upstairs (both feet on each step). (4-6 stairs) Jumps in place, two feet together. Throws ball overhead. Kicks stationary ball. Short attention span, moving quickly from one activity to another.	Runs around obstacles. Uses slide without assistance. Walks down 4-6 stairs alternating feet. Balance on one foot for 5-10 seconds. Catches ball. Steers and pedals tricycle. Has still short attention span.	Walks backward toe-heels. Gallops to music. Hops on one foot. Bounces large ball. Jumps forward effortlessly. Throws ball with one hand to person 4-6 feet away. Catches small ball thrown from 3 feet.	Walks on balance plank forward, backward, sideways. Hop effortlessly. Swings independently. Can hit ball with bat. Dribble and bounce the ball. Longer attention span.
Fine Motor Skills	Turns pages. Fills and dumps containers with sand. Paints with a large brush. Tears paper. Holds thick crayons with thumb and fingers. Stacks objects. Puts small objects in slots, strings large beads. Uses one hand consistently in most activities. Balances on plank. Takes off simple unfastened clothing. Draws horizontal lines and vertical lines.	Builds tower of 8-9 blocks. Enjoys clay i.e. roll balls, snakes, etc. Completes 3 pieces puzzle. Traces writing template. Cuts across paper. Copies circle, and cross. Uses two hands together for simple activities such as opening bottle lids, using hammering toy. Buttons and unbuttons own clothing.	Cuts on line. Builds tower for 10 or more blocks. Writes a few upper case letters. Can do finger plays. Draws simple recognizable pictures. Pastes and glues easily and at the appropriate place. Colours within enclosed space. Copies square. Folds and creases paper three times. Dresses without supervision. Use Velcro straps, tries to tie shoes.	Cuts out simple shapes. Has adult grasp of pencil. Has handedness well established (i.e., child is right or left handed). Writes numeral 1-10. Writes first name. Colours within lines neatly. Writes letters. Copies triangle. Dresses self completely.
Socio-emotional Skills	Separates from mother to go to preschool. Watches other children, joins sometimes in their play. Defends own possessions.	Initiates social interaction with another child. Shares toys, materials. Enjoys dress-up clothes. Waits and takes turns.	Gets along well in small groups. Plays simple table games. Resolves problems with peers. Enjoys dramatic play closer to reality.	Very social and makes friends more easily. Has poise and control. Plays competitive games.



	<p>Cannot share work space. Enjoys floor plays. Enjoys praise. Helps adults put toys away. Participates in small group activity (sing and claps) for 5-10 minutes. Insists on doing things independently. Uses spoon, spilling little. Begins to understand cleanliness.</p>	<p>Enjoys simple humour. Begins dramatic play such as playing house, pretending to be animals. Participates in small group teacher directed activity for 10-15 minutes. Washes hands unassisted.</p>	<p>Talks about experiences/events and own feelings. Brushes teeth with supervision. Take and keep the material back at appropriate place.</p>	<p>Engages in cooperative play with rules and roles assigned. Provides alternative solutions in difficult situations. Participates in independent work for 20 minutes. Brushes teeth unassisted. Supports and assists another child.</p>
Cognitive Skills	<p>Names pictured objects. Has short attention span. Identifies big/small objects. Touches and counts 1-3 objects. Matches three colours. Learning is mostly based on exploration. Identifies own drawing. Names objects that go together. Finds difficulty in distinguishing between reality and fantasy. Understands the concept of "one".</p>	<p>Arranges objects in order of size (upto 4 levels). Classifies objects /pictures in categories. Touches and counts four or more objects. Identifies and names four colours. Works on puzzles (4-5 pieces). Asks 'why' for information. Repeats three numerals. Continues to have difficulty between fantasy and reality.</p>	<p>Matches, identifies and names four basic colours. Has more extended attention span. Draws names and describes recognizable picture. Knows own age. Recognizes and names some letters and numerals. Knows home address. Can compare three pictures. Can tell likenesses and differences. Can tell what material objects are made of. Learns to distinguish between real and unreal.</p>	<p>Shows interest in clock and time. Likes structured activities. Names all numerals (1-10) and most alphabet letters. Completes puzzle of 10 or more pieces. Attention span widened. Time concepts are expanding (Diwali will come after two weeks).</p>
Language Skills	<p>Says her name. Points to pictures of common objects when they are named. Talks to self in mirror.</p>	<p>Says full name. Talks in sentences of 4-5 words. Tells about past experiences. Continues to talk out loud to</p>	<p>Can identify and point to pictures described. 'Reads' pictures. Provides rhyming word to complete a set i.e. bat, rat, ...)</p>	<p>Retells story from picture book with reasonable accuracy. Pretends or acts out a</p>



	<p>Understands no, not, don’t and can’t. Enjoys listening to simple, short story books. Identifies pictures of action words (eating, clapping, running). Enjoys looking at picture books. Verbalizes wants. Struggling to make sense of world. Follows simple directions such as: Give me the block; Bring your shoes and socks; Repeat parts of rhymes and songs. Answers simple questions: What is this? Can identify objects when told their use. Places object in, on, under, beside. Can point to parts of the body.</p>	<p>themselves as they play with materials. Tells action in picture. Makes up words and rhymes. Asks for explanations. Speech is understandable but there are still some sound erasers. Likes to talk with adults. Listens longer to stories. Sings simple nursery rhymes. Understands prepositions (on, under, inside) Can point to smallest of two squares.</p>	<p>Asks for explanations. Well formed sentence structure. Follows instructions in proper order. Understands comparatives like big, bigger and biggest. Use verbal directions into play activities. Understands sequencing of events. Middle last Ask when, how, and why questions. Demonstrate a variety of uses for a language such as getting information, expressing opinions and giving informations. Identifies and points to above, below, top, bottom, between.</p>	<p>story. Listens and takes turns in group discussion. Loves to talk. Speaks fluently and clearly. Uses more complex sentences. Asks meaning of words. Reads 10 common words. Communicates well with family members and friends and strangers. Identifies and points to some, most, first, all.</p>
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(Source: Kirsten A. Hansen, Roxane K. Kaufmann, Kate Burke Walsh; ‘Step by Step: A Program for Children and Families’ published by Children’s Resources International, Inc. in partnership with Open Society Institute, New York)

While looking at the characteristics of young children, the preschool teacher can plan for age- and developmentally appropriate activities and can make modifications for the individual differences, wherever required. The important thing to remember is that each child is unique. They cannot and should not be compared with one another. As said earlier, although there are set patterns of growth, yet each child develops at her own pace and in her own style. That is why we find differences among children in a class. The quality of the learning environment plays a significant role in early years as it affects young children’s feelings, behaviour and ability to accomplish tasks. The ECE programme’s schedule, routines and transitions also help create a comfortable atmosphere.



Quality ECE programme must plan and weave opportunities where children get a feeling of success and not of failure. If the teacher does not plan and relate activities and experiences to developmental factors, children often get a feeling of failure or frustration. Teachers should provide lots of challenging materials, activities and experiences according to the developmental level of each child so that the children get a sense of achievement. If you provide very simple and easy activity to older group of children, it will not excite and challenge them as they can do it quickly and easily. On the other hand if you provide difficult and complex material to much younger group of children, they will not be able to cope with it and get frustrated. Every child has special interests and own learning style. Therefore, the teacher needs to adopt innovative and different strategies to help all children succeed as learners.

1.3 Components of Quality Early Childhood Education

The term 'Quality' does not have any standard definition; various definitions of the term reflect different perceptions of the individuals and society. The term 'quality' generally refers to high degree of goodness, worth or excellence in an 'object' or system. Quality is an attribute of any object, structure or system that is relative in nature and cannot be measured in isolation. The NCF 2005 views quality as a systematic attribute rather than only a feature of instruction or attainment. Moreover, it is not merely a measure of efficiency; it also has a value dimension. The attempt to improve quality of education will succeed only if it goes hand in hand with steps to promote equality and social justice. Quality is a multilevel and multidimensional concept that includes various programmes and classroom features (Mashburn et al., 2008). In the context of ECCE, quality reflects components of the environment that are related to positive child outcomes in the academic and social domains. The two broad dimensions that are often used for ECCE quality are features of programme infrastructure and children's direct experiences in classrooms. Quality in Early Childhood Education has been recommended widely and 'Quality start' is the entitlement of every child, and responsibility of every parent and educator. While defining 'quality' in the context of ECE, it may be suggested that it would encompass all those issues which would contribute to quality experiences for young children.

While assuring quality, it is important to take note of those who are involved in a variety of services and across different sectors in the area of ECE. In an ECE setting both teachers and children come from a range of backgrounds, disciplines and experiences.



Teachers are entrusted with the challenging responsibility of care and education of all these young children. Although a high quality ECE programme is flexible, teachers need to do lot of prior planning to make it balanced, suitable and appropriate to children's needs, interests and abilities. A quality Early Childhood Education Programme is expected to have the following components:

- (a) Age and developmentally appropriate curriculum
- (b) Adequate opportunities for play
- (c) Enabling and stimulating learning environment
- (d) Well trained and qualified staff
- (e) Equal opportunity policy
- (f) Appropriate methods of Observing and Assessing children
- (g) Systematic involvement of parents and other care-givers
- (h) Nutritious meals and Health Care
- (i) Favourable teacher-child ratio
- (j) School readiness and smooth transition to primary school.

(a) Age and developmentally appropriate curriculum

The curriculum is the sum total of all the experiences available to the child, and it cannot be reduced to a syllabus. It has to be constructed to suit the child's requirements in different contexts, and should be in tune with the age, needs and abilities of the child; it requires full involvement of the teacher, while developing and also while transacting it in the classroom. It is important to reiterate that the curriculum should not be dull, meaningless and demanding for the child. Often it is seen that the present pre-school education programme forces children to do things most inappropriate for their age and needs. A good programme should cover all the things that would facilitate children's learning and development. This calls for a developmentally appropriate programme that focuses on the holistic development of the child in a stimulating and stress free environment, fostering active exploration and experimentation through play.

Cognitive skills such as problem solving, observation, memory, sequential thinking, classification and analysing play an important role in all the activities that children do. Manipulation of concrete objects or sensory motor involvement is the most important component of learning for young children. Young children need opportunities to use their cognitive skills as they actively engage with materials and activities rather than learning situations that require them to listen or to watch.

Literacy development is growth in communication skills including initial speaking and listening, and then writing and reading. A certain level of attainment in language skills is essential



to enable the child to begin formal education successfully. Every part of a quality ECE programme should offer the opportunity for literacy development, “The classroom should display print rich environment and quality children’s literature. Literacy skills can best be sharpened through listening, speaking, dictated drawings, expressing ideas and specifically planned emergent literacy activities in the ECE programme based on needs and age of the children. The **whole** child should be the focus of the programme.

Physical and motor development should cover the activities and experiences for gross motor and fine motor skills such as, building with blocks, sand and water play, stringing beads, lacing cards, creative art activities and so on. Apart from development of physical abilities it should also include conversations on caring for the body, how to keep the body healthy and fit, and nutrition for healthy body. Motor skills that are needed in the performance of **gross motor activities** involve control of arms, legs and trunk and for fine motor activities these would involve control of the hands, feet and fingers. Music activities provide children with opportunities to learn clapping, singing, rhythm, and the interpretation of music through movement. There are many other opportunities for learning physical skills such as lacing a shoe, hammering a nail, buttoning a coat, pedaling a tricycle etc.



Figure 1.1

Children at different ages need different kinds of opportunities for learning physical skills. These are reflected in the structured activities that teachers present each day to a particular group of children. For example, toddlers need more frequent opportunities for *self-help routines* to learn physical skills such as dressing themselves, buttoning, zipping, folding, tying, buckling, putting on



and taking off clothing etc. This also includes feeding themselves, managing napkins, glasses and cups, carrying plates, pouring and serving. Self-help routines also include washing and drying hands and face, brushing teeth, combing one's hair. Toddlers are also involved in putting toys back to the storage, dressing dolls, completing two piece puzzles, stringing beads, using crayons, turning pages, building blocks, sand and water play, etc. The above said opportunities for young children to practice and master physical skills are a major part of quality ECE programme.

There are opportunities for the acquisition of gross motor skills for which outdoor activities such as running, climbing, pushing, pulling, jumping, throwing, catching should be included in the programme.

Social skills are very important because children must learn to get along with others. Sooner the children learn the skill of getting along easily and happily with others, it is more likely that they would enjoy school life and feel confident. ECE programme should plan and include such experiences that promote the ability to control antisocial impulses/behaviour. Small group activities and play in carefully planned activity areas help children to get along in a group, enjoy playing with other children, cooperate and share. The major goals for social skill learning in ECE settings relate to peer interactions and socially desirable behaviour. Play activities weaved into the quality ECE programme provide many opportunities to young children to learn social skills related to being a member of a group.

Emotional domain is emphasised in the quality ECE programme because child needs to develop emotional stability or control over her emotions to feel self-confident. Emotionally safe and healthy children do not feel insecure; they feel free, and have positive self-esteem. Social emotional development during ECE stage is about socialization where children learn about values and socially desirable behavior. It is all about helping a child to become kind, competent, independent and confident person. Sometimes the socio-emotional activities are not visible in the written planned ECE programme but these are woven in the programme. Table manners, cleanliness, use of dustbin, controlling impulses, expressing feelings and sharing materials are a few examples.

(b) Adequate opportunities for play

The quality ECE programme assures play as an integral part of the preschool programme. Play-based programme is flexible that can be easily adapted by teachers for all age groups including infancy. Play allows the optimal meaningful development of the child.



Besides physical environment, quality ECE environment includes secure relationships with teachers and other care-givers. Children are active learners. A safe and secure play environment encourages young children to develop necessary skills and competence. Preschool teachers are often faced with the task of providing young children with a well-defined stimulating and supportive learning environment that offers a wide range of materials/apparatus and equipment. The indoor and outdoor physical environment fosters optimal growth and development through opportunities for exploration and learning. Physical space and materials provided affect the level of involvement of the children and the quality of interaction between teachers and children.

(d) Well trained and qualified staff

Knowledgeable and responsive staff of the ECE centre is the critical factor to determine the quality of the programme. It is generally assumed that any person who likes children or who herself is a mother will be a good person to run the early childhood education programme. This may not always be true. Regular training of the staff members at ECE centre is very crucial and needs to be emphasized. The training programmes of anganwadi workers should give them adequate inputs about child development so that they are able to relate activities with the development or be creative to develop their own programmes and activities. Training is also important for the professionals who are responsible for the grassroots training and supervision. Good teachers provide emotionally warm environment where children share emotions and ideas with others. Sharing ideas enables children to see the world from another's perspective. Knowledgeable teachers figure out how the young children in their programmes think, learn and make sense of the world. Well trained teachers communicate to parents, community and others care-givers about what they are doing and why they are doing it. They are able to articulate how play experiences promote learning and development. They guide parents and community members on how to support and participate in play activities.

(e) Equal opportunity policy

The environment of an ECE center should be such where children can safely explore gender related roles and take part in different kinds of activities that are related to these roles. It is not fair to assume that all boys like blocks and all girls like art activities and doll play. For example, boys should also be engaged in doll's area and girls should also be given more gross motor activities. For this, the teacher also needs to be conscious while displaying pictures and





Figure 1.3

- Do I encourage the girls differently than I encourage the boys?
- Do I use statements like “Why are you crying like a girl? Boys don’t cry.”
- Do I expect boys to be involved in one type of play and girls to be involved in others?
- Do I allow only girls in the dolls area and not the boys?
- Do I plan gross motor activities keeping boys in my mind?

reading story books to children. Perhaps many times teachers are not aware of any gender bias in their classroom management or in their teaching style /strategies. It is important for all of us to reflect on our teaching strategies/practices and consider whether or not any part of our teaching practices are driven by gender bias. It is important for all of us to discover any hidden attitude we may have about gender. We all need to remember that our teaching practices can have a lifelong impact on young children’s learning potential in their early years of life.

(f) Appropriate Methods of Observing and Assessing Children

Observation and continuous assessment of children help the teacher to provide a detailed description of the overall personality of the child, her progress and development over time. Teachers may utilize such information for classroom planning and making developmentally appropriate activities for individual children as well as for the group as a whole. It would also help the teacher to identify and help the children with special needs. The parents could also be benefitted as they are kept informed about the progress of their children. The partnership between parents and teachers on the basis of regular progress sharing gets strengthened and it adds to the quality of the ECE programme.

(g) Systematic involvement of parents and other care-givers

Quality ECE programmes depend on strong partnerships between



teachers and families. Teachers and parents share a common love and concern for the child. Children feel more secure and supported when their parents are involved in a variety of school activities. It is a wonderful opportunity that increases the interaction and communication between schools and families. Parents are the first teachers and have a lasting influence on their children's attitude, emotions, values and ideas. Teachers are professionals having knowledge about child development and growth. Both of them play a crucial role in the development and education of the children. Another important fact is that children imbibe a lot of learning from outside formal educational settings. Therefore, the linkage between home, preschool and community must be strengthened. When parents participate in ECE programme, teachers are able to get additional information about children and their family environment and this may help them to deal with the child in a better way. However working with parents also requires prior planning and lot of guidance skills on the part of the teacher. There are many ways to strengthen and enrich this bond. The strategies may of course vary according to specific preschool situations.

(h) Nutritious Meal and Health Care

Every child must be given a nutritional supplement in the school to compensate for any nutrition deficiencies. Stimulation and nutrition together positively affect development of the children. As per the guidelines of the Honourable Supreme Court, every child should be served at least one hot cooked mid-day meal, locally produced, and one mid-morning or mid-afternoon snack as per age requirements. In addition to providing mid-day meal, there should be ample provisions for adequate and appropriate health care. Medical check up of all the children is necessary at regular intervals. It will help to monitor growth (height and weight) and nutritional supplementation of all the children. At the same time early detection of disabilities will help in providing counselling and treatment for the disability.

(i) Favourable Teacher-child ratio

Smaller size of the classroom has always been suggested for addressing the quality of processes in the ECE classroom. It has been suggested that age-wise this ratio could be: Age 3 to 4 years and 4 to 5 years - 1 trained teacher for 20 children; Age 5 to 6 years - 1 trained teacher to 25 children. However it has also been observed in a few countries that class size alone is sometimes used as a justification for neglect of in-depth analyses of quality issues. It is felt that investment in teacher training and regular support

According to Bruce and Meggit (2002), "Equality of opportunity means opening up access for every child and family to full participation in early childhood services. There can be no quality in early childhood services unless there is equality of opportunity". Children should not be denied of their rights based on their race, nationality, gender or abilities; boys and girls should not be treated differently.



to them in managing classrooms would be a better strategy to address quality. For example, using empathy and social-emotional skills, culturally relevant group games and activities or rotational leadership processes can help children to work collaboratively on group activities. This does not mean that a larger class size is better, but in a context in which there is lack of trained caregivers, more creative strategising may be necessary. Smaller child-caregiver groupings are still important for stimulation, development and adequate protection of young children.

(j) School readiness and smooth transition to Primary School

Quality ECE programme provides for the school readiness activities which helps children in making a smooth transition to primary schools. When children join primary school after completing their preschool it is important to ensure that they are well adjusted in their new settings. That is why it is felt necessary that preschool and primary school should be in close vicinity. The methodologies adopted by the teachers in the primary classes could be different from those of preschool teachers, and the child may feel little insecure and upset. It is the responsibility of the preschools to bridge the gap, if any, between early learning and primary school environment to facilitate a smooth transition. A good preschool programme should therefore provide for this expectation.

REASONS FOR PROVIDING A GOOD ECE PROGRAMME

- Findings of brain researches advocate for quality experiences at early stage.
- ECE is a cost effective way to reduce poverty and foster economic growth.
- ECE helps in the smooth transition to primary school.
- ECE is a pathway to inclusion and social equity.

1.4 Why is it important to provide Quality Early Childhood Education?

Arguments for a quality early childhood education programme have been discussed in the introductory section of this chapter. It is an accepted fact that early experience affects the development of the brain and lays the foundation for intelligence, emotional health and moral development. Healthy early development, and particularly school readiness, is dependent on how young children think and feel. It is also felt that early intervention is important, and well-designed, accessible early intervention programmes are needed for children at risk. A quality ECE programme not only addresses the diverse needs of young children but also helps in discovering the problems faced by children with special abilities and children at risk.

Findings of brain researches advocate for quality experiences at early stage

Researches in the field of neurosciences reveal that quality experiences during the first six years enhance children's physical/



motor, social, emotional and cognitive development (Barnett, 1995). Recent researches on the functioning of the brain also indicate that quality ECE programme not only affects a child's development but also actually changes the physical structure of the brain (Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, 1996). The first five years are critical and sensitive periods in a person's life when the differentiation of nerve function and establishment of neural pathways occur. In the first six years, the growth of the brain is very rapid and afterwards it develops at a relatively slower rate. Babies begin to learn rapidly from the moment they are born. During the first five years, there is a rapid increase in the development of the number of synapses (the wiring of nerve connections) between neurons (brain cells). The neural pathways connect different parts of the brain. During the first five years, the child's brain is working on connecting the neurons. Take, for example, when we play cricket and run on the pitch again and again, what happens? A path is created and the grass of that particular area goes flat. Similarly, when the baby uses her senses of learning, smelling, touching, seeing or tasting again and again through different experiences, a sensory path is made. By age three, growth of the human brain is almost complete. Researchers suggest that billions of neurons in the child's brain must be stimulated to form sensing pathways, which would influence a person's competence and how she/he learns and behaves. Whatever we 'do' and 'say' to a child (positive and negative experiences) during the early years influence the formation of these critical pathways and processes. That is why it is emphasized to provide more enriching experiences and activities for sensory development. A quality ECE programme must provide opportunities and activities for development of each of the five senses i.e., seeing, touching, hearing, smelling and tasting. These neural connections or sensing pathways mould the way the child feels, behaves, thinks and learns. In other words these neurological pathways in the brain control the child's language, intellectual, emotional, psychological and physical responses. It is difficult to change many of these neural connections in the later stages of life. These neural pathways influence how we cope up with the challenges of life.

ECE is the cost effective way to reduce poverty and foster economic growth

ECE is important for the overall development of the child, especially children coming from low income families and at-risk children, as these children get inadequate and irrelevant experiences at home. Children from poor families are particularly deprived as their parents



may be illiterate and not able to effectively interact with them, and there are very few opportunities for optimal development. Children do not get toys to play with and books to look at and read. If a young child continuously gets such kind of deprived environment in the most important years of her/his life, it is likely to have adverse effects on development. In this context ECE plays a very important role as the child gets a stimulating environment at the quality ECE center and it facilitates her proper development. ECE helps girls to regularly attend primary school as they are free from taking care of their siblings.

ECE helps in Universalisation of Elementary Education

Quality ECE provides School Readiness activities to the children thus contributing to the universalisation of elementary education. School readiness focuses on the dimensions of early learning development. These dimensions are: physical well being and motor development, social and emotional development, language development and cognitive development. Each dimension plays an important role in the child's preparation for school. Children's readiness for school helps them in making a smooth transition from ECE centre to primary school in terms of their preparedness to learn and to the new learning environment. Children who participate in early childhood programmes are more likely to enroll in school, complete school on time, plan their families, earn higher household incomes, become productive adults and educate their own children. This, to some extent, leads to reduction in the number of dropouts and failures at the primary level.

ECE is a pathway to inclusion and social equity

Every child has a right to get the best possible childhood experiences. According to Sims (2009), equity in early childhood education refers to fairness and is based on a balance of two different sets of rights: right to attend an early childhood environment, and the right to participate and be represented equally within that environment. Children have diverse needs and they come from different cultural and social backgrounds. This results in children participating in early childhood environments differently. The most significant gains are noted among children from low income families. According to research findings children who go to pre-school are less likely to need special education, repeat grades or participate in illegal activity. Children's access to quality early childhood programmes which address issues of equity and social justice is crucial in maximising children's participation in the learning experiences.



Research findings on Early Learning Years

- *Human brain is plastic. There is a reduction in the plasticity of sensing pathways after a sensitive period of the first five years ends. Research also shows that a baby's brain is more active and more flexible than an adult's brain. The young child is 'literally an alien genius' (Gopnik et al. 1999).*
- *Early brain development sets the foundation for lifelong learning behaviour and health (McCain and Mustard, 2006).*
- *The brain-body connections are crucial in the function of the immune system and the body's host defenses. This is one of the reasons that quality stimulation of brain development in the early years is associated with better health in adult life (Sternberg, 2000).*
- *"A newborn's brain is composed of trillions of neurons...The experiences of childhood determine which neurons are used, that wire the circuits of the brain. Those neurons that are not used may die" (Begley 1996, cited at <http://web.worldbank.org>).*
- *Exposure to an early learning program in the year before school entry has a positive effect on children's school readiness (Sammons 2010; Sylva et al. 2010; Wong et al. 2008).*



Figure 1.4



PRIORITY ISSUES

- Setting up norms and standards
- Regulations
- Advocacy
- Training of the work force and professionals
- Research
- Resources

1.5 Essentials to ensure Quality ECE

The right kind of intervention at the right time with active stimulation in an emotionally supportive stress free environment fosters the pace of learning by young children. That is why it is important to ensure the quality of ECE programme. In order to evolve a quality ECE programme, genuine efforts are called for from different stakeholders.

Setting up norms and standards

Standards need to be defined in relation to the overall objectives laid down for ECE programme and also in relation to each objective. The norms and standards are particularly required for the essential elements of quality viz. Curriculum, Teachers, Teacher-pupil ratio and group size, Infrastructure, and Supervision and Monitoring. Considering the diversity of levels, needs, contexts and perceptions, there can be no one single uniform standard laid down for all. There are also programmes that offer different components or different combinations of components. However, there can be a certain range of variation for each group.

Regulations

When we are dealing with the development of young children it is important to ensure that quality of the programme being offered is appropriate. It is high time for the Government to bring in legislations to control mushrooming of poor quality ECE programmes. As of today there are no authorized guidelines about who should run the preschool centers, how they should be run and how they should be directed to contribute optimally in the development of children. Different strategies and approaches should be evolved for stronger and more partnership between government, private and voluntary sectors. The involvement of early childhood professionals in the regulation process will ensure the introduction and implementation of fair and appropriate sectors.

Advocacy

Quality Care and Education are inseparable. Therefore, the child and family must be considered together and partnership between parents, professionals and teachers must be developed. Generally parents lack knowledge about the significance of this period in the life of their child. They need guidance on how to promote appropriate development of their child. Hence there is a need for massive campaigning using all types of media. The message should be the



same – the significance of this period of life for human development and brain growth; the dangers of early malnutrition and neglect; the purpose, content, scope and meaning of ECCE; the dangers of introducing too early formal methods unsuitable for the age group; the importance of transacting the curriculum in a language familiar to the child; the integration of health and nutrition with care, development and education at this stage; the dispelling of false myths and replacing them with accurate information in the child's interest. At the same time, there is a need to address the aspirations and dreams of parents. Sometimes parents may have unrealistic aspirations. If parents understand the significance of ECCE in the overall context of learning and development, pressures for formal teaching and learning at the preschool stage will be reduced.

Training of the Work force and Professionals

The staff working at ECE centers is generally not given quality pre-service and in-service training. This is a critical area and needs immediate attention. The training of professionals of this area requires careful consideration on issues such as preparation of modules to upgrade knowledge and skills of teachers and caregivers, introducing flexibility in the training programmes, enhancing capacity of existing training institutions, introducing well planned inputs for supervisors, etc. The quality of training will determine the quality of personnel in ECE programmes. While planning for training of preschool teachers there is a need to focus on practical 'hands-on-training', frequent in-service training programmes, exposure visits to model preschool centers and experience sharing amongst teachers. At the same time the syllabus of Nursery Teacher Training Courses need to be reviewed and updated to provide for the current and other evolving issues of ECE.

Research

The field of education cannot survive unless strong links are created between policy, practice and research. Research has to feed into the policy and at the same time issues related to programme practices need to be studied in order to understand their impact on children and their stakeholders. Research provides a scientific basis for developing specific interventions. In order to have an upgradation, research should be pursued as a regular and continuous activity.

Resources

No programme can be run successfully over a long period of time in the absence of adequate resources of all types – Human, Physical



and Financial. There should not be any compromise in matters of the care and education of young children. Continuous monitoring of ECE centres, on the spot guidance and demonstrations are needed to ensure quality of ECE programme on a regular basis. Government, educationists and professionals need to pay sincere attention and display a sense of commitment to see the area of Early Childhood Education prospering.



Chapter 2

DESIGNING CREATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The physical environments and experiences provided for children, indoors and out, have a powerful impact on their present and future (Greenfield, 2004; Ulrich, 2004).

2.0 Introduction

Designing physical space for young children is a challenging task as they are active and curious learners. Physical space for young children's activities will vary from centre to centre in urban as well as in rural areas depending upon the availability of total space and number of children in the center.

Nowadays the new understandings coming from neuroscience are emphasising the importance of providing emotionally secure and supportive environment for young children's learning and development. Children need to feel safe, secure and confident. Stress can destroy brain cells and make learning more difficult. A good quality physical environment positively affects children's learning and development in many ways. Well-designed environments support exploration, give young children a sense of control and enable children to engage in focused and self-directed play. Good environment makes parents and care-givers feel welcome and involved. Poorly designed environments, on the other hand, discourage these activities. And because well-designed environments engage children in activities, they minimise problematic behaviours such as aggressiveness, etc. A quality ECE environment is expected to provide secure relationships with teachers and other care-givers.

In order to ensure that all children benefit from rich experiences in early childhood, the preschool teachers are faced with the task of creating a stimulating and emotionally secure learning environment for their young children. Children are active learners and to develop the necessary skills and readiness they need to feel accepted. A safe and attractive play environment encourages young children to develop necessary skills and competence. Preschool teachers therefore should provide young children with a wide range of materials, apparatus and equipments. Another important point is regarding organisation of materials and equipments in



classroom. Very often we see that in some ECE centers children are overwhelmed with the wealth of material and equipment yet little learning takes place, whereas, there are some other ECE centers similarly equipped but the material is so well organised and placed that opportunities for learning and exploration are maximised.

In this chapter we will focus on the main issues of the learning environment for young children where they can explore and develop their individual interests. The chapter has been organised under following headings:

2.1 Organising Indoor Environment

2.1.1 *Setting the indoor environment with Activity Areas*

2.1.2 *Suggested guidelines for physical setting of an early childhood classroom.*

2.1.3 *Storage for children's belongings*

2.1.4 *Effective usage of available indoor space*

2.1.5 *Classroom displays*

2.1.6 *Organising circle time*

2.1.7 *Evaluating activity areas*

2.1.8 *Classrooms adaptations*

The indoor learning environment is an important and powerful teaching tool for early childhood centers. If the teacher sets up the environment of the ECE center with the knowledge of how her children learn and develop, it can positively support the teaching and learning. The environment of the ECE center communicates to young children what is expected of them. The well maintained and organised indoor environment develops young children's confidence to express themselves, to make decisions, to actively explore, to discover and to develop and practise skills. An appropriate indoor environment can be created by dividing a large classroom into several activity areas.

2.1.1 Setting the Indoor Environment with Activity Areas

The early childhood classroom should be divided into distinct activity areas so that children have clear choices of activities and materials, and they can work in small groups. The number and size of the activity areas in a given classroom will depend upon the size of the room and the number and age group(s) of the children. This would also help to satisfy the developmental needs of children. While planning and creating activity areas, think about the kind and amount of space required. For example, the block building area must be large enough for 6-8 children to work together and safely build their creations. These areas must be orderly, on the child's

*Practitioners who understand child development and how children learn, and who aspire to support children's individual growth and development, construct environments which are adaptable and communicate a sense of respect and purpose
(French and Murphy, 2005).*



level and should be inviting. The size of the room may limit the use of all areas at one time. And when there are more areas the physical setting becomes more crowded and complicated. If this is the case a separate 'Activity Resource Room' may be created nearby to further set up these activity areas. The children can easily come to this 'Activity Resource Room' for free indoor play (since it is in the close vicinity of the preschool) once in a day for about 40 minutes. This Activity Resource Room will have different activity areas that would become laboratories for child initiated learning through play.

It is a good idea to have a carpet or a *durrie* or linoleum flooring as it reduces noise as well as it is comfortable to sit on. Each area should have a variety of materials in plenty so that several children can use them at the same time. In the art area, for example, one child might be working with play dough or plasticine, another painting at the easel and two or three children doing free-hand drawing with crayons, whereas some others might be scribbling with coloured pencil on the running board. Activity areas that are arranged properly facilitate children to work independently. Children also learn from each other. Activity areas and working in small groups provide them with opportunities for natural and frequent interactions. Small group activities also teach children to solve problems, make decisions, express themselves, become more independent and learn from their peers. And because children develop at different rates, appropriately designed activity areas are able to meet the needs of young children with a wide range

Small group activities in well defined activity areas help children focus on specific activities and help them understand behaviours that are expected in these areas (Prescott).

AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM MAY HAVE THE FOLLOWING

ACTIVITY AREAS

- Dramatic Play area
- Block Building Area
- Literacy and Library area
- Mathematics / Manipulatives area
- Art area
- Science or Discovery area
- Music and Movement area



*Figure 2.1
Play provides opportunities to get along together*



**BASIC MATERIAL
REQUIRED**

- doll house
- play store
- play utensils
- dress-up clothing
- doll clothes
- dolls (male & female)
- bed for dolls
- make-believe groceries
- clay fruits and vegetables
- empty cans and containers
- measuring spoons and cups
- old sunglasses
- magazines, play table and chairs
- child's size table and four chairs
- a full length mirror
- play telephones (2), clock, and a plastic basin.

**BASIC MATERIALS
REQUIRED**

- large hollow blocks
- unit blocks
- colourfully painted blocks
- cardboard blocks
- foam blocks and blocks made with empty juice/ milk/oil cartons.
- Children have to plan
- make judgements and construct together.

of abilities. The versatility of activity areas encourages children to interact with materials at their own developmental level.

(a) Dramatic play area is usually set up in a corner. Children find a link between home and school in these dramatic play areas. The space for dramatic play should be clearly defined. Boundaries can be formed by the walls of the room or by furniture or shelves. The furniture or shelves should be low enough to permit adults to see over them at all times. Dramatic play areas provide opportunities for role play, pretend play, trying out and acting out familiar and imaginary experiences. Playing 'House-House' or 'Doctor-Patient' seems to be the most popular themes for young children.

In this area children take out their pent-up emotions and feelings while enacting different roles. They also use various tools and utensils. Although they play in small groups (cooperative play), a few spend their time in stirring, mixing in the saucepans while other are engaged in patting the doll etc. The dramatic play area can be located adjacent to blocks because both areas are active and somewhat noisy.

(b) Block building area provides excellent opportunities for problem solving and mathematical learning. Blocks are essential for children of all ages. It provides possibilities for the exploration of concepts such as shape, size, weight, number, spatial awareness and so on. It also improves eye-hand coordination and helps children learn how to clean up and keep things back. Blocks are the best example of constructive and cooperative play.



Figure 2.2 Playing with dolls is a common theme that occurs in the dramatic/dolls area.





Figure 2.3 Blocks building—any time favourite of young children

Children often combine block play with dramatic props such as dolls for block houses, toy car on the block bridge, toy animals in block houses and so on. The teacher should encourage children to explore the blocks, build structures and engage in dramatic play. Playing with blocks develops small and large muscles. While setting up block

activity area select an area which is free from too much noise. The number of blocks and the amount of space needed for block area depend on the age and number of children in the class. Blocks are displayed in open shelves at an appropriate height so that children can remove and replace them easily. The block shelves should also be marked clearly with pictures and words (as it encourages emergent literacy) so that children easily know where to find and replace blocks.

(c) The Literacy or Library area means a print-rich environment. The literacy area should be smaller and more intimate, and this can be done with rugs, small cushions, chairs and a table for writing and drawing (readiness activities).

Preferably the area should have rugs, small chairs and a small table. The books should be attractively displayed on the rack. The type and level of books should be according to the age and interests of the children such as graded story books for emergent readers, poetry and rhymes collection, non-fiction books about animals, vehicles, alphabet books, number books, class created books and so on. Toy telephones, puppets, story cards, etc., may be placed to encourage conversation among children. Flannel Board and cutouts of favourite stories and rhymes should also be available in the literacy centre. Magnetic letters, sandpaper letters and writing templates are important material for literacy corner. Samples of children's work with their names on it must be displayed at their eye

BASIC MATERIALS REQUIRED

- a writing area
- variety of papers (lined and unlined)
- notes
- signs
- greeting cards
- thick coloured pencils (easy to hold)
- markers
- crayons
- thick sketch pens
- slates
- *takhtis*
- chalks
- old typewriter and book rack
- picture books
- number calendars
- story books
- information books
- pop-up books number and story books.



Materials in the math area range from buttons, bottle caps, seeds that children have collected to commercially produce math manipulatives such as puzzles, coloured pegs and pattern cards/blocks.



Figure 2.4 Children enjoying writing readiness activities

level. In short, the area should surround children with a meaningful print-rich environment to encourage emergent literacy.

One can also create a small listening corner in the literacy area by equipping the area with tape recorder and audiotapes of stories and rhymes. Children can choose to listen to a story on cassette while looking at the pictures of a story book.

(d) Mathematics/Manipulatives Area: Young children must have lots of opportunities to handle and manipulate concrete objects to experience mathematical concepts. Manipulatives are small materials that require children to use their eyes and hands to do something, such as, puzzles, pegs, nesting toys, lotto and legos etc. Manipulatives are usually used by children individually rather than in pairs or in groups. Concrete items of daily use such as bottle caps, pebbles, shells, and buttons are ideal for counting and classification. Egg trays provide excellent container for sorting small items. A few set of cards such as picture cards of different categories are very useful for sorting activities. Manipulative area should include a range of puzzles that encompass the skill levels of all the children. In the mathematics area children learn to sort, classify, order, count and compare. Especially in ICDS centres, where there are children of different ages in one class, it is all the more necessary to provide materials for different levels of skills so that all children get a feel of joyful learning.

Open shelves should be used to display the materials and be

**BASIC MATERIALS
REQUIRED**

- Floor numbers (with number 1-10 printed on them. These are also useful for gross motor games)
- Number lines
- Play money
- Puzzles
- Pegboards
- Lotto games
- Lego blocks
- Dominoes (dot dominoe, number dominoe, number object dominoe, etc.)
- Coloured beads
- Coloured magnetic pieces, etc.





Figure 2.5 Children playing with dominoes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- clay, crayons
- coloured pencils
- thick felt pens
- markers
- brushes
- collage materials
- coloured chalks
- scissors
- play dough
- wood shavings and different types of paper (chart paper, newspaper, magazine, coloured paper, etc.).

clearly labeled. The area should have enough space for several children to use their materials comfortably and simultaneously without interfering with each other. Materials from everyday life have as much potential for revealing number concepts to young children as other learning tools.

(e) Art area brings joy, excitement and satisfaction to the young children. In this area children become intensely involved while they explore different media. They paint with brushes and with their fingers. A high quality art education programme for children provides them creative experiences through a variety of materials. Children also look at their art and talk about art. Preferably each day children should have a choice of whether they want to draw, paint, construct, cut or paste. The art activity area plays a significant role in a comprehensive ECE programme by contributing to all areas of development. Tearing, cutting and pasting provide individual activities to children and provide small muscle development. They also learn about tactile experiences. Young children learn to discover different shapes, colours, textures and sizes. Art activities and experiences develop eye-hand coordination and also encourage communication skills and sharing habits.

(f) Science or Discovery area is often a part of the early childhood classroom where children can actively explore. Balancing scales to weigh with, small toy machines to take apart and put back together and seeds to plant and grow can help young children. The science area should be preferably near the window and a table

Interesting, concrete materials to observe and explore encourages the natural curiosity of young children (Ziemer).



MATERIALS REQUIRED

- magnets
- magnifying glass
- balance scales
- smelling jars (containers with separate smells such as lemon, onion etc.)
- shells
- feathers
- pebbles
- sponges
- pieces of wood
- seeds
- plants
- pinecones
- funnels
- spray bottles
- large marbles
- keys
- containers for pouring and measuring
- corks
- toy boats
- aluminum foil
- dried plants
- stop watch
- pipe cleaners
- plastic bottles
- sieves
- sifters
- tongs and tweezers
- old x-rays
- coloured cellophane paper



Figure 2.6 Drawing with chalk is satisfying

could be kept where different things or objects are displayed for exploration. This area can become a “mini museum” where children can share collections of objects. To keep the area interesting the objects, materials, displays should be rotated and changed whenever you feel that children are losing interest in them.



Figure 2.7 Discovery area—You can see the curiosity and enthusiasm in learning!





Figure 2.8 Movement Activities and Creative Dance make a good blend!

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- drums
- tambourine
(daphali)
- chimes
- bells
- wood blocks
- rhythm sticks
- triangles etc.

(g) Music and Movement area is the place where children listen to music, sing, play musical instruments and perform creative dances. The teacher should try to include appropriate tapes / cassettes, CDs and rhythm instruments in the music area and also modified musical instruments which children can play and enjoy such as rattles made of empty plastic containers etc.

Teacher made and child made musical instruments should also be included such as drums made out of cookie container, music box made of match boxes filled with seeds, wind chimes made of coke caps and lids.

2.1.2 Suggested guidelines for physical setting of an early childhood classroom

The following guidelines and strategies would facilitate the children to work and play meaningfully in activity areas and also help the teachers to observe, understand and assess the children while working in small groups:

- The furniture and equipment must be of the correct size and suited to height of the children. Make sure that all furniture is stable and secured so that does not fall on children or catch on children's clothing. In ideal ECE classroom, tables are used for some activities and several other activities take place on the floor. The display and bulletin boards need to be placed at the child's eye level.
- The drinking water fountains, mirrors, towel racks, shelves, bag hooks and other materials meant for children's use must be kept low so that children can reach them comfortably. The chairs and



activity tables should be of the appropriate size and sturdy. In anganwadis where children sit on the durry, make them sit in a semi-circle so that the teacher can maintain eye-contact with all of them. The teacher should sit slightly at a higher level than the children but not on a big chair. A teacher's chair and desk often take up a great deal of space and in early classroom we seldom use them. So it is better if we remove it and use a kind of victory ladder so that the teacher can sit at an appropriate height while doing different activities.

- The room must be organised in a way that the activity areas are uncluttered before the children enter the room, for example, different puzzles can be kept in separate boxes and at the same time there should be sufficient material in each activity centre for the children. Avoid keeping all the material before children at once, otherwise there will be no curiosity among children. For example, if your classroom has 6 puzzles inset boards, put only three at a time. At the end of the activity, encourage children to keep the toys and materials back in their original place.
- As far as possible make the noisy areas away from the quiet areas. For example, quiet areas are where children can hide away, look through the picture books or gather together for a story. Noisy areas such as music area may be created near the outdoors.
- The setup of the early childhood classroom should be so organised that it encourages children to develop certain skills such as classification, matching, seriation, pattern-making etc. For example, children match the label on a basket to the label on the shelf where the basket is kept when not in use. Collect natural objects such as seeds, pebbles, shells, etc. and put them in separate containers so that children can play with them for activities such as making patterns, classifying them, etc.
- Keep all the materials and supplies in easy to reach, well organised baskets labeled with pictures and words to encourage emergent literacy and decision making in young children.
- Ensure that all the activity areas are enriched in such a way that it encourages all the children to participate in classroom activities as fully as possible.
- Include materials and objects that are familiar to children to give them a sense of belonging. Keep on changing and rotating the materials in activity areas to create interest and retain curiosity. Children need variety and if you keep the same play material for long duration it will definitely make them bored.
- Provide materials for children with special needs in all the activity areas.



- Before sending children to activity areas divide them into small groups and let them choose their activity area (see that each child gets a chance to work in all the activity areas).
- Encourage children to take care of the material and equipment. For example, ask them to put their paint and glue brushes in a mug of water immediately after the activity so that the paint or glue does not harden.
- The classrooms, corridors and outdoors must be kept clean for health and hygienic reasons. The classroom environment must be happy, cheerful and stimulating with attractive display boards based on the particular theme or topic.
- The selected material and equipment should have some purpose. It should fulfill the learning needs and interests of children in the classroom.
- There should be storage shelves for keeping the folders/portfolios of children.
- Display children's artwork in the classroom (at their eye level).
- Let the books be available in the literacy area at least for a month.
- Provide puzzle pieces with knobs (easy to grasp) so that it becomes manageable for younger children.
- Display each child's photograph along with her family (frame decorated by the child) in the dramatic play area.
- Divide the activity areas by shelves and foam board etc. This separation gives distinct areas and limits the number of children in each centre. You can number code the areas.
- Children should be allowed to move freely from one activity area to another. There should be no rigidity on the time spent by the child in one activity area. When there are age appropriate materials in each activity area and it is creatively displayed, children get actively engaged in play and move less frequently. They spend longer period of time at their work resulting in increasing their attention span.
- You must remember that the activity areas, materials, activities and games can be added or deleted according to the needs and developmental abilities of the children. These areas are designed to promote the mastery of skills, the development of concepts and the acquisition of knowledge by young children.
- Select material/manipulatives that provide a wide range of challenges and give children a taste of success. For example, if materials provided are not age appropriate, children would find them difficult and complex, and would have a fear of failure. This would perhaps stop them from using the play material kept for them.



- Children need help in mixing paints. And also remember that all art activities require access to water tub / sinks nearby. Plastic cloth can be used to cover tables for clay and/or work and for messy art activities.
- Provide age appropriate equipment of sufficient quantity, variety and durability. These are important ingredients for a quality setting for young children.
- Encourage children to use equipment safely.
- Develop rules with children for safe play.
- Encourage children to rest when tired.
- There should be rules for getting in and out of the activity on issues such as taking turns, number of children to be in an area at the same time etc. These rules should be clearly illustrated and discussed with children. The classroom should promote smooth movement from one area to another.
- Finally when designing the EC classroom, it is important to design spaces such that these are visible from every part of the room. The teacher should be able to see all the children ensuring their security and safety.

The physical setting or the room set up should support the early childhood programme, it should be woven around the topic or the theme. For example, if the theme is ‘animals’, the display on the bulletin board should have animals, their homes etc. Block area could be converted into a jungle with animal props etc. displayed here and there. In the manipulative area puzzles of animals may be kept. In the science area fish cutouts with attached paper clips could be kept in the pond, using fishing pole magnets (keep a trough or a small tub as an imaginary pond). Children can also do counting — how many fishes in the pond and so on. Areas of the classroom should be clearly defined for conducting different kinds of activities such as building blocks, looking at books, scribbling, creating with art material, playing with toys, exploring sand and water.

Remember to review the physical environment before children enter a play area and remember to continuously monitor their safety during play.

2.1.3 Storage for Children’s Belongings

Designate secure places for keeping children’s belongings. Preferably there should be lockers, drawers, shelves with locker and hooks for each child. That may be inside or outside each classroom where they can keep/hang their belongings and materials. Each locker should be easily accessible and neatly labeled with a child’s photo,





*Figure 2.9
Looking in the mirror
enhances self-
esteem*

name and logo. In case of small rooms or anganwadi centres you can fix hooks outside the classrooms where children can hang their water bottles etc. The teacher will also need storage space for rugs / mats and pillows for children to take naps, especially for a full day ECE programme. The teacher should be careful to notice if there are children with special needs in the centre. She should consult and take the help of special education consultant visiting the ECE centre or classroom and take suggestions if any changes are required in room setting.

2.1.4 Effective Usage of available indoor Space: some suggestions

- Keep minimum number of tables and chairs as young children use the floor for play activities. However, there should be enough table space for everyone during nutrition or snack time. If the children are using floor for nutrition time, the teacher should spread a plastic sheet on the floor for all the children and make them sit around it. Keep a tray or tub in the center where the children can put trash like fruit peels, foil etc.
- When the children are using floor for activities, the teacher needs to provide comfortable seating provisions on the floor such as rug or carpet. You might use rug made of sacks or 'durries'. This area should be reserved for circle time or large group activities such as games, story-telling, etc. in which all the children might





*Figure 2.10
Eating together is good
for socialisation*

participate together. As mentioned earlier, to facilitate certain games, it might be helpful to paint circles, dots, or lines on the floor, or to use tape for such outlines. The taped circle outline will help children to sit in a circle during circle time activities.

- Provide sufficient space so that every child has a comfortable place to sit.
- Allocate space for charts so that you can hang/display the daily schedule or picture charts.
- Provide an easel stand which you can also use for flannel board stories and picture conversations, apart from painting.



*Figure 2.11
Children need lot of
active involvement
during group time*





Figure 2.12
Clay modeling-so
much fun !

- Always do the messy activities like art activities, water play, clay modeling on the floor or on *takhtis* so that it can be washed easily, else the teacher can do these messy activities outdoors.
- Place the CD players and tape recorders always near electrical outlets.
- Allow natural light in the classroom as much as possible as children, in routine, look at picture books, draw and make patterns etc.
- Sometimes because the room is small, it is not possible to have all the activity areas operating simultaneously and thus the teacher needs to select from the variety of activities and change the equipment and material on a regular basis.

Finally, organise the classroom to ensure children's safety and to help you observe and supervise all the children easily.

If the room is small

Clayton and Forton (2001) mention, "When children are confined to spaces that are too small, or when they don't have enough room for making transitions without bumping into each other or the furniture, the inevitable result is increased tension, conflict, and misbehavior".

- If there is less space in anganwadi, provide interest area activities in small groups. We often find anganwadis facing problem of sufficient space. In such cases an anganwadi teacher needs to create more small group activities. For example, she may ask



her helper to organise activities for one group (3 years old) of children outside the *anganwadi* and the older group (3+ to 4 years old) inside the centre. In this way she can conduct readiness activities for the older group of children. But at the same time she is also required to supervise the outside group. In case there is no outside space, she should take the children to nearby park/ panchayat *chabutara* or under a shady tree, whenever weather permits and conduct story-telling and conversation activities there.

- Secondly, if space is very limited for classroom use then there is a need to change and rotate materials more often, even everyday in extreme cases, such as in *anganwadi* centres. In such centres, it is necessary that materials for child use are carefully displayed so as to make both access and cleaning convenient. Labeled baskets or small carton boxes can be used to keep them. For many materials the teacher may colour code both places and boxes to provide children an experience in colour matching as well as room restoration. Most teachers, because of constraints on money and space, teach in less than optimum conditions. In spite of these constraints, good teachers maintain their main focus on facilitating childrens' learning in every possible way throughout the programme day.
- An *anganwadi* teacher and supervisor may contact *sarpanch* of the village and convince him to provide space for young children's play or locate community hall of the area and find provision if she can take the children (of course with their parents' consent) there at least once in a week so that children can use their skills in the open environment.
- The ECE center with little space must change their activity areas often and find creative ways to use community areas, such as parks and recreation facilities, for gross motor activities. But the teacher should always be careful when using community facilities. Be sure that playgrounds and other equipments are safe and developmentally appropriate for the children.
- In ICDS centres (*anganwadis*) where space is always a constraint and creating activity areas is out of question, provide play activities in small groups.
- If there are no shelves, dividers or bookcases in the room, use area rugs to define activity areas.
- If the classroom is poorly lit, locate the literacy and book area near the window and avoid putting decorations on the windows.
- If you are short of transparent plastic containers, use shoe boxes, baskets, plastic bowls and other containers. Cover them with paper and label them with pictures showing their contents.



- To get more of available space, use stackable tables and chairs that can be easily moved to suit current needs.

2.1.5 Classroom Displays

“The presentation of equipment and resources should say... ‘come and get me’, and inspire the feelings of excitement, intrigue and the desire to explore.”



*Figure 2.13
Display at eye level
encourages speaking
skill as well*

Some guiding principles

- Display objects that arouse curiosity and wonder.
- Display materials so that children can see them easily. Arrange materials on low shelves so that children can reach easily. It has to be at their eye-level.
- Label the containers, shelves, lockers etc. For labeling, you may use children’s photos, pictures of toys cut from catalogues as labels. Labels should have both pictures and words to promote emergent literacy.
- Save display space for children’s work. Provide a bulletin board or low string on walls so that you can display each child’s work. You can also paste a large sheet of newspaper or chart paper to display children’s work. Display their work and if possible, photos on it. It gives children a feeling of appreciation and self worth when their work is displayed. Label the containers or box of materials, for example, on a container of 2 piece animal puzzle paste picture of any animal so that children know that



this container contains animal puzzles and after they finish playing with this they put the entire animal puzzle back to this container. When you label materials in this way, cleanup becomes a matching and literacy game that helps children learn to keep the materials or objects back to their proper place.

- When you display theme related pictures keep the display simple.
- Display only relevant items. Have an orderly display. Avoid putting everything on the walls. Remember to take out outdated displays or those that children are not using. Some teachers use all the walls and available spaces and fill them with posters, charts and artwork. The walls become overcrowded and it becomes difficult for children to focus on any one theme.
- Change the displays regularly.
- Explore space for display. You may display on walls and bulletin boards, room divider boards/shelves, on string, easel stands, etc. You can also hang an umbrella or hanger mobile from the ceiling.
- Be creative! Have you ever thought of using an old sari/bed sheet as a frame to pin up your pictures?
- Talk about the purpose of display with children.

2.1.6 Evaluating Activity Areas

Evaluation of activity areas is necessary and this can be done by observing children, how often they visit the different areas, what type of interactions they have with the materials and peers in the area. While reviewing any particular activity area the teacher needs to consider a few points such as:

- Does the area require new material?
- Are the materials presented in an organised and attractive way?
- Is the material easily accessible to children?
- Does the material arouse interest amongst children in the class?
- What worked well?
- What problems came up?
- Was I able to monitor children's behaviour and movements?

Answers to these questions help the teacher to get some ideas about reorganising participate activity area and make it more appealing and meaningful for children.

2.1.7 Classroom Adaptations

Classroom adaptations are important as the infrastructure and facilities vary amongst ECE centers from place to place. When the classroom environment does not meet the specific needs of a special





*Figure 2.14
Preschool children
like doing things on
their own*

child, adaptations should be made to accommodate that child's individual needs. The adaptations may be with regard to physical settings of the classroom and classroom processes.

1. While creating and designing the environment of early childhood classroom the teacher must keep in mind the needs of children with special needs. Adaptations must be made carefully for any child with special needs, be they physical challenges, learning disabilities, or emotional issues. A quality EC classroom must promote appropriate use of materials, facilitate development of targeted skills and promote positive behaviour among the children. Changes in lighting, noise level, visual and auditory input, physical arrangement of the room or equipment, and accessibility of materials are important considerations for adaptation.
2. The activity areas or type of activities chosen must encourage social interaction among all children. The teacher can encourage peer interactions in various areas during daily routine. For example, nutrition time can be an excellent time to encourage peer interactions. Carefully planned seating arrangements during different activities also promote socialisation.
3. The child with special needs (if any) should preferably be seated between two other children.
4. Most of the play materials that are appropriate for early childhood classrooms are also appropriate for use by children with special needs. It is sometimes necessary to physically



modify the instructional or play materials to facilitate a child's participation, for example, adding handles, making material larger, adding velcro on materials, etc.

5. Tape paper on tables for children who have difficulty in holding and colouring.

2.1.8 Organising Circle Time or large group time

Identify a place in your ECE center or classroom where all the children can gather to do discussions on theme, listen to stories, share their views in a whole group, transition from one activity to another and involve in music and movement activities. 'Circle Time' encourages interactive learning i.e., hands-on, listening to others and also sense of togetherness. Read aloud stories, group games, singing, dramatisation of stories, and other hands-on activities are ways to use Circle Time. Children do best when they know where to sit in the circle. So one can mark the circle with either red colour paint on the floor or with removable tape.

2.2 Organising Outdoor Play Environment

- 2.2.1 Setting the outdoor play area
- 2.2.2 Essential requirements of an outdoor play area to facilitate learning
- 2.2.3 Selecting commercial quality toys and equipment
- 2.2.4 Adaptations for outdoor space

No preschool is complete without taking into account the outdoor area since indoor and outdoor together make total learning environment. Children are very curious and enthusiastic when they



*Figure 2.15
Outdoor play also
adds balance to
the ECE day's
programme*





*Figure 2.16
Children enjoy the
freedom
of open space and
use muscles in
new ways*

play outside. Here things are always changing and children can learn in all the developmental areas. Teachers can enhance the children's' growth by interacting and observing them and definitely by providing them the planned activities. The outdoor environment adds colours, textures, smell and sound to all activities. It provides concrete and hands on experience and awakens the senses. Outside area is the perfect place for playing with water and building sand castles.

The outdoor environment invites large muscle development. The freedom of space offers children opportunities to run, skip, jump and move their entire bodies in uninhibited ways. Basic playground equipment such as jungle gyms, slides etc., encourage climbing, development of upper and lower body strength, balance and coordination. Equipments like balance beams, swings, tunnels, slides, obstacle courses, see-saws, tire structures could be set up in a variety of ways. Riding toys i.e., tricycles, cars, pull toys, can also be added to the concrete outdoor area.

Teachers may remember that the outdoor environment is not limited to play areas in the school, she can take children to nearby parks, neighbourhoods and gardens.

2.2.1 Setting the Activity Areas in outdoor play environment

Like indoor classroom the outdoor environment of the centre also requires careful planning. The outdoor equipment should provide children with a wide variety of opportunities for active gross motor activities and experiences. An ideal outdoor play area has several





Figure 2.17 Developing motor skills

different types of play spaces that stimulate children to learn in a variety of ways. The following are the few examples of outdoor play areas :

- Climbing Area
- Sandpit and Water Play Area
- Garden Area
- Quiet Area
- Transportation or Concrete Area
- Grass Area

(a) Climbing Area

Children of all ages generally love this area but teacher should not force them to go beyond their ability and capacity. Most accidents occur in this area so it must be well-supervised and it should have a soft ground cover as far as possible with grass or sand.

Equipments the climbing area may include:

<i>'Jungle gyms'</i>	<i>Seesaws</i>
<i>Hanging bars</i>	<i>Tyre structures</i>
<i>Logs</i>	<i>Trees</i>
<i>Swings</i>	<i>Tunnels</i>
<i>Slides</i>	<i>Balance beams</i>
<i>Climber ladder</i>	<i>Rope</i>

BASIC MATERIALS

- small plastic buckets
- bowls
- shovels
- plastic spoons
- scoops of all sizes
- funnels
- sifters
- pans
- old nesting blocks
- natural objects like twigs
- leaves
- pebbles etc.

(b) Sand pit and water play area

This area should be close to water supply. If you do not have water fountain outside, keep water readily available in tubs or plastic jugs. Sand pit, tray or sand box should be covered after the play is over. This will stop cats and insects to enter in it. If the sand pit is too big or it does not have a lid, rake and clean the sandbox every day. Area for sand and water play area, clay modeling is also sometimes called 'messy area' and it should be preferably organised outdoors. Play with sand and water is considered very desirable for young children, both for satisfying their emotional needs and as well as for the development of mathematical and scientific concepts which can be learned while playing. There are many ways to organise these activities. It is not necessary that the teacher would provide big equipment but if the school can create sand pit outdoors under some shady tree, sand play will be exploited fully. Some schools also provide trays or shallow table of wet and dry sand so that children enjoy and experience the properties of this material.





*Figure 2.18
Sand and water
play offers
wonderful
opportunities for
creative*

Play with potter's clay is very much enjoyed by children in the 'messy area'. Similarly playing with water is a pleasurable experience for most children. The teacher can provide a water tub/trough from which children can derive a great deal of pleasure and it is an important part of learning environment.

In case you are providing sand and water table it should be at waist height to allow children work comfortably. Material can be stored in plastic trays or bins under the sand and water table. The teacher can also provide a big tub or shallow tray for water and sand play.



*Figure 2.19
Clay modelling
outside the classroom*





*Figure 2.20
Water play is possible
in the classroom also!*

The teacher can introduce bubble blowing activity to maintain interest in this area. Some children whose attention span is limited are likely to spend more time in sand pit and especially in water play.



*Figure 2.21
Children need simple
sifters and sievers in
the sand area*



Some suggested accessories for water play area are:

<i>Toys and paper boats</i>	<i>dropper</i>	<i>sifters</i>
<i>Toy buckets</i>	<i>funnel</i>	<i>toy water animals</i>
<i>Plastic cups</i>	<i>measuring cups</i>	<i>sponges</i>
<i>Empty bottles and cans</i>	<i>shovel</i>	<i>spoons</i>
<i>Twigs</i>	<i>biscuit or cookie cutters</i>	
<i>Pebbles</i>		

One can also think about creating an area outside to keep animals and plants. Young children should learn to be kind to animals and feed them. They should also be encouraged to learn how to water the plants as well as observe how plants and animals grow.

(c) Garden area

Encourage children to plant seeds and watch them grow. See that toy gardening tools are available. Children get first-hand experience while they manipulate a variety of materials in the garden area. The outdoor play area also requires trees for shade. A Large Soft Area (grass etc.) for organised games is also needed to be there so that theme based outdoor games could be organised for the children. It is also important to provide adequate storage space for Outdoor Play Equipment. The ideal situation is to have a storage shed where you can keep the cycles, tyres, rope, water play and sand play kit and also first-aid box in case of emergency.

(d) Quiet Area

Every outdoor area needs a quiet space. Preferably this area should be in the shade where the children can relax and cool off.

Some of the basic materials required here are:

- Low wooden benches or plastic chairs
- Chalk
- Books
- Crayons
- Paper
- Magnifying glass, etc.

You may also bring easels and colours to this area especially during the winter time. Here teachers and children can sit and talk and can also conduct a story-telling session.

(e) Transportation or Concrete Area

The outdoor play area should also preferably have a hard surface to make riding a tricycle or pulling a toy easier for children. In this area children learn to pedal, balance and take turns. It would be





*Figure 2.22
Some outdoor
equipment invites
socialisation*

good to include riding toys for children of all ages such as tricycles, tyres, pull toys, wagons, scooters, etc.

Perceptual gross motor activities can be created by providing balance beams (made up of log, tyres, balls, ropes and hoops). You can do this outdoors in nearby community ground. Development of quality play environment requires knowledge of children's



*Figure 2.23
Outdoor is ready for
children*





Figure 2.24
Play on See-saw
is always fun

development and the ability to use resources and materials effectively and imaginatively. Creatively planned play environment, both indoors and outdoors, supports the ECE goals and objectives. It provides opportunities for the development of personal awareness, socialisation, communication, cognition and motor skills in young children. In addition, a carefully planned outdoor playground also provides facilities for the child with special needs. If you have a child with special needs in your classroom or *anganwadi*, you must know how to help the child. Accept the child and make environmental changes whenever and wherever required. Do pair this child with a capable child who likes to help (under observation). The teacher can ask the authorities or parent community to create a ramp for the ECE centre.

As ECE educators always talk about flexibility in the ECE programme, providing material in rotation and also change of atmosphere, we can use both the environments — outdoors and indoors, for making a perfect classroom. For example, taking paints, colours, papers, crayons and water outside allows children to experience them in new ways. In this way working in outdoor area can become more exciting for them. Although it is the same old colouring activity, doing it outside becomes exciting for the children. Similarly an empty bird's nest when brought to the classroom offers children the chance to see it closely, touch it, learn how it is built, learn more about birds through conversation and picture books. Many of the skills and competencies which develop at early childhood stage are learnt from natural environment. Children will have better concept formation when they watch worms, insects, butterflies and birds in reality rather than looking at their pictures.

Remember, even on a limited budget, determination and creativity can produce important classroom improvements leading to a more stimulating and pleasant environment for both teacher and children.



2.2.2 Guidelines for Ensuring an activity outdoor play area

Below are some considerations which must be ensured while looking at play spaces:

- Is the area planned out in a manner that a teacher can see the children at all times?
- Is there soft ground cover under swings, slides and climbing structures such as jungle gym etc.? Are the swing seats constructed with soft and light weight material e.g., rubber, canvas?
- Are the boundaries of the play area well-defined? Does the outdoor play area have a protective fence/wall (with lockable gates) next to hazardous areas such as streets, deep ditches, water etc.?
- Are there sufficient and enough equipments for all so that children do not have to stand in line and wait for long?
- Is there a quiet area where children can be by themselves such as sand pit, shady area etc.
- Is there a drinking water and toilet facility available?
- Is the outdoor play area spacious enough for children to move freely?
- Is the outside play area separate for young children to guard them against the intrusion of older children?
- Is there a ready first-aid kit to handle minor injuries?
- Are equipments appropriate to the age range?
- Is there adequate space between equipments?
- Are all equipments free of sharp edges, protruding elements and toxic substances?
- Is the outdoor area free of litter (e.g., broken glass, pebbles etc.)?
- Is the size of equipment appropriate to the age group served?
- Safety and security must be the primary concerns for the children to play freely in the play area.

Supervising and observing children is the best way to guarantee their safety and also to teach them about safety, both in the classroom and while they are outdoors.

2.2.3 Selecting Quality Commercial Toys and Equipments

Presently the markets are flooded with toys and preschool play equipments. The preschool teachers and educators must be careful in selecting ECE toys and equipments. The criteria for selection of commercial toys, play material and equipment for early childhood stage could be as follows:

- The play material, equipment and furniture should be according to children's age, needs, level of development, abilities and interests.



- There should be a variety of play material and equipment.
- The play equipment should be safe and durable.
- The play equipment should be such that encourage children's active participation and involvement.
- The play material or equipment should also encourage versatility and imagination.
- The play equipment should be versatile so that children can use it in different ways thus allowing for creative potential.
- The play equipment should be simple, easy to use and not too complicated.
- There should be brushes with large handles and large crayons/ felt markers for children with special needs.
- The material and equipment should be brightly coloured so as to make them pleasing to the eyes.

2.2.4 Strategies for making outdoor areas interesting and useful

It has generally been observed that funds are often not available to purchase a wide variety of play equipments required to enhance all aspects of children's development. At the same time most of the schools do not have adequate outdoor space. For example, in *anganwadis*, the provided infrastructure for outdoor play is almost nil (especially in urban sector). The children do not have any outdoor play facility. As suggested earlier, in such cases the *anganwadi* worker should take the children to the nearby park/primary school at least twice in a week for gross motor play activities. However a few adaptations as suggested below can be useful:

- The basic outdoor play material for the *anganwadis* and *balwadis* include a rope, a plastic ball (good quality) tyres and chinks.
- You can take the help of parents or community groups to donate and construct simple, inexpensive equipment.
- You can provide perceptual gross motor challenges by planning field trips to the nearby area park or sports complex, or community playground where there are plenty of play equipment, at least twice in a week.
- Creative teachers can improvise by moving indoor equipment to outdoor temporarily to conduct games and activities, for example, you can take a water tub outside, and also construct a small sand pit inside a (donated) tyre.
- Create tyre structures, especially in the urban sector.
- A garden area can also be prepared by the parent/community volunteer. It can be done near the walls of the *anganwadi/balwadi* if the outdoor area is inadequate.
- Create a natural area where you can keep or hang a bird feeder made from wood snaps, terracotta dish, milk or ghee cartons.



- Large appliance boxes (such as T.V. cartons, etc.) can be used to promote creative play.
- Carry a story book, blanket or a sheet when you are visiting the nearby park. Spread the sheet for storytelling and dramatisation.
- *Anganwadi* and *balwadi* teachers can provide creative art activities by taping large sheets of donated papers or newspaper etc. to fences, sidewalks or on the walls of *anganwadis* or *balwadis*. Encourage children to do painting, rubbing with tender leaves, colouring with crayons, etc. You can also provide them marigold flowers for rubbing and colouring.
- The teacher can get children involved for lengthy periods of time in an activity such as painting the side of the *anganwadi* wall with water. Do it in small group activity. This activity requires only a small bucket of water and long paint brushes.

2.3 Teachers' Role in Creating the Physical Learning Environment

The indoor and outside areas should be viewed as the total learning environment and therefore design of the indoor and outdoor space needs to be purposeful, child-centred and should be carefully planned. The indoor and outdoor physical environment also fosters optimal growth and development through opportunities for exploration and learning. Physical space and materials affect the level of involvement of the children and the quality of interaction between teachers and children. The key aspects of the physical environment are:

- The arrangement and use of space and equipment (indoor and outdoor) and
- Selection and storage of materials.

A foremost consideration of designing the physical environment is SPACE. Availability of space is of utmost importance, especially at the preschool level. Young children need many opportunities for gross motor movements. Sitting at chair and table for longer period of time is not recommended for the preschoolers as it is both emotionally and physically undesirable. The right environment sets the tone of the preschool day for both the children and the teacher. The preschool environment should offer plenty of opportunities for learning competencies in all the domains of development, viz., physical and motor, social, emotional, cognitive and language and also in art areas. The classroom should be divided into smaller, well-defined areas to help children focus on specific activities.





Figure 2.25 Blocks Building Area

The role of a preschool teacher in creating the learning environment is very crucial and demanding. The teacher must ensure that both the environments are planned to meet the needs of each and every child. She must take into account the aims and objectives of the preschool programme. When the teacher understands the developmental needs of young children, she is able to plan appropriate play experiences and organise a suitable learning environment, including indoor and outdoor play area. This emphasises that the teacher should know about the age characteristics of children to identify the developmental changes and needs of young children. This would help her to select proper equipment, materials, toys and other teaching learning materials for the centre. Material and equipment can be added or removed, depending on the need and age appropriateness of the children in the classroom.

Outdoor play should be part of each day's schedule. Teachers should plan outdoor experiences and activities as she does for indoor experiences for approximately 40 minutes each day (including the transition times - see details in Chapter-III). This will help the children to get ready, walk to the outdoor play area, enjoy the activities and get back to the classroom. As the children become familiar with the routine of going out for play, the transition will become smoother and quicker.



A piece of advice for teachers:

- *Don't rush.*
- *Avoid saying, "Hurry up".*
- *Be flexible with few time constraints.*
- *Give children time to finish tasks.*

It will be good if the teacher:

- ensures that the children are offered variety of multi-sensory materials and activities.
- understands that every child learns at her own pace and in her own style.
- attention span of children can be increased only if the teacher provides opportunities and allows children to complete their tasks at their own pace.
- plans activities according to the abilities of the children.
- acts as a facilitator so that children develop further skills and understanding.
- encourages children to explore, investigate and discover on their own.
- provides wings to the children's imagination by remaining in the background, for example, answering their questions, helping them in building, discussing ideas and so on.
- keeps moving from one area to another to encourage and engage children in conversations about what they are doing and how they are involved with the materials.
- helps the children in expanding the play and appropriate action, for example, in fantasy play, intervention of a teacher or an adult can facilitate language learning and problem solving activities.
- encourages children to care for materials and toys.
- ensures that the children get time to explore and talk about the environment.
- creates a classroom environment where children feel safe and comfortable; does not force children into **gender based stereotypical roles**. For this, she needs to be aware of her own beliefs and assumptions that affect her teaching ways and avoid using statements like "behave yourself, don't cry like a girl!", "Boys, don't play in doll's corner", "girls can't build with blocks etc."

It is important for the teacher to identify signs of possible developmental delay in the physical, emotional, social, communication or cognitive spheres; parents of children with developmental delays should be consulted and if need be, necessary counselling should be done with the help of a professional. Encourage independence and avoid doing tasks for the child. Teachers also need to remember that daily lesson plans also affect space and materials arrangement. Therefore arrangement for special equipment or any reorganisation of space necessary for a lesson should be included in the programme plans.



Chapter 3

PLANNING A QUALITY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMME

As the children who come under the purview of ECCE range from infants to pre-schoolers, it is important that activities and experiences designed for them are developmentally appropriate (NCF-2005).

3.0 Introduction

Early Childhood Education programme is what happens in the ECE centres. Preschool teachers provide variety of experiences and activities to the children to achieve the desired goals. In every ECE setting, whether it is *anganwadi* (ICDS), *balwadi*, or preschool, the developmental levels of the children and their background experiences vary. Teachers and teacher educators are expected to acknowledge these differences in children and plan the ECE programme accordingly. The ECE programme must be age appropriate and relevant to the child's strengths, needs and abilities. For example, a three-year-old child needs simple, familiar, more concrete and more sensory activities than a five-year-old child.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) requires that young children be provided care, opportunities and experiences that lead to their all-round development – physical, mental, social, emotional and school readiness. The curriculum framework and pedagogy for ECCE must be based on this holistic perspective, taking into account the various domains of development, the characteristics of children at each sub-stage, and their learning needs in terms of experiences. It is well known that children have a natural desire to learn and make sense of the world around them. Learning in the early years must hence be directed by the child's interests and priorities, and should be contextualised by her experiences rather than be structured formally (NCF-2005).

While planning an ECE programme the teacher must include such experiences and activities that will help children to develop their skills of problem solving, reasoning, constructing, thinking etc., otherwise they will be limited to rote memorisation. Playing, music, rhyming, art and other activities using local materials,



along with opportunities for speaking, listening and expressing themselves, and informal interactions are essential components of learning at this stage. We need to provide our young children lots of concrete and hands-on experiences so that they can construct knowledge on their own and develop into creative learners. This can be best met when there are small group activities and experiences encouraging peer group interactions.

However caution would be against pressuring children into the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) and the early introduction of formal instructions, i.e. against making pre-school into training centres for admission to primary schools. In fact, the suggestion is that ECCE cover the age group 0-8 years (i.e. so as to include the early primary school years) (NCF-2005). The preschool teachers need to sit together while planning weekly ECE programme. The weekly planning will help teachers to work together and they will also be clear about their roles and responsibilities. While planning, quality ECE programme, focus should be on developing a child's positive self-esteem, inculcate the feeling of "Yes, I can do it!" in all the children, without comparing them with each other or shaming them in front of others. We need to value each child's cultural background, their unique interests and abilities.

The goal of ECE is the integrated and balanced development of children. To achieve this goal it is necessary to take a holistic view of their development needs and learning process they go through at different stages. It must provide opportunities and experiences for physical, motor, healthy, social, emotional, language and



Figure 3.1
Threading beads



intellectual development. A good ECE programme calls for a child-centered approach that empowers the child and makes her an active participant in the learning process. In India, the contextual diversities should be given an important place to ensure curriculum flexibility.

This chapter outlines a play based developmentally appropriate programme that focuses on the holistic development of the child in the natural setting of the classroom. The chapter has been organised under following headings:

- Play-based Developmentally Appropriate ECE Programme
- Development of a Quality ECE Programme
- Planning Themes and Units
- Organising Transitions
- Evaluation of the ECE Programme.

The Pedagogical Process

The general objectives of ECCE can be described as follows:

- (a) Laying the foundation for a healthy, productive and satisfying life in the future by enabling the child to develop his/her maximum potential;
- (b) Preparing the child for entry into and success in primary school; and
- (c) Providing support services to women and girls to enable them to enter/continue with education, training, and be part of the workforce.

To achieve these objectives, the curriculum needs to be:

- developmentally appropriate, activity-based and related to the child's needs, interests and abilities, according to age.
- an integrated set of experiences to foster holistic growth and development in all domains, such as health and well-being, and cognitive, physical, social, emotional and language development through an interlinked approach.
- flexible enough to suit the diverse social, cultural, economic and linguistic contexts of our country, as well as adaptable enough to suit individual differences among children.
- able to help the child to adjust to the routines of primary school as well as to the demands of more formal teaching.

The ECCE teacher needs to be equipped with an understanding of the following basic principles:

- Play as the basis for learning
- Art as the basis for education



- Recognition of the special features of children's thinking
- Blend of the textual (basic literacy and numeracy) and the cultural
- Mix of formal and informal interaction
- Experience of both familiarity and challenge in everyday routines
- Primacy of experience rather than expertise
- Developmentally appropriate practice and flexibility
- Use of local materials, arts and knowledge
- Integration of health and well-being based on healthy habits.

Before spelling out the implications of these principles in greater detail, it would be helpful to look briefly at the following:

- (a) the various domains of development.
- (b) developmental characteristics of children at different ages; and
- (c) the nature of children's learning needs.

(Source: Position paper in early childhood education, National Focus Group on ECE, NCF-2005, NCERT)

3.1 Play-based Developmentally Appropriate ECE Programme

During the early eight years, play is an essential part of the quality ECE programme. During these important years a child's physical, motor, intellectual, social and emotional growth should be supported by their homes, child care centres, preschools, primary schools and community. These areas of development together give us a picture of the whole child. Developmentally Appropriate Programme believes in the thinking that each child learns and develops differently. Developmentally Appropriate Programme (DAP) gives importance to the children's natural social nature of learning and values their cultural and linguistic diversity. It also believes that young children need such an environment that encourages them to interact at their own level of development with a minimum amount of teacher interference. Good ECE Programmes are age appropriate and focus on age appropriate activities to see what is developmentally occurring with young children as they grow. To make it simpler, Developmentally Appropriate Programme is not just what we do with our children, but how we think for them, about them and the programme. DAP suggests that we need to value what young children are doing and learning in a child centered classroom. The teacher should observe her children and set up the environment to match the skills of children.



3.1.1 Importance of Play

Play comes naturally to a child. It can start wherever the children are, as they can engage immediately. Play provides learning experiences to the child in a concrete form and thus makes the child an active participant directly influencing all areas of development. Many researchers have studied children as they play and found that play affects many different areas of skills and general development.

Play-based ECE programme is flexible which can be easily adapted by teachers for all age groups (infancy through preschool). Play-based programme is child-centered, active and caters to individual needs, interests and abilities of children. It is an integrated, interactive, balanced and process-oriented programme which fulfills the developmental objectives.



Figure 3.2
Play is a way of
doing things

Play promotes and encourages social and emotional development

Children get feelings of success and self-esteem by positive play experiences. Play gives children the opportunity to express their ideas and feelings. As children express their thoughts they learn to handle and control their emotions. In a carefree and stress free environment they experiment with materials, find new solutions and use their ideas. Play allows the optimal meaningful development of the child. It fosters self-actualisation and self control in children and also helps them to make decisions in particular play situations. Play, according to Piaget, motivates children to interact with other



children and when they do so, they become less egocentric and more aware of others. Play indirectly provides such social skills which are necessary lifelong such as, while playing with other children they get practice in taking turns, negotiating conflicts, in being less selfish, less bossy and less shy. Self-regulation is a necessary skill for success in life. Children need unstructured free play time to develop these abilities. The daily schedule of the quality ECE programme must include activities that promote social and emotional development.

Play promotes important mental capabilities

Play gives children the freedom to imagine, explore, investigate, discover, experiment and to create. *It unfolds children's curiosity, and enhances creative-thinking and problem-solving abilities.*

Play is an activity by which the young child learns about herself and about the world. What play like to us is actually work for the child. In a good ECE center where opportunities for play are provided, cognitive development is nurtured and enhanced. Play also enhances children's school readiness. Readiness skills are best developed through purposeful play activities. It is for the preschool teachers and other care-givers to offer ideas, equipment and environment which allow children to learn and explore. Children's attention span also gets widened when they are interested in activities.

Play promotes vocabulary and expands language development

Play fosters language skills. Through play children get opportunities to use new words, interact with other children and listen to others. Communication skills are best developed when children are given opportunities to play in small groups. As per research findings children who have strong oral language skills often have strong reading and writing skills. In contrast, children with oral language problems are at higher risk of reading and writing difficulties (Scarborough, 2001). Opportunities of free play support the child's ability to communicate, and to express and understand feelings. It also supports development of skills related to thinking and problem-solving, developing and maintaining relationships. Learning to understand, use and enjoy language is the first step in literacy, and also the basis of learning to read and write. This is referred as the initial stage of emergent literacy and it extends through the preschool years. During this stage young children look at books, interact with books, charts, posters, magazines and other forms of print in their immediate environment. They begin to identify words that rhyme, match letters, recognise letters, pair the letter with the

Play enhances creativity and imagination where children produce fresh, innovative ideas in the process of pretend play. Play is believed to be the basis for learning (Piaget, 1962).



sound it makes, pretend to read, scribble and write. Children learn more by being involved in practical activities promoted through play. During early childhood years children first learn to use oral forms of language i.e., listening and speaking and then they begin to explore and make sense of written forms i.e., reading and writing. Teachers and parents need to join in this play, both by talking with and listening to the children, taking into account their interests and previous experiences. A teacher can record observations on children's play, learning and language achievements.

Play promotes motor development

Play provides the physical activity needed to strengthen and coordinate young children's muscles and bodies. The large muscles are used for running, jumping, throwing, catching and skipping etc.

Children should be given lots of opportunities to practise these skills so that their bodies grow strong and healthy. In addition children also need opportunities to use their small muscles which are developed through muscle activities such as play with clay, stringing beads, colouring, using scissors, using manipulative toys etc. Active physical play includes activities that use physical movements to allow children to use their energy, and it gives children the chance to develop gross and fine motor skills, learn new things as well as socialise.



*Figure 3.3
Play flourishes in
an atmosphere of
acceptance*



3.1.2 Developmental Play Stages

Teacher also needs to remember that play does not just vary by activity or age either, for example, as newborns and infants, a child is engaged in random movements. This is unoccupied play and it sets the stage for future play exploration. And then comes the solitary play where a child (toddler) plays alone and independently and keeps herself busy and entertained. This type of play is mostly common in younger children ages 2-3. The third type of play is onlooker play in which a young toddler simply observes other children play and does not participate. The fourth type of play is parallel play that can be observed in older toddlers. Here two children are playing side by side but involved in their own world. In a parallel play a child has little social contact with her nearby playmate. Here a child individually plays with her toys similar to those used by children sitting nearby. In associative play three to four-year-old children are engaged in the same play activity, playing separately from one another, but no attempt is made to divide the play tasks. Children are involved with what the others are doing, for example, children involved in building blocks. Cooperative play is the next stage in which four-year-old children come together in a group and start playing together. This type of play is common in relatively older preschoolers, for example, children playing a board game, making a puzzle together, or playing 'house-house' or an outdoor game.

3.1.3 What does play include?

Play can include running, jumping, drawing lines, dabbling in colour, putting together puzzles, matching and pairing activities and so on. Young children do not distinguish play activities aiming to enhance cognitive development from those related to physical development. Neither do they separate play activities that promote mathematical learning from those that promote language learning. Children's play can be divided into the following categories:

- *Active play*: walking, running, jumping, climbing, crawling, and other use of large muscles as well as music and movement activities;
- *Quiet play*: pretend reading, stringing beads, colouring, free drawing, painting and other art activities etc.;
- *Cooperative or social play*: games and activities that involve more than one children;
- *Solitary play*: drawing, colouring, or any such activity that involves only one child;
- *Manipulative play*: together making puzzles, building with blocks, solving problems, or any such activity that involves eye-hand coordination or fine motor skills;



- *Creative play*: art activities such as painting, clay molding, tearing and pasting, telling stories, story making or any such activity that involves a child's imagination;
- *Dramatic play*: dolls play, dress-up, dramatisation, make-believe play or any such play that involves pretending.

There is a widespread acceptance of the idea that play in early years is very important. However at the practical level, sometimes even aware parents view play as a sheer wastage of time. Play is too often replaced with workbooks without giving children enough play experience with concrete and manipulative material. While ECE teacher educators and researchers give importance to play in ECE programme, many parents generally question their child, "what did you do at school today?" and they become upset if there is one word answer from their child- "play". Teachers need to help parents to understand that children learn while playing. Play in a way is work for the children, and not just entertainment. It is a valid and an important way of learning, for example, children learn to put parts together to form a whole when they work on a puzzle. Young children need to feel successful in what they do. Teachers need to plan very carefully to ensure their success. Quality play experiences include all aspects of development i.e. physical, social, emotional, language, creative and cognitive.

One of the complaints voiced most often about a play-based ECE programme is the absence of emphasis on the teaching of the Three R's - Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. It would be unfair to young minds at this stage to expect them to grapple with the abstract. For example, learning the vocabulary of quantity - heavy-light, more-less, few-many is difficult but understanding the difference through activities would clarify pre-number concepts. Children can grasp these notions through activities, games, worksheets and other sensorial sources such as play with objects or dramatic acts.

Worksheets should be given to the children only after plenty of concrete experiences and activities. Art activities converge with pre-literacy tasks. For example, children need to participate in as many emergent literacy activities as it will promote familiarity with labels and help them identify sounds and words, listening to stories and poems, going on field trips, looking at books, charts and posters. These play activities are basic to initiating an interest in reading and writing, and preparing children for formal reading, writing and arithmetic. Children must feel safe and should be able to express themselves without fear.

The EC classroom will hold a special meaning if children are permitted to play and work in small groups and join together to perform a large group activity. Play based classrooms need to be organised so that they have both small group areas as well as 'big circle time' for



the whole group to meet and interact. A child who wishes to work alone for some time should also have the space and freedom to do so. Teachers who observe children as they play can gain important insights into what children are thinking and feeling. Children need adults who value their play. While providing play activities it is necessary to provide variations and reinforcement in activities. (Please refer to Annexure –‘A’ for sample Activities and games)

3.2 Development of a Quality ECE Programme

Planning and scheduling are an important part of creating and implementing the ECE programme. Goals are essential to the ECE programme. Although the ECE programme is play based and flexible, planning helps the teacher to think ahead. The age and developmentally appropriate programme needs to cover all areas of development – physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language. Programme planning in the early childhood years does not mean planning a rigid time table.

The content for the ECE programme should come from following sources:

1. Observation records of individual children
2. The goals that a teacher has set for the children
3. Understanding of children’s interest, needs, strengths, characteristics and circumstances
4. Teacher’s knowledge of children and their development. (for example, she knows that the younger the child, more flexible the schedule should be, or three-year-olds need simpler, toys and more sensory activities than five-year-olds, etc.).

Every ECE center should make a list of purposes or long term goals, for example, what are we trying to achieve by planning this programme? What should a parent expect a child to achieve by attending a preschool for two years? What approach would the school follow? Goals and objectives constitute the why of the curriculum. Goals provide the purposes of teaching. When we talk about long-term planning, we are referring to the goals of ECE programme and when we talk about short-term planning, we refer to its objectives. Long-term goals serve as the basis on which teachers design specific short-term objectives to guide programme planning. Objectives should be very specific and should clearly state the purpose of the activity.

In long-term planning, the teaching team looks at the entire school year. It is planning for the full academic year. They discuss what would happen when the children come to school, what topics would be introduced, how to involve parents in ECE programme and so on. They also discuss about special events, visits, visitors,



holidays, etc. Long-term planning is a general blueprint of the major events of the year. It helps the teachers to review the developmental milestones. Teachers need to plan the activities that lead children through these stages. Themes and unit planning will help you in integrating children's needs, interests and abilities.

Short-term planning is done term-wise, monthly, weekly and finally on daily basis. Through discussions, teachers decide topics, themes, activities related to the topic, visits/visitors and what changes they will make in the activity areas. Teachers discuss the interests, needs and problems of individual children and the sequence of activities in a day's plan. They prepare materials related to the topic of the week. They note and plan for special events such as birthdays and holidays. They plan a balanced and flexible day's programme.

3.2.1 Devising the Daily Balanced Schedule

During the early years, repetition is an essential form of learning. A daily schedule is the planning of the day by time and activities. Therefore, the daily schedule should include certain basic activities every day. This gives children a sense of security. Well planned daily schedules help parents to understand the order of the day, and support teachers to plan age appropriate activities for children. But the routines should not be rigid. They should be flexible, open to suggestions from children, able to accommodate unexpected events such as a visitor or a celebration. There should be room for adapting according to children's changing attention spans and shifting moods.

The characteristics of a daily balanced schedule are as follows:-

- It should be age and developmentally appropriate.
- It should provide for active and quiet activities/experiences.
- It should provide alternating periods of structured and unstructured activities.
- Children should have daily opportunities for indoor and outdoor play.
- It should provide for balanced experiences through individual, small group and large group activities.
- It should also include traditional large-group activity i.e., circle-time, when the children sit in a circle and teacher discusses a topic, any experiences, stories, etc.
- While planning is essential, there must be flexibility in a day's programme, for example, free play may be planned for about 30 minutes, but if the children are involved and interested in an activity, it may be extended to 45 minutes. It has been seen that often children are rushed from one activity to another or



sometimes the activity is stretched just because the lesson plan indicates that at 12.00 p.m. dramatic play is scheduled. Flexible schedule allows flow of activity.

- Changes in planning must be spontaneous and teacher should take advantage of teachable moments. For example, one day a small little piglet came close to the outdoor play area. The children were excited and started asking questions. A good and wise teacher can take advantage of this and help children to satisfy their curiosity by talking about the piglet.
- Every day there should be some time where the child can select and choose her activity center.
- Daily planning should be such that it allows time for teachers to observe children, talk with them and work with them individually and in groups.
- Time must be allocated for transition from one activity to another.
- Extra time must be allocated for moving the children from one room to another such as activity room, music room, etc.

Some suggestions for the teachers:

- Write the plans in a diary. It helps to provide structure to the programme. Writing plans in a diary also helps in keeping a record of activities.
- Prepare a web chart or a web programme plan as a visual scheme that depicts relationships between a theme and developmental domains/activity centres. Fig. 3.4 and 3.5 provides sample programme planning webs.
- Try to put more challenging activities in the morning as children are fresh at that time.
- Consider each child's energy level and health condition in planning activities.
- The order of activities must be formulated, whether the day begins with an activity or free play.
- The teacher must understand that all developmental aspects depend on each other. When children are playing with manipulatives or working on puzzle, they may use mathematical reasoning, language skills, or trial and error strategy to solve a problem. These learning skills are not separated into different content areas but occur simultaneously. Learning is interconnected and integrated. Therefore, the day must be planned and organised before the children enter the classroom.
- Programme planning varies with the age of the children and length of day.

Sample daily schedules for different stage groups have been provided at the end of this chapter. Also note that the lesson plans suggested in this handbook are activity oriented.

According to Webster and Schroeder (1979: 66), "No timetable can be, or should be, adhered to too rigidly in an early childhood classroom".



A programme planning web on ‘A Child Exploring The World’

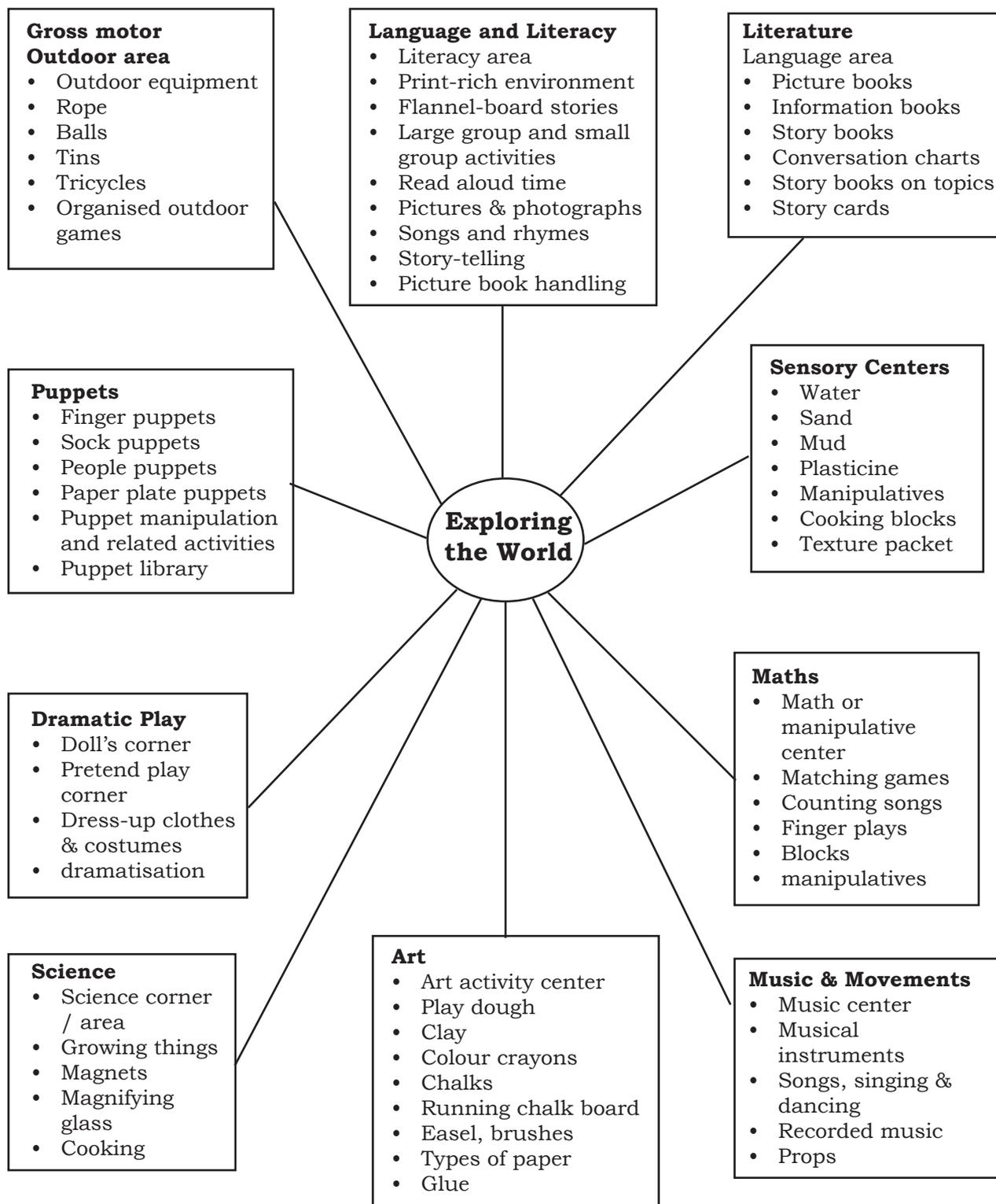


Figure 3.4



A programme planning web on 'My Senses'

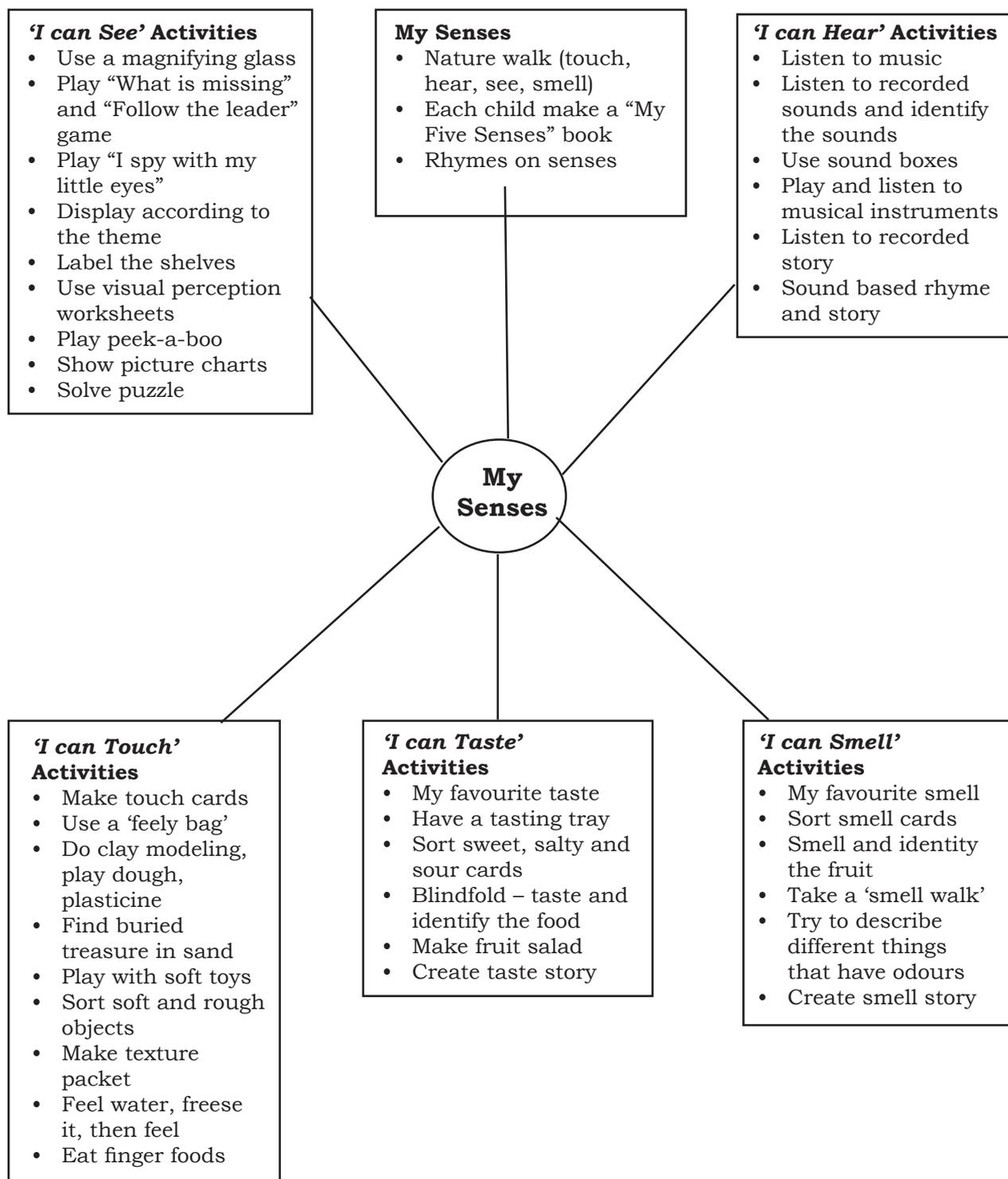


Figure 3.5



3.2.2 Organising children in groups

Young children need individual attention and care. In play based ECE programme teacher plans activities and accordingly makes children sit in large groups or small groups. For example, children need to sit together in large group for activities such as story-telling or when the teacher is talking about concept, such as animals, water, etc. Every day in a balanced ECE programmes, children should have time for three types of interaction– individual interaction, small group experiences and large-group activities. These groupings help both the teacher as well as the children.

Children learn better and interact more in small groups and it becomes easier for the teacher to observe, understand and interact with each child. Small group activities encourage more conversation and learning, and check unwanted behaviours. Small group activities encourage the children to take responsibility for their learning in a controlled environment and teach them independence and self-discipline. Small group activities help the teacher to observe and evaluate the child's progress in a better way. In a small group, children learn more effectively than in large groups and the teacher has the opportunity to give immediate feedback. The length of group time is determined by the age and development of the young children. At the beginning of the year group time may last only ten to fifteen minutes. Gradually lengthen or shorten the time as indicated by children's interest.

The teacher may be guided by the following considerations while grouping the children:

- Group the active children with those who don't normally interact during small group activities.
- Keep group size small (five to six in one group).
- There should not be any gender disparity while dividing groups.
- Keep in mind the age and abilities of children. Form heterogeneous groups. For example, pair the children with others who will complement their personality traits and help them achieve their learning and developmental goals.
- The teacher should adjust her lesson plans and assessment to meet each group needs.

Some suggested activities for the 'small group time':

- Threading beads, pipe cleaners
- Completing puzzles
- Building blocks
- Completing pattern



Ensure that Materials

- Are available for each child
- Are attractive and inviting
- Can be manipulated by the children
- Are appropriate to the age of the children.

- Looking at books
- Sorting objects
- Making collages
- Play dough/plasticene/clay modeling
- Simple lacing/sewing activities
- Water colouring/painting
- Tearing/cutting and pasting
- Play with dominoes
- Teacher – involved conversations in a small group
- Emergent literacy activities
- Play with manipulative materials.

Some suggested activities for the ‘large group time’

- Morning singing time
- Read aloud story time
- Picture reading/vocabulary development
- Rhyming activities
- Theme based conversation
- Snack time
- Alphabet and word wall activities
- Music and Movement activities (songs, finger plays, rhythms and games)
- Group reading readiness activities
- Group writing readiness activities
- Group games
- Children sharing.

3.3 Planning Themes and Units

The words THEMES and UNITS are often used interchangeably and even referred by ECE educators as “thematic units”. Thematic approach should be used to introduce children to different types of activities that require active exploration, problem solving and acquisition of a specific concept or skill. A unit is a section of an ECE programme and is based on the ‘Theme’ around which the activities are to be planned. The programme plan of ECE must be relevant to the child’s developing needs and abilities. That is why it is important to do a need assessment in advance which should be followed by continuous evaluation throughout the programme. The theme based plans must provide lots of opportunities for healthy social, emotional, physical, motor, and intellectual and language development, helping children to learn and grow in an integrated manner. Theme teaching involves creating many activities around a central idea. The teacher should examine each activity area and



determine how information about a particular theme could be provided in as many areas as possible. The activities should be woven into every part of the programme plan within a flexible time frame, ranging from several days to a few weeks.

This chapter presents sample theme as a concept or topic “On Plants” and web plan on “My Senses”. The teacher should always remain flexible, innovative and responsive to her children. Developing a list of themes is usually the first step. This will help the teachers as they develop lesson plans and activities, games and songs that fit in that plan. She then determines the specific objectives and understandings that she would make her children to grasp as a result of the ‘Theme’. Teachers have to brainstorm the themes and activities that might be incorporated into the unit.

Themes can be organised weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. Select the theme that relates to the children in your class according to their experiences, age and stage of development. The teacher can also select children’s storybooks according to the theme but in case she is not able to find topic-based story she can select any story. List activities that require prior planning such as nature walk, festival celebrations, and field trip or invite guest and parent.

The sequence of theme planning could be as follows:

1. Select themes and write down the specific objectives.
2. Plan and select activities to support the theme (refer to annexure ‘A’ for sample activities).
3. Decide the sequence and duration of activities i.e., which activity will be done first, second etc. and for how long.
4. Write down objectives for theme or activity and prepare the lesson plan.
5. Collect and prepare materials, resources and plan activities.
6. Organise the room environment i.e. display according to the theme or activity planned.
7. Finally ensure that there is a balance in day’s plan.

3.3.1 Unit plan

Once a theme is chosen, the teacher is ready to construct a unit plan. Unit plans are an important part of planning. It includes numerous activities and games to carry out the plan. Just brainstorm a topic or theme in various areas of ECE programme i.e. motor, cognitive, language, art etc. Plan an integrated unit based on concepts that are relevant to young children’s lives. The unit plan includes more activities than actually required for a lesson plan. Unit plan itself is like an activity. It helps and encourages the teacher to select the best activities for the theme and meet the needs of the children in the classroom. For example, a theme on “Plants” has been selected.

THEMES THAT COULD BE PLANNED FOR CHILDREN IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

- Myself /All about Me
- My Family and My Home
- My five senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching)
- My Body
- Animals – specific categories (farm animals, zoo animals, birds, insects, dairy animals, animal babies, fishes, pet animals etc.)
- Colours in our world
- Shapes in our world
- Plants and trees
- Houses
- Air
- Water
- Transportation
- Flowers
- Numbers
- My Community
- My Friends
- Seeds
- Seasons (summer, rain and winter)
- Festivals (national/tribal/religious/regional)

(These themes can be modified to fit any age group and different activities under these themes could be developed for different age groups).



A sample unit plan on “Plants” for 4 to 6-year-old children could include the following suggested activities.

Suggested Activities under Unit Plan on ‘Plants’

Brainstorm activities on theme “Plants”

- **Field Trips and Nature Walks**
 - Nature walk to look for plants
 - Plant nursery
 - Flower shop
 - Houseplants at home
 - Plants in preschool/ECE Centre
- **Art related Activities**
 - Leaf printing
 - Colouring with flowers
 - Plant collages – dried leaves, dried flowers, twigs, seeds etc.
 - Seed pasting
 - Paper folding – flowers, trees
- **Musical Activities**
 - Songs/rhymes about plants
 - Creative and rhythmic movements such as plants moving in the wind, growth of plant from seed to plants.
 - “Musical chairs” in which picture of vegetables/fruits are kept on the chair and when the music stops, directions are given, such as “All the carrots stand up and jump around the circle”.
- **Visitors**
 - Florist
 - Gardener showing plants in the school/nursery and talking about how to take care of plants at home.
- **Activities for Language and Literacy Development**
 - Conversation on plants, leaves and seeds
 - Poems and rhymes
 - Stories about plants
 - Language games on plants
 - Showing and discussing about plants (their colour, size, texture, smell, etc.)
 - Creative language or oral brainstorming with open ended sentence: “If I were a tree, I would –”
- **Scientific Discussion**
 - How plants grow
 - Needs of plants – sun, water, air

Let the children observe – leaves, flowers, stem, bud, and root. Also show the real plant and the picture as well).



3.3.2 Lesson Plan

After the unit is seen in broad perspective, weekly lesson planning comes in. The lesson plan gives you directions for specific activities. It provides the strategies and methods to conduct the activities in order to achieve the goals and specific objectives. Once the teacher starts writing plans for every lesson, planning becomes a habit. A lesson plans includes the following:

1. Goals and objectives
2. The activities/experiences to achieve them
3. The materials to be used
4. Evaluation of the lesson

As the teacher plans for the daily, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly activities, she should consider the following points:

- Plan in team. Brainstorm ideas for activities and games. The simplest way to do this is to prepare a “weekly activity plan at a glance” as per the format shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Weekly Activity Plan at a Glance

Theme: _____ Date: _____ Teacher: _____					
Age of Children: _____					
Planned Activity for:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Language Development					
Motor Development					
Cognitive Development					
Creative Self					
Social Development					
Special activities for children with special needs					
Emotional aspect—understanding feelings					

Although the experienced teachers clearly understand the objective for each activity, new teachers or student teachers often do not have this clarity and so it is essential that they use a chart as shown in Table 3.1 as well as in Table 3.2. When the teacher writes down the objective for the activity, it clarifies the purpose and it also becomes easier for her to explain it to the parents why various activities that look like “just fun and play” are included in the programme.



Table 3.2
Examples of Possible Activities

Area of Development	Activity	Purpose/Objectives
Language Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage conversation between children in the morning. Show and talk about plants while watering them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receptive and expressive language by increasing pleasure in communication. Increased comprehension of new vocabulary.
Physical and Motor Development Gross Motor Skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting drops of water in the glass with dropper. Using outdoor equipment such as ride on tricycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fine muscle–eye-hand coordination. Large muscle – develops leg movements and balance in a body.
Cognitive Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational dominoes Button box Soaking rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matching skills Classification or sorting skills: sorting according to the category of size/ colour.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eating banana (sequential thinking cards) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cause and effect: soak some rice in water, leave some out, and compare. Temporal ordering: place cards in order (from left to right direction) in which they will be used.
Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group of children will spread the plastic sheet for nutrition time. Gently push younger child on swing. Cleaning off the activity table after the work is over. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate cooperative behavior. Experience satisfaction in helping another person. Experience pleasure in work and helping the group.
Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing in the doll's corner. Kicking ball / playing with hammering toys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expresses angry feelings indirectly / releases pent up emotions.
Creative and Aesthetic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collage Block building Think of ways to cool a hot glass of milk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use art material to experience pattern and design. Imaginative and constructive play helps the child to construct in her own way. Foster development of creative problem solving.
Plans for children who have special needs		The teacher will make adaptations according to the individual needs of students.



- Organise the classroom and activity areas. Display according to the theme. A well-planned and attractive environment facilitates learning.
- Always write the lesson plan as this will reveal your thinking.
- Post it to the parents as well. Special letters sent home on a monthly basis promote trust and quality partnerships between teachers and parents. Such a letter may discuss the theme the children would be exploring and also offer home activities that parents can do with children at home to add experiences external to the classroom. (See Fig. 3.4).
- Remember to plan for a bad weather such as rainy day, too hot or humid day. You can keep a new storybook, new game, art activity, flannel board story, new puppet in a special box to use for such an occasion.
- **Consider the following questions:**
 - What do the children already know? How can I build on that?
 - Is the theme or the activity appropriate for the age and need?
 - Are there too many or too few activities?
 - Is the lesson plan flexible enough to allow for spontaneous and unexpected events?
 - Is there time for free play?
 - How to improve the activity next time?



Figure 3.6
Picture books – A
source of true delight



- How to get a feedback to improve the ECE programme/ activities?
- Am I doing sufficient emergent literacy activities?

3.3.3 Sample Weekly Lesson Plan on 'Plants'

Overall Goals

- To make children aware of nature and environment around them
- To help children understand and know about types and uses of plants
- To extend children's vocabulary
- To familiarise children with the names and parts of common plants, such as, leaves, flower, fruit, branches, etc.

Day 1

Large-Group Activities or Circle time

- **Free Conversation**

Children will be seated in a semi-circle and share their ideas and feelings.

- **Topic based Conversation**

Introduction the Theme - 'Plants'

Children will be sitting close to the teacher on the rug. The teacher will begin by singing a rhyme on plants. She will then show a small plant and talk about it. She will also draw the children's attention towards pictures of plants and trees displayed in the classroom at children's eye level.

Nature Walk

Explain to the children the purpose of visiting outside. Then take the children to the nearby outside area where they could look at different types of trees and plants. Teachers can also utilise this time to reinforce knowledge about parts of a tree (at child's level) and encourage the children to see that leaves have different shapes and sizes.

Small Group Activities

Art-leaf Collages

Divide the children in small groups and make them sit (either on rug or on activity table). Give each group a square piece of chart paper and some glue. Provide different kinds of leaves to the children. Demonstrate and then ask the children to paste the leaves on the paper as they wish.





Figure 3.7
Display of
Children's work on
'plants'

Good-bye Circle

Ask children to bring different types of seeds from their home such as chana, rajma, lobiya, etc. and empty containers for next day's activities.

Day 2

- Let the children enjoy the free play in the activity areas.
- Then collect the seeds and containers. Talk about them. Put soil in the containers in front of the children. Let each child sow her seeds in the containers. Write each child's name with logo/child's photo on the container and keep them near the window.

Large Group Activities

Visitor - Florist

The florist may show and talk about different flower plants, how to take care of them, parts of a flower plant. All plants need air, water and sunlight to grow.

Music and Creative Movement

Play music and encourage children to move their body like a tree or plant on a windy day, in the rain, when they do not get water on a hot summer day.

Story-telling on Plants

Children will sit close to the teacher and listen to the story on plants.



Art

Provide empty and washed salt shakers or any other container to each child (which they have brought from their homes). Also provide some seeds in a bowl and ask the children to put these seeds in a container. Then help them to decorate these seed shakers with coloured paper, wool etc. These shakers will be used during music and movement, and outdoor activities.

Individual Activity

Sensory Tray with Wooden Items: These will include toothpicks, wooden spoons, bark, wooden boxes, wooden blocks and sawdust. Show the above items and let the children feel the textures (rough - smooth) and products of wood.

Small group activity: Age appropriate Readiness Activities

Good-bye Circle:

Ask the children to water their container before they leave for home.

Day 3

Large Group Activities

- Free conversation (talking time for children)
- Conversation on Plants: Ask children whether they look at their plant(s). Ask them to observe what is happening to their plant. Show the picture of growth cycle of plants (always at the child's level). Explain that just as we grow, the animals and plants also grow. Show the picture of a baby and the latest photo of a child, baby animal and grown up, seed and a plant. Talk about need of plants – air, sun and water.

Science area: Ask the children to observe the growth of a seed planted.

Excursion to Nursery: If possible take children to nearby nursery to observe different types of plants.

Outdoor play: Free play on outdoor equipment and any organised game based on 'plants' for gross motor development.

Story-telling and Song on Plants

- Individual Activities such as 'Free hand drawing' and Small group activities in the Activity Areas along with readiness activity i.e., one group of 5-6 children can be with the teacher for 'readiness activity' and other children can be divided into Activity areas. Then the groups can be interchanged.



Day 4

Large Group Activities

- **Free conversation** (talking time for children)
- **Structured Conversation:** Discussion of things that grow on plants and trees. Talk about different types of trees and the different things that grow on them. Pictures of the trees/plants and items or actual items should be used if possible and available. Sing song on plants.

Story-telling

Outdoor play: Let the children play freely outside on the outdoor equipment and then let them play an organised game for gross motor development planned by the teacher.

Planting Song

Sing this song to the tune of “Farmer in the Dell.”

*It's time to plant the seeds,
It's time to plant the seeds,
Heigh-ho, the derry-o,
It's time to plant the seeds.*

Other verses:

*The warm sun shines all day...
The rain comes gently down...
The plant pops through the soil...
We need to water and hoe...
We help our garden grow...*

As you sing, invite the children to act out each verse.

(Author Unknown)

Small group activities in the Activity Areas along with readiness activity

Let the children play in the activity centres of their choices such as block building center, art, threading beads, literacy area, etc i.e., one group of 5-6 children can be with the teacher for ‘readiness activity’ and other children can be divided into Activity areas. Then the groups can be interchanged.

Art Activity: Let children rub a crayon over the paper to bring out the design of the leaf veins. or Carrot Collage (Art). Help children cut paper into carrot shape. Provide tissue paper or coloured paper from magazines (red and yellow). Invite children to tear pieces of both colours and glue this onto the paper, making sure to overlap pieces. The combination of both colors will create a tinted orange carrot.



Individual Activities: Shape Tracing and Cutting

Shapes such as circle and tin lids will be made available for the children to trace around. Provide blunt scissors to them to cut out the shapes (under observation of teacher).

Day 5

Large Group Activities

Free conversation: Ask the children to look at their plants. What happened?

Structured Conversation: Do a recapitulation. Discuss what they have learnt about plants. Let the children use their shakers and sing songs about plants.

Visitor: If possible, a person can be called to show the children how juice is made (carrot juice, orange juice etc.). The children will then drink the juice. Discuss and show how a product (juice) is made from tree product like carrot, orange etc.

Small Group Activities

Along with small group activities in activity centres you can also provide a specific art activity to one group of children such as 'Art Toothpick Creation'. For this activity provide each child some toothpicks and some glue/fevicol. Draw a picture of a tree on a cardboard and let children paste these toothpicks on it.

Outdoor Play: "Musical chairs"

Story-telling about plants

Individual Activities in Science Area

- a. Let the children continue to observe the growth of their plants in the containers. Every second day ask the children to draw what they observe. In such an activity, children will be constructing knowledge about plants creatively.
- b. Sorting and classifying seeds:-Provide small plastic bowls for sorting seeds by various characteristics, such as their colour, size, kind, etc. The teacher can provide magnifying glass to look at different leaves.

3.4 Organising Transitions

Transitions are those activities or learning experiences that facilitate children to move from one activity to another. Transitions are those times in the classroom schedule when teachers and children move from one place or one activity area to another. These are also teaching



techniques of quality early childhood programme. A sensitive and good teacher determines in advance the transition times in the daily schedule so that children do not line up and keep waiting for their turn. Keep a notebook of transition activities.

As a teacher one needs to understand that young children need time to adjust to change, for example, during small group activities where there is rotation in group activities, the teacher should use a transition activity to help and direct children from –

- Indoor to outdoor play and vice-versa
- Child-initiated to a teacher-directed activity
- Active to quiet activity or vice-versa
- Toileting, washing hands to nutrition time.

In case of younger children the teacher needs to help them to adjust while they arrive and separate from their parents. Be patient and help them in learning to listen, sit down and do some group activity for a brief time. It is very important to plan for the transitional activities as it is often seen that teachers do not plan for transition time. During transition time i.e., moving from one activity to other, children often spend much time waiting to move to or begin the next activity in preschool classrooms. For example, all children might be required to wait until everyone has finished their lunch before moving to the next activity, or children might be expected to wait for their vans or buses.

Clean-up time is a transition time that often presents difficulties. Children do not always feel ready to keep materials back. Sometimes singing together or making up games helps lighten the task. Transitions need to be planned as a vehicle for learning. The teacher should remember that young children are always learning from both planned and unplanned activities. Transitions between activities are integrated into the ECE programme as learning opportunities.

When the children are little older, transition activities can be used for giving directions, helping them understand the sequence of events etc. When the children get used to the daily routine, the number of transitions can be reduced. They can choose their play and activity areas. While planning for the transitions the teacher might think of following questions:

1. How do I prepare my children to move from one activity to another?
2. Do I plan my daily schedule to include transition times and consider what the children would do during that time?
3. What activities can I do with the children, such as singing rhymes, playing word or guessing games, or doing finger plays so that time passes joyfully as the children wait for the bus or for other children to finish lunch etc.?



4. Are there too many transitions between activities?
5. How do I encourage and help children to become more independent as they make transitions from one activity to another (e.g., gathering their water bottles, putting on shoes, keeping back blocks, picking up toys etc.)?

Examples of Transition Activities

- After small group activity, ask all children who are wearing yellow to stand-up. Continue calling various colours until all the children stand. Then give directions for the next activity.
- Play “Simon says” On the last direction, call out any child’s name such as – “Raghu says”, “sit down”. The teacher is now ready for story telling or any other quiet activity.
- Prepare a set of flannel board circles with each child’s name (with a logo on it) on one circle. Place name side down on flannel board, and take off circle one at a time while saying the child’s name. When the child’s name is called she would choose a poem, finger puppet play or an activity for the group to do.
- Children gather quickly when you play the tambourine (daphali), dholak or other instrument. Let two or more children play the instrument, while you are waiting for others to gather.
- Say, “if your name begins with the same sound as banana, ball, you can go to block’s area” and so on.
- Ask children to help each other (Rahim will you please help Amba find her hair clip?)
- Sing transition songs to help the early childhood children change activities. Invite the children to sing-along with you, which will improve their language skills and vocabulary, develop self-discipline, and create a joyful and orderly atmosphere.

For Example:

1. “Good Bye song”- (To the Tune: “Are You Sleeping”)

*School is over, school is over,
Time to go home, time to go home,
I’ll see you tomorrow; I’ll see you tomorrow,
Bye, bye, bye; bye, bye, bye!*

2. “Time for colouring” (To the Tune: “Are You Sleeping “)

*Time for colouring, time for colouring,
Let’s go colour, let’s colour.
Time to make a picture,
For Diwali,
Fun, fun, fun; fun, fun, fun!*



3. “Calendar song” (To the Tune: “We Wish You a Merry Christmas”)

*We wish you a happy Diwali
We wish you a happy Diwali
We wish you a happy Diwali
All day long*

4. Clean-up song (To the tune “Mary had a little lamb...)

*“Time to put your crayons away, crayons
away, crayons away
Time to put your crayons away
Now it is activity time”.*

A Sample Parent Letter

Dear Parents,

We will be talking about ‘Me and My Environment’ as we begin our theme “Myself”. We will provide lots of opportunities for our children to understand and learn—

- I am special because I am me.
- I enjoy discovering, exploring and experimenting.
- I use my senses to do so many things.
- I play and learn.

We will be organising activities for:

- self-control
- self-motivation
- verbal expression feelings
- self-esteem
- free and topic based conversation
- self-help skills.

Activities that you can do at home:

- Sing rhymes with your child and record them.
- Play with your child.
- Talk with your child.
- Let your child help you in small things.
- Make child’s name card for her/him.
- Make ‘All about Me’ book for your child.

Kindly send the following for this theme:

Old magazines (for cutting “my favourite pictures”)
Small plastic balls (for making puppet)
Child’s photo and family photo.

Thank you for your support.
(School Teacher)



UNIT PLAN ON COLOUR (Age 3+)

Visits and Visitors

- Flower shop
- Florist
- Colourful clown
- Gardener
- Paint store
- Garden or Nursery
- Celebrating Colour Day

Language and Literacy

- Create a book on colours and related pictures. Children could cut pictures from magazines on their own of that specific colour.
- Stories on colour
- Poems on colour
- Puppet play on “Colour Story”.

Art and Fine Motor

- Easel painting
- Making ‘specs’ with coloured cellophane
- Finger painting
- Thread painting
- Blot painting
- Mixing paints
- Colourful collage
- Flower and leaf rubbing
- Threading coloured beads/macaroni/painted clay beads

Music and Movement

- Colour song
- “Musical Chairs” with colours on the back of each chair
- Creative movements with coloured ribbons/duppattas

Food

- Make fruit salad and add food colours to it.
- Make coloured macaroni.
- Make coloured rotis of spinach, carrot, gram flour etc.

Cognitive Development

- Colour dominoes
- Visual discrimination colour cards
- Colour flash cards for sorting
- Colour self corrective puzzles



- Cards of animals and birds having different colours
- Sorting of red and yellow fruits.

Sample Weekly Programme for PSE Component of ICDS with Anganwadi Children Programme

The *anganwadis* under ICDS scheme run the preschool component for two and a half hours. The timing and duration for the preschool varies from state to state. Supplementary nutrition for the children is distributed within these two and a half hours or after the *anganwadi* time. The time given for the activities as per the sample programme is suggestive. The *anganwadi* worker can increase or decrease the time according to the needs of the children. Very often we see that there is a space constraint in *anganwadis* and creating all the activity areas is not possible; so the *anganwadi* worker can think about developing at least one-two activity area for at least one week and then again she can plan for other activity areas. The following is the sample of preschool education component of ICDS:

Sample Weekly Programme for an Anganwadi

Time	9.30 to 9.45 a.m.	9.45 to 10.05 a.m.	10.05 to 10.20 a.m.	10.20 to 10.35 a.m.	10.35 to 10.55 a.m.	10.55 to 11.10 a.m.	11.10 to 11.30 a.m.
		Language Development	Cognitive Development	Motor Development Fine Motor/Gross Motor		Language Development	
Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Free playtime • prayer 	Free conversation and topic based conversation	Activities for Sensory Development	Free play in Activity areas and creative art activities (small groups)	Free play or outdoor equipment and organised games on topic	Activity for Listening Skill	Story and Rhyme
Tuesday	-do-	-do-	Activity / Experiences for Colour Concept	-do-	-do-	Activity for Speaking Skill	-do-
Wednesday	-do-	-do-	Activity / Experiences Shape Concept	-do-	-do-	Activity for Reading Readiness Activities	-do-
Thursday	-do-	-do-	Activities for Pre number / Number Concept	-do-	-do-	Dramatisation	



Friday	-do-	-do-	Activities for Pre number / Number Concept	-do-	-do-	Activity for Writing Readiness Activities	Story and Rhyme
Saturday	-do-	Recapitulation	Activities for cognitive skills – Memory / Observation – Sequential Thinking – Problem Solving	-do- (All creative activities develops fine muscle skills in young children)	-do-	Activity for Speaking Skill	-do-

Note: This daily schedule is flexible, depending on the needs of the children and the weather.

- Half an hour should be allocated for nutrition time, may be in between or after the daily routine.

SOME SAMPLES OF ECE DAILY SCHEDULE

A FOUR HOURS' SCHEDULE (Half Day – Four-year-olds)

08.30 a.m.	Arrival, individual greetings and cleanliness check-up of children
09.00 a.m.	Prayer
09.00 a.m. – 09.15 a.m.	Free Conversation (Sharing of news)
09.15 a.m. – 09.35 a.m.	Cognitive/Language Activity
09.35 a.m. – 10.05 a.m.	Outdoor Play (Observe and interact with children as they enjoy outdoor activities)
10.05 a.m. – 10.50 a.m.	Hand washing, Refreshment and Rest
10.50 a.m. – 11.20 a.m.	Indoor Free Play in small groups along with one Creative Activity (Help children put away materials in each activity centres)
11.20 a.m. – 11.50 a.m.	Structured Conversation on Project
11.50 a.m. – 12.20 p.m.	Story and Rhyme/Dramatisation/Rhythmic Movements
12.20 p.m. – 12.30 p.m.	Good Bye Circle

A THREE HOURS' SCHEDULE (Half Day – Three-year-olds)

09.00 a.m. – 09.20 a.m.	Arrival, Cleanliness checkup, prayer
09.20 a.m. – 09.30 a.m.	Free Conversation (Sharing of news)
09.30 a.m. – 09.50 a.m.	Cognitive Activity in large group
09.50 a.m. – 10.10 a.m.	Indoor Free Play in small groups (Help children put away materials in each activity centres)
10.10 a.m. – 10.25 a.m.	Outdoor Play
10.25 a.m. – 10.55 a.m.	Hand washing, Refreshment and Rest



10.55 a.m. – 11.20 a.m.	Creative Activities
11.20 a.m. – 11.35 a.m.	Language Activity in large group
11.35 p.m. – 11.55 a.m.	Story and Rhyme/Dramatisation/ Rhythmic Movements
11.55 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.	Good Bye Circle

(Source – *Early Childhood Education Programme, NCERT*)

A THREE HOURS SCHEDULE (Half Day – Two-year-olds)

8.30 a.m. - 9.00 a.m.	Preparation time for Teachers: Review the plans for the day. Prepare activity areas, for example, prepare play dough, mix paints, display, display new picture books
9.00 a.m. – 9.30 a.m.	Table activities and indoor play
9.30 a.m. – 10.00 a.m.	Free Play (children choose activities) and clean up (Hands washing, toileting, etc.) for nutrition time
10.00 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	Nutrition Time
10.30 a.m. – 10.40 a.m.	Rest time with a story
10.40 a.m. – 11.10 a.m.	Large group time (Music and movement, finger plays, language games)
11.10 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.	Centre activities (art, manipulatives, blocks, dramatic play) and clean up with song or poem or special individual time
11.30 a.m.	Good bye circle and think about activities of the morning (Children leave for home) Review and make plans for the next day

NOTE: This daily schedule is flexible, depending on the needs of the children and the weather.

For the Teacher:

- During nutrition or meal time help children develop positive attitudes toward food and nutrition.
- Find out if any child has food allergies.
- Allow enough time to children to finish their meals.
- Make nutrition time sociable.



Full Day – Toddlers

9.00 a.m. – 10.00 a.m.	Arrival Caring for toddlers individually. Activity time (Story book, blocks and other toys available)
10.00 a.m. – 10.15 a.m.	Snack / Nutrition Time
10.15 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.	Outdoor Play A walk around the centre, a special activity Some singing and rhymes
11.00 a.m. – 11.15 a.m.	Ready for lunch. Washing, toileting. Looking at pictures with individuals, quiet play activities.
11.15 a.m. – 12.00 noon	Saying prayer before lunch Toddlers participate in self feeding as possible This time includes washing hands, face and mouth wash after lunch and getting ready for nap by 12.15 or so.
12.15 p.m. – 2.00 p.m.	Naps
2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.	Indoor play activities with individuals or small groups. Reading story, music toileting, washing hands
4.00 p.m.	Ready for departure. Light snack for those who will be staying till 5.00 p.m.

Although there are many similarities between half-day and full-day programme, yet there are some notable differences. Children in full day programmes have different needs from those who spend mornings away from their homes.

3.5 Evaluation of the ECE Programme

Finally it is important for the teacher to evaluate whether the goals and objectives of the lesson have been accomplished to a great extent or not. Evaluation can include observations of the children when they are at play and doing activities. Play activities or specific readiness activities or tasks can be designed to help the teacher



determine children's understanding of the objectives of a specific lesson.

The teacher should evaluate the unit plan using several criteria. These might include the following:

1. Are the plans well-written?
2. Are the topics and activities relevant to children's lives?
3. Whether the daily schedule has a balance of child-directed and teacher-initiated activities?
4. Are the activities developmentally appropriate?
5. Is there enough time for the children to do the activities?

Evaluation is the final step in programme planning and is a continuous process. The teacher should know whether she has achieved the goals of the daily schedules, lessons and units. It is through continuous evaluation that she determines the value of her teaching by judging whether she has reached her goals. Whether it is an '*anganwadi*', or '*balwadi*', in a rural or urban setting or a preschool in an urban area, each has its own way to achieve the targeted goals. Evaluation of the ECE programme has several aspects such as the quality of the programme, the way the ECE centre works and the effectiveness of ECE programme.

The teacher needs to evaluate the ECE programme by assessing the total learning environment, its setting i.e., use of space, furniture, materials, storage, display, balance in the play activities in daily schedule, the way activities are carried out, quality of teacher-child and peer interactions and the care given to each child. While assessing young children the teacher needs to reflect on strategies, materials and teaching practices that she is using and understand their impact on children. Observing and assessing children in an informal way helps the teacher to know what skills the children have acquired and what they are learning. This will also help her to identify if any child is suffering from any learning problems. (*Refer to Chapter 4 for greater details*).



Chapter 4

WAYS OF KNOWING AND ASSESSING YOUNG CHILDREN

In observing a child, the practitioner's intent is to 'construct a shared understanding of children's ways of interacting with the environment, of entering into relationships with other adults and other children and of constructing their knowledge' (Gandini and Goldhaber, 2001).

4.0 Introduction

Knowing young children, reaching out to their hearts, understanding them, giving unconditional love, accepting them, and building quality relationships with them are the challenges generally faced by the preschool teachers. Good preschool teachers value the strengths and needs of young children and use this knowledge in making decisions about them. In knowing and understanding children, teacher's knowledge of child development plays a vital role. All teachers need to develop observation skills. They should observe children very carefully when they are engaged in activity centres in order to know as much as possible about them.

In this chapter we will talk about:

- Bonding between teachers and young children.
- Purpose of recording children's progress through Observation
- Ways of recording or collecting information.
- Factors to be considered while observing children.

4.1 Bonding between Teachers and Young Children

In order to provide a quality ECE programme in your classroom and ensure that the preschoolers enjoy the play activities and explore learning through experiences, it is important that the teacher and children know each other, blend well through bonding and mutual relationships. The mutual relationship builds up only when you talk, keep communication channels open and join children in their play activities. You need to observe them in different situations. There is no need for hurrying, whether you are observing, recording or planning the experiences for them. Rapport building is crucial. Be positive if you want positive behaviour from children.



Rapport building and forming relationships is a challenging task and it takes time to develop a bond and trusted relationship. Each child is unique and has her own individual needs. A teacher is expected to help each child grow as a person and develop her/his potential as an individual. Young children usually like a teacher who appreciates their strengths and helps them to make the best use of their capacities. They feel more secure with a sensitive and caring teacher. While planning for children, the teacher should think about the needs of individual children. She should set limits and inform the children about the standards for their behaviour. She should help children understand the guidelines of living and working with their peers. On the other hand the teacher needs to learn techniques of engaging children in group work.

We must remind ourselves that we should provide a stress free, emotionally secure and stimulating environment to the children. Deprivation of some kind usually exists in every background. For example, one child may come from poor family and be deprived of material comforts, but she/he may be good in developing friendships and relationships. Another child may have all the material comforts but she may not be good in making relationships. A teacher should respect and accept each child and help them in making use of their strengths. Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia system

Once there was a new teacher and she was asking children to move to the activity areas. The child 'Shelly' refused to move. When the new teacher tried few strategies to motivate her for joining other children in the activity areas, 'Shelly' shouted, "No, I don't want, keep away". Meanwhile the regular old teacher came in and she told Shelly that it was time to get ready for group activities and she had kept a lot of exciting material in the areas. Shelly felt happy and went to activity areas to join other children. It happened perhaps because the new teacher had no relationship with 'Shelly'.



Figure 4.1
Small groups are always helpful



THE TEACHER AND OTHER CARE-GIVERS MAY FOLLOW THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES TO BUILD A BONDING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

- Accept the child as she is
- Respect the child
- Always call a child by her/his name.
- Be sensitive to children's feelings
- Try to avoid empty praise such as saying, "good and excellent". Do genuine appreciation and praise their efforts. Instead say, "Today you've used different colours, it's looking wonderful". Giving reasons and sound judgments on their work increase children's confidence in their own abilities.
- Keep communication channels open. Talk to the child.
- Listen to children patiently. Answer their questions and curiosities.
- Try to understand children's point of view.
- Provide ample opportunities for exploring and learning.
- Give children opportunities to make decisions.
- Show interest in the children's work. Join them in play activities.
- During free conversation, share something of yourself. This will encourage the children to express and share their feelings and ideas.
- Help children face failure in a positive way.
- Note down your experiences during the day.

said, "The way we get along with children influences what motivates them and they learn". Rogers (1969) suggested three main qualities necessary for establishing warm, 'person-centered' relationships: - acceptance, genuineness and empathy. A teacher should genuinely accept the children as they are and view the world from their perspective. She needs to be sensitive to sense the child's needs and causes of uneasiness and respond before the child gets upset. For example, "Sanjay was unwilling to get involved in any kind of the activities as his mother prepared to leave. The teacher understood the unease of Sanjay. She took him by the hand, and diverted his attention. The teacher took Sanjay on her lap, put her arms around him and chatted informally while engaging him in the activity along with other children. Within few minutes Sanjay was engrossed in the activity. He got down from the teacher's lap and went to join the activity with other children".

Teachers know their children very well, they know who will react adversely, who is feeling insecure and who will get frightened in watching cartoon in dark room. They should therefore, give ample support to the children and minimise their fear and discomfort. Let us see another example -

"Piyush, a four-year-old boy was playing in the blocks corner. He gathered all the blocks to himself. There were two other children who also wanted to play with the blocks. Piyush denied authoritatively, saying, Nobody will touch, all blocks are mine. The other two children went back to the dolls corner. Ms. Kapoor, an experienced teacher, intervened and talked to Piyush, "You're one of the oldest children of the class, and you know how to share. Come let's show others also how we share our things". Piyush agreed and shared the blocks with other children and they all constructed together."

Teacher's affectionate and right behaviour helped Piyush to exhibit more mature behaviour. The teacher could also follow up this incident by telling a story to reinforce cooperation and sharing.

Successful relationships provide the basis for quality teaching and learning. Relationships between the teacher and young children are crucial to





Figure 4.2
Children enjoy with
a caring teacher

children's emotional security. This would ultimately help them in developing relationships with their peers.

4.2 Purpose of Recording Children's Progress through Observation

Copley says that assessment can be seen as the process of observing, gathering evidence about a child's knowledge, behaviour and dispositions, documenting the work that children do and how they do it, and making inferences from these evidences for a variety of purposes. The Position Paper prepared by the National Focus Group on *Early Childhood Education*, National Council of Educational Research and Training (2005) strongly denies use of quantitative assessment or standardised test. Children should not be subjected to oral interviews in order to pass or move to higher settings of leanings in early years. Careful monitoring of children's progress must be done through continuous and consistent observation. Before assessing the children, the teacher should be able to appreciate that:

- Each child is an individual and grows in her/his own way.
- The child's overall development must be the focus of the ECE programme.
- Young children learn best through concrete and hands-on experiences.





*Figure 4.3
Sometimes teacher's facilitation
is helpful*

- A child's self-concept affects how she or he learns.
- The learning experiences are affected by the cultural background, interests, needs, age and developmental levels of each child in the classroom.
- The purpose of assessment is to help children learn further.

Through evaluation, the teacher can plan learning experiences to match the needs of the children and challenge their abilities. The teacher should also do self-evaluation by asking questions such as – Whether the current ECE programme meets the abilities and needs of the children? Am I able to achieve my objectives? Am I providing the right type of challenging

opportunities and guidance to young children? What changes do I need to make to improve the current programme? When the teacher is conducting activities in her classroom, she observes what and how the child performs and then records these observations. She is then in a better position to plan her future play activities and learning experiences. She can better communicate with parents as now she knows each child better and more comprehensively.

Observation is a process of watching a child at play without interfering and recording is the process of documenting the observed behaviour or activity performed. The main purpose of observing and assessing children is to provide information about each child's total development, their progress and changes that occurred over a period of time. It is to understand 'What do they know?' 'What are they able to do?' 'What are their feelings, interests, and attitudes?' 'How is their physical health', and 'What would encourage her/his involvement?' This information helps in drawing valid conclusions about child development, children's progress, choice of interesting and appropriate toys and play materials and arrangement of the learning environment.

When the teacher observes children in the classroom, she gets unique opportunities to understand how to enhance classroom activities and instructional practices. The observation data helps her to reflect on the classroom environment, curriculum and teaching learning strategies and to determine which aspects of classroom experience are working well and which might be modified to better meet children's needs. The teacher also gets to know "where do children stand under different dimensions" in their development. This information can be effectively used for classroom planning, making activities relevant and appropriate for individual children and the group. Further, it would help in identifying children who need special attention and help.





*Figure 4.4
Listening to a child
helps teacher to
know a lot about her*

Informal and continuous evaluation is the process of developing a nearly accurate depiction of what a child knows and how she goes about during the process of learning. Teachers of young children need to be very careful while assessing their progress. The best way of assessing children's work is through observations. Systematic documentation of such observations helps the teachers and parents to develop an understanding of the child's individual strengths, interests and the way of learning. Continuous recording also helps the teachers to inform different stakeholders about the progress of children. It also facilitates in maintaining the quality of the ECE programme.

Advocates of early childhood education have strongly argued that any form of standardised test is inappropriate for young children in the early years of schooling, given the uneven nature of young children's development and learning, and lack of reliable instruments for assessment. The reason for not recommending testing in case of young children is that it makes the child uncomfortable and adds to the stress. Testing measures only knowledge or skills in a specific area and do not provide information about children's interests and their ways of learning.

4.3 Ways of Recording or Collecting Information

Teachers of young children should use informal evaluation techniques. These techniques can be used to evaluate the total early



childhood education programme or specific areas such as language, cognitive or creative art. For example, in a story-telling session, teachers may check if the children are attentive while listening to stories, to what extent they can describe things in pictures, and are they able to remember the sequence of events.

There are many ways of recording information concerning what occurs in an ECE center or classroom. Anecdotal records, samples of children's work, daily or weekly observation notes about progress, photographs, checklists, rating scales, talking to the child in-depth are some of the methods that can be used to record children's behaviour.

4.3.1 Role of Observation in Assessing Children

Assessing is considered to be the most effective method to know about the progress of young children.

Sometimes while playing in small groups or in activity centres, such as in language area, children make special comments or manipulate learning material in math's area. The way they give answers to problem solving questions are occurrences worthy of remembering. To work effectively with the young children, we need to know them well through careful observation of their actions. Teachers need to observe how the child is developing in her/his own way. For example, if a teacher is familiar with all 20 children of her class, she should be able to relate the child by the specific descriptions provided about her behaviour, without actually seeing the child.

Points to be decided before observing for reporting:

- Whether to observe the whole group or a small group or individual child?
- What points of behaviour to be observed? – (How the child initiates, interacts with peers and also during dramatic play, doll's corner, etc.)
- Where to observe – in learning areas, on the playground, etc.
- How long to observe
- How to document the observations.

Keep a page for each child to document your observations. You can use tape recorder, checklists and notebooks etc., to record. Sharing of the observation data with parents, principals and other teachers will provide good feedback for making changes in the classroom methodologies and programme plans.

Observations can be used by the teachers for different purposes, for example, on

- Individual child – to focus on one or more specific area(s) of development e.g. self-help skills



- Groups of children – to focus on one or more skill(s), e.g., abilities to communicate, share and take turns.
- The whole group – to assess whether all children have mastered one skill, e.g. balancing while walking on a drawn line.
- An area of the room – to assess whether the area is appropriately used and what activities occur there.

When conducting observations, teachers must take particular care to avoid allowing any preconceptions or biases. While conducting systematic observations teachers should be using their understanding of child development as a filter to identify expected behaviour as well as pick up critical points that indicate a child might be struggling with learning. Systematic observations should:

- Occur multiple times over a period of time (e.g., every day for a week)
- Collect information from multiple sources (e.g. teachers, parents), and
- Collect information from multiple contexts (e.g., classroom, playground, home).

What to Observe while Assessing Young Children

- Watch for mood and temperament. Is the child easygoing or tense? Does she cry frequently? Is she able to express her feelings verbally? Does she easily get frustrated?
- How does a child interact with other children? Does the child share materials? Does the child initiate play or wait to be invited?
- Does she spend time in activity areas? Does she move on her own from one activity area to another or does she require your help?
- What kind of roles she takes within the group such as leader, talker, follower, and listener, etc.
- How do children respond to daily routines?
- How and what materials are used?
- Watch for the quality of use such as - Is the crayon securely held?
- The imaginative use, for example, “Does the child invent new ways to use blocks?”
- How many pieces can the child join in puzzles?
- Does the child show interest in books and other print material? Does the child notice similarities and differences?



- Does the teacher feel their language development is slow, normal or advanced? Give reasons for the assessment. Observe the same children, a month later. How has each child's language development changed since the last time?
- How extensive is the child's vocabulary?
- Watch the child outside at playground.
- Is she/he easily frustrated?
- Document small changes in behaviour.
- Particular learning experiences of children.

(Don't forget to collect the samples of behaviour)

Generally many teachers find it very difficult to write or note what has been observed. Sometimes it becomes difficult to put certain things into words. The following is a sample of what the teacher might observe:

1. During topic based conversation, for example 'animals', I noticed the expression on several children's faces. Kanav was gazing off into the distance, although he occasionally turns his face to Shahin who was talking. As Shahin talks, she was smiling and maintained direct eye contact with me. Shantha yawns and rubs her eyes.
2. As children work independently, I noticed that Shruti started her third activity without having finished either of the first two. Anmol was in the blocks with Jose and Usha was mixing all the puzzles. I heard Ruby telling Shahid that he would not play with her anymore if he did not give her the wooden truck and I also saw Shahid handing over the truck to Ruby.
3. I noticed that Ida loses the concept of one-to-one correspondence when there are more than four objects to count.
4. Aditya talks all the time and never seems to work on readiness sheets.

Record your observations using such words that describe actions rather than those words that judge actions.

If the teacher wants to know whether a three-year-old child has the ability to manipulate with hands and fingers, then she should watch for dexterity; flexibility; precision and control; coordination; how a child stacks, keeps, moves and rotates objects and blocks; which fingers the child uses, preference for right or left hand. (By two and half to three years most children place simple shapes in an inset board puzzle; turn pages of book; string large beads with large holes, stack small blocks; love to roll, squeeze and pound the



plasticine or modeling clay. By four to five years most children can string small beads, use clay for making simple things, use cutter and work on a five to six piece puzzle.

The teachers need some mechanism to record and organise all the data collected through observation. She may maintain a checklist for each child, which can be kept in the child's folder. When data are collected through observation, she can indicate on the checklist that on a particular date, the child showed evidence of having a particular skill or concept. It is very important that such checklists are detailed and comprehensive.

It is important for the teacher to observe skills related to all aspects of learning including verbal and communication skills, social skills, thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as skills associated with constructing, creating and expressing ideas. Literacy and numeracy skills should also be observed and recorded. The observations should be recorded in such a way that it helps the teacher to know more about the children. It is often seen that with experience and after observing a child's actions and behaviour, the teacher becomes aware of particular strategies that should be adopted. As she gradually develops the observation skills and knows her preschool children, she will find it easier to make decisions about what to observe, how to observe and document. And when the teacher knows adequately about children's interests she is in a better position to make appropriate changes in the ECE programme and accordingly develop classroom strategies.

Please note it may not be helpful if you just write, "can count". Instead you should write Counts upto five and Counts upto ten or classifies in two categories and classifies in four categories. It takes a long time for a child to learn to count up to ten. Similarly a child takes time to fix puzzles of 5-6 pieces. A teacher should always note the factual statements as it would describe what the child actually did or said. For example, "Dipti picked up the block and threw it at Suraj", should be noted instead of writing "Dipti was aggressive". Information recording should never bear labels as they do not convey information that helps in understanding a child's development.

Teacher can use observations to understand what is happening in the classroom. The recording should be done of whatever the teacher observes. She records in writing that happening. Often teachers think that they will remember the event and fill it while writing the child's profile but the fact is that so much occur in a day's schedule that it is impossible to remember without recording.

The teacher can prevent 'problem behaviour' such as tantrums if she carefully plans the programme and uses appropriate



techniques. If a child hits other children in some circumstances and not in other situations, she needs to adapt the programme and activities in such a way that will keep the child calm and engaged in activities. Similarly, if some behaviour is common to many children in the group, it means the routine programme needs to be modified. If 4-5 children are frequently hitting, biting or out of control, you need to understand that the programme needs to include structure and appropriate developmentally appropriate activities. It is possible that the problem lies in the programme rather than in the children.

4.3.2 Anecdotal Notes

Anecdotal Records provides a brief and factual description of a situation, incident or behaviour. It is one of the methods of teacher's observation about children's behaviour. These anecdotal notes provide lot of information for end of the day staff discussion. They also provide continuous and comprehensive information about a child in the acquisition of various skills. At the same time it helps in detecting the areas in which a child may need additional help. The anecdotal records should have the child's name, birth date and date of observation at the top. The observer's name or initials should



Figure 4.5
Small groups are
always helpful



also be included. Drawing conclusions from anecdotes may help teachers to judge whether the child is ready to learn the next stage of activities. While writing the anecdotes the following guidelines should be followed:

- Each anecdotal record must include the name of the activity and observer, where it happened (indoor or outdoor), number of children involved, type of development observed, date and time.
- Notes and descriptions should be specific and factual (what actually happened, children's actions, reactions).
- A format or system must be designed to record the description of events. For example, if the teacher observes the child in language area she may record child's progress in language development.
- Anecdotes should be specific and purposeful, focusing on selected behaviour outcomes.

Sample of Anecdotal Record

Record exactly what you observe under observations and your interpretation of the incident and strategy for the particular child in future under 'Interpretation'.

Child _____ Age _____ Observer _____ Type of Development _____		Date _____ Time _____ Location _____	
Sample I Incident/Observations The teacher was telling the story – 'Rupa Haathi'. In between, she asked whom did Rupa Haathi go first to ask for colours. Kanav said, "Me". The teacher said, "Look very carefully and raise your hand". Kanav did not raise his hand and said, "Lion". The teacher finished the story and told the children to get ready for activity room. Kanav sat on the rug and did not move until the teacher talked to him and then they both went together to activity room.		Interpretations Kanav– totally involved in the story. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies himself with the character of the story. • Teacher fails to acknowledge his participation in the story. • His emotions are disturbed. • Required the teacher to draw him out of the situation. 	
Sample II Rani was playing in the block area. She was building a tall unevenly balanced block structure. Gitika, who was in the block area had been watching. She suddenly pointed to that block structure and said, "You need to make that one straight." At that moment, the entire structure fell down. Rani stamped her feet, kicked the blocks and said to Gitika in a loud voice, "You did it! You made it fall down. You just go from here!" Gitika walked away without saying anything.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows solitary and parallel play happening simultaneously. • The child is a keen observer. • Emotions of the child need to be handled carefully. • Teacher to note the expressions of both the children. 	



Sample III

The teacher was asking problem-solving questions. The teacher asked, "What will happen if all the trees are cut?" Aporva said, "Madam, then what will happen to birds, where will the birds make their nests?"

- Aprova seems to like to participate in group discussions.
- He likes to answer questions even if they are not correct.
- Teacher to observe and note the creative potential of the child.

As we see in the above sample examples of anecdotal records, the teacher, rather than recording that a child became angry and showed rejection for her friend for knocking down the blocks, records the actual episode. Similarly, for example, rather than noting that "Aditya was happy outside today", she should note, "Aditya jumped from the second bar of the climbing apparatus and laughed with joy, *"maine kar liya"* and smiled as he said, *"dekha"*. Again it will not be helpful to note that "Priyanka was in bad mood today." Two weeks later, you will not remember why Priyanka was in bad mood. The dated anecdotal notes help in reviewing the child's progress in given areas at particular occasions.

The teacher can also hang a cloth bag having pockets for each child on the classroom door. Then label each pocket for each child with her/his name along with picture logo. She keeps the notes or index card about her/him right there. This may be very handy to jot down the observational notes.

Sample Activity Analysis Sheet**Theme: My Senses****Group: Toddler (3-4 years)****Date:**

Area	Activity	Objective	Observation Notes
Physical and Motor	Balance beam	Foster coordination of bodies in balancing and spatial awareness Talk about feeling body as it moves.	Children really enjoyed walking on the balance beam. I emphasised on spreading their arms so that they find balancing easier. Later on they joined the two balance planks and modified the activity to satisfy their love of riding toy cars on it. Next time I will have the toy cars riding separate from the balance plank so that the activities don't interfere with each other.
Creative and Aesthetic	Foot printing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrate on touch and sensation via feet. • Provide creative experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children need to sit on chairs while doing foot printing, not standing as painting was very slippery. It requires lots of clean up and safety. <p>Next time I will do it with children sitting on the chairs.</p>



4.3.3 Samples of Children Work or Portfolios

These are collections of work that a child does over time. Keeping children's work in a portfolio can provide lot of information about them. These samples will help the teacher to understand and record each child's progress in drawing, attempts at writing and other areas of development. Whatever the child creates, such as scribbling, colouring, beginning state of writing, clay modeling, etc., are the kinds of samples of child's work. The teacher should keep several examples of work of the children. In this way she can see the process the child uses to create something. She should create children's display work area and display their work in that area.

“In one of the ECE centres there was one child Riyaz who used to draw only with black crayon. Once a teacher encouraged the children to draw members of their family. This child Riyaz drew two figures. He used red and blue crayon for one figure and he literally smudged black colour in the drawing of another human figure. The teacher asked why he used black in that particular figure, whereas the other human figure was very colourful. He replied the colourful figure was his mother and the black one was his father. Later on the teacher talked to this child in-depth and also with his mother, and came to know that his father used to come drunk every night and beat his mother and sometimes Riyaz also. That day in the ECE center when Riyaz was using the black crayon in his free hand drawing he was using the process of colouring to vent out his feelings.”

In the above case the teacher kept the sample of child's work and wrote down her observation notes. This would always help the teacher to understand Riyaz. Without documentation of a teacher's observation and enquiry, Riyaz drawing on family was just a bad or dirty drawing. In a quality ECE programme when the teacher jots down the observation notes for a particular drawing it becomes an important piece of work helping her to understand the child and his pent-up feelings. Parents often get surprised to see the child's work when teachers share the portfolios during parent teacher meetings.

Children's thinking and learning processes are also documented in the portfolios. It is good to build a balanced portfolio—it should have not only excess of creative art samples, but also have entries about physical, social and language development. Child's name and date should be written on each work product. Whenever children are ready to copy their names let them do so on their work product as functional practice in letter and numeral formation. Never force the child and it may not be considered as a hint to begin formal writing. Identify and annotate each work product of a child. Annotations also include observations by teachers. For example, in assessing fine



motor skills, make observations about children's grasp, strength and coordination. Similarly if you are keeping anecdotal records or jottings in the child's portfolio, arrange them in chronological order and it will be very helpful if you code them with coloured pens or stickers as you can relate them to language, fine motor or social development.

Types of items that can be included in portfolio:

- Work samples and products (sample of drawing, printing, pasting, attempts of writing, practice work sheets, any other art medium)
- Photographs of a child engaged in any activity area/work/play
- Photographs of collage prepared by child/children
- Audio tapes and video tapes
- Interviews--- audio and video
- Organised and structured observations, performance assessment
- Anecdotal records and jottings
- Dictated drawings
- Participation chart—what a child did on a given day or during a given period.

Remember portfolios are a rich source of information for communicating with and about children and their learning. It helps to capture many dimensions of children's development and learning. It is difficult to incorporate into a portfolio everything you need to know about a child but try to make each item that goes in the portfolios as informative as possible such as work samples, photographs, drawings etc.

4.3.4 Photographs and Videotapes

The teacher can also take photographs or videos to record children at work in all the areas of development. The teacher can capture specific shots like how a child builds a tower, how she solves puzzles, how they behave in dramatic area or doll's corner or how a child help or share with others. Videotapes or CDs can be shared with families so that parents know what their child might be doing during the day. The teacher can also do audio recording especially in the activity areas where children are interacting in small groups. It is very effective if children conversations are taped regularly. For example, you can tape when children are retelling the story. CDs can be very good tools in helping parents see the progress of their children. Videotapes and audiotapes help teachers to assess the child and also boost the motivation and confidence of children. These tapes can also be used during parents' interaction programme and teacher training programmes. Teachers can also design suitable classroom strategies by viewing and listening to these tapes.



4.3.5 Checklists

Checklists are a list of learning outcomes, behaviours, or traits of a child in a particular developmental area. A teacher is to determine whether these traits exist in a child or not. She has to mark on the checklist as “yes” or “no” to indicate whether a particular child exhibited a behaviour during that observational period. This is an easy method of assessing behaviour or traits. The checklist includes a wide range of behaviours and skills to assess young children in preschool. It helps in describing the child’s unique development and her strengths and weaknesses.

Although checklists provide pretty good and valuable information, they also have some limitations that need to be looked into. For example, a teacher is observing children (with checklist in her hand) in the outdoor equipment. The teacher may write “yes” in her checklist when she observes Ankita can climb up and down on the climbing equipment. Ankita normally shows her reluctance in climbing but that day the teacher and peers encouraged her to climb. One of Ankita’s friends also called her, “See Ankita I’m also climbing, come after me.” All the children started clapping and encouraging Ankita. Now these observations should also be noted along with “yes” to capture the full details. While developing checklists the teacher can create a blank column to record such specific behaviour.

Teachers can use and complete the checklists quickly and at the same time provide valuable information about child’s behaviour by jotting down short notes in the column provided.

1. Sample Checklist for Fine Motor Skills

Name _____ Age _____	
Skill	Evidence
– Zips zippers	
– String beads or other small objects	
– Completes puzzles of 4-5 pieces	
– Buttons/unbuttons	
– Connect interlocking blocks	
– Stacks objects correctly	
– Traces around object	
– Cuts well with scissors	





Figure 4.6
Talking intimately
to the child

2. Sample Checklist for Cognitive Development

Name of the Child _____ Date _____					
	Monday Date	Tuesday Date	Wednesday Date	Thursday Date	Friday Date
Classifies two categories					
Classifies three categories					
Solved simple puzzle (2 pieces)					
Matches one-to-one					
Classifies four categories					
Solve complex puzzles					
Matches one-to-one					
Knows Pre-number					
Big - Small					
Tall - Short					
Touch and counts up to five					



4.3.6 Talking to the children in-depth provide great insight into how they perceive their world. For example, when a child is playing with blocks and constructing, you may ask – “can you tell me what are you making? Which block do you think is heavier? Why do you think so and so on?” You will be surprised as to how children think and you’ll also be able to understand how they view their work. Your talking to the children can be informal and formal as well. The above example is of an informal situation in a block building area. Many times it becomes difficult for the teachers to help the parents to understand how much learning occurs in a play-based ECE programme. One way to help and satisfy parents can be: like after you finish conducting activities on one theme or topic, you can converse with the child, “tell me all that you know about animals.” Open ended questions, such as – “How does an aeroplane fly?” “Can you tell me any story you remember on animals?” “Do you have storybooks at home”, etc. While the child is replying do not contradict, accept the answers. The purpose is to learn more about a child’s thinking process.

- Teacher should make assessment a regular activity so that she can plan age-appropriate activities and experiences for young children.
 - She may not write an anecdotal record on each child every day; instead do it for one or two children per day.
 - Always stay organised and write down the information in your diary so that you can use it while planning next week’s activities. These information or notes will help you to document progress of ECE programme and the child in particular.
 - Make assessment a regular and normal part of ECE classroom
- Keep on collecting and recording the information about children along the way. For example, teacher may keep register or prepared checklists ready near the area where the routine activities are carried out. It will become easy for them to make a note, mark a checklist as they observe and play or work with children.
- Sit or stand at such a place from where you can observe the whole room when children are engaged especially in small group activities. Keep your ears attuned to the conversations of the group.



Through systematic observation over time teachers are able to generally observe children engaging in daily activities and reflect on the meaning of what they see. For example, a teacher might observe that a child does not participate in classroom interactions nor attempt writing. Now she can draw a meaning from this observation. The critical point is that conclusions should be based on observations of the child over a period of time rather than one time. Successful observations allow teachers and adults to record meaningful details while children are engaged in activities. They can take into account children's development, interests and needs across different domains of development. For example while observing children playing with blocks and talking together about the colours and shapes of the blocks, a teacher may observe motor skills, cognitive language and social skills.

4.4 Factors to be considered while observing and assessing the children

A preschool teacher needs to consider the following dimensions while observing and assessing the children as it is important to respond to their individual differences.

- Age is an important factor when deciding what activities to provide, how to provide them and for how long. Knowledge of child development is also important for the teachers. For example, she would know that a five-year-old child can stay on particular activity for a longer time than a three-year-old child.
- There could be a great variance in the Developmental Level (ability and functioning) within any age group. Take for example, amongst three-year old children, some will function like two-year-olds and some like four-year-olds; whereas some are in between. Sometimes a child may show delay in some of the motor abilities. A variance in the developmental levels of children can be observed in the ECE centres/classrooms while children belong to same chronological age. If a child is developmentally delayed or a gifted child, the variance will be even greater. Therefore, it is not right to consider only the chronological age but the teacher may have to individualise learning strategy according to the child's developmental level. She should assess the ECE programme from time to time to ensure that the needs of all children including those with special abilities are properly met. An on-going evaluation will help her in making modifications in the ECE programme.
- Teachers often witness gender-based behaviour such as girls preferring to play in doll's area, pretend and social play area



while boys engage in physical and loud play. You need to be aware to encourage all children to expand their competencies. All children should participate in the activities of each activity area. They should be encouraged to play in mix groups having both boys and girls. Similarly, they should help each other without having any gender biases.

- Each child is unique and learns in her/his own style and as per own pace. Some children grasp the concepts more quickly while others may take some more time; some are independent and do things on their own, while others are relatively dependent. The teacher needs to adjust her activities and role of children accordingly.
- Most of the children have at least one interest, though all of them are attracted by various activities of the centre. Some like to play with clay, some are fascinated by cars, other like only to be involved in constructing blocks. The teacher can include activities from all areas of the curriculum based on children's interests.
- Children, when they come to join the ECE centre, have a differing self-concept. Some of them have a feeling "I cannot do" whereas others are extremely confident. The teacher needs to help the children to think positive. She should help them to know their strengths and teach them to identify resources to solve problems.
- Children often exhibit different behaviours and skills in different contexts. A teacher may observe that a child's use of language in the classroom is limited but a parent may observe that the child has a good vocabulary and uses a lot of language while playing with siblings and talking to adults. With this information a teacher can infer that the child is capable of using language in play. She can then plan experiences for active use of language vocabulary.

To summarise, the process of developing effective practice for observation, record-keeping and quality programme planning must be considered from the perspective of a whole-team approach. By knowing individual difference amongst children and accepting them we can improve the quality of learning experiences for them. When the teacher make a meaningful, interesting and quality ECE programme and implements it with full responsibility and dedication the children will certainly benefit from it.



Chapter 5

QUALITY PARTNERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Just as schools need to be ready for children and children need to be ready for schools, parents also need to be ready in early childhood education for their young children and relate to teachers who will begin to shape their children's early school years.

Parents are the first teachers to a child and have a lasting influence on children's attitude, emotions, values and ideas. Parents play a crucial role in the development and education of their children. In order to make quality ECE effective there must be a positive link between the preschool and the home as these two are most important places in a child's life and education. It is the parent who knows the child more intimately than others and they will continue to carry prime responsibility for her appropriate development. Teachers have the knowledge of growth and development of child and parents can share with them their own understandings and experiences about their child. The insights of both parents and teacher may grow with the sharing. Parents and teachers have much to learn from each other. Teachers need to welcome parents as partners. Parents must feel that there is willingness on the part of staff to communicate with them and be able to discuss mutual expectations about the child and the ECE setting. Many preschool teachers might have not received a formal pre-service training. They may not be as efficient in relating to and communicating with parents but they need to know how to involve and encourage parents in the proper development of their child.

Quality partnership between parent and the teacher would facilitate optimum development of the child. As the child comes from home to ECE centre and goes back home, there is a need to bridge the gap between children's homes and the ECE centres. There are many ways to strengthen and enrich the bond between the ECE centre and the home. The strategies may necessarily vary according to individual preschool situations. When parents and practitioners work together in early years settings the results have

a positive impact on child's development and learning (DFEE/QCA, 2000).

It is up to the early childhood centres to provide a welcoming atmosphere, and it is up to the parent and the early childhood staff to develop a relationship. This is a missing piece in a number of early childhood centres. Early childhood teachers and staff are often so focused on the child that they forget the parent. There are many ways to make the environment more welcoming and engaging for families. Quality ECE programme suggests that there should be more and more interactions between parents and teachers.

This chapter focuses on the following:

- Why partnership between ECE centres and parents and communities are important
- How to develop vibrant partnership between ECE centres and other concerned
- What are the benefits of involving families and communities in ECE programme?
- What are the strategies for communicating with parents and families?
- How to organise parents education programme.

5.1 Why partnership between ECE centres and parents and communities are important

(a) It helps in addressing the challenges due to Changing Family Patterns

Every family has its own culture, values and way of rearing children. Parents are influenced in their child-rearing practices by the way in which they were reared. Family life has also been influenced by rapidly advancing technology. Television limits the conversations between family members. Many children watch the same programmes as viewed by their adults. Television monitoring by adults is a must for all children as it has been found that T.V. watching has a negative effect on children's' total development. Teachers need to identify and suggest such T.V. programmes which would increase interactions between family members and the children as well as contribute to their intellectual growth. Children first learn who they are from their parents and home. They develop a sense of how their parents view them and how their parents' are. Children's' socialisation, learning, growth and development depend on the family's living style. When children move to the school or to neighbourhood, they begin to compare their lifestyles with their peers.

A teacher needs to listen to parents to understand each child's cultural background. This will help her to understand and meet the



child's needs in a better way. It will also help her to communicate more effectively with the families. Today parenting has become very challenging because of breaking of joint family system and both parents going out for work. Young parents, especially mothers, often get confused as to how to look after their children. They do not understand her behaviour or they just do not know how to bring up their child. On the other hand, there may be some families living in substandard housing, do not have stable jobs and struggle to provide for their children's basic needs. Sometimes there is violence, alcohol abuse and other sources of stress and frustration which would leave the families with little energy to meet the needs of their little ones. The complexity of modern life, the pressures of balancing work and family commitments often lead to ignorance on the part of parents about developmental needs of their children. Such situations call for parent's participation in early childhood education and strong partnership between teachers and families. But often we see that lack of time and lack of opportunity to participate are the barriers to participation for the parents in ECE programme. It has been seen that in some classrooms, some parents are quite involved whereas some are not able to be involved because of work or other pressures. For example, one parent had to care for a sick family member. Parents are individuals and should never be compared.

(b) It assures parents about the social and emotional security of their children

A teacher of preschoolers must have come across several such situations when parents get upset when they come to drop their child each morning. Three year old Ria, has been enrolled in the ECE centre for about three days before and she faces a difficult time separating from her mother in the morning. Ria cries and clings to her mother as she tries to leave her each morning. Mrs. Saxena, Ria's mother, responds by becoming more and more upset. She leaves Ria only to return minutes later at reception because of her concern about Ria's being upset and crying. She would usually asks, "How is Ria"?, "Is she still crying"?, "Can I see her"?, "How long it will take"?. Once the teacher took Mrs. Saxena to Ria's classroom. Her return to the classroom increases the severity of Ria's crying. Now, in order to help both Ria and her mother cope with the separation anxiety you need to think about following issues:

- When and with whom you should discuss the issue of separation?
- How will you help Ria's mother to cope with the difficult morning hours?
- How can you sooth and calm Ria's mother and provide assurance for Ria's well being?



- What strategies will you utilise to communicate with Ria's mother and other such parents about this issue?

When both parents are working, it becomes all the more necessary to meet and relate with parents time to time as it is quite difficult to arrange for contacts between working parents and the teachers. Establishing partnerships with parents and relating with parents is actually involving them in ECE programme. Relating with parents is a process of sharing information and establishing relationships. Teachers need to be oriented on how to relate to parents and families. It is essential for a quality ECE programme.

Teachers need to be aware of the feelings of parents. The morning hours are very crucial. You need to help such parent (mother) when she finds it difficult to leave the child in the ECE centre. Here the teacher needs to help the parent gain confidence in the ECE centre and its programme. The teacher needs to help Ria find activities that she enjoys and may also associate a sociable child in Ria's play. Whenever possible, especially the first few days, she should invite the mother to observe and comment on what is happening. It may take time for Ria and her mother to trust the ECE centre and its programme. As a wise teacher one needs to understand the anxiety of parents and their feelings about leaving their child. Most parents are able to help the child with separation if they themselves feel confident about the ECE centre.

Most of the parents enjoy watching the changes that appear in the child during the first few months after joining the centre. The noticeable changes are child's language, social skills, ideas about herself and what she can do.



*Figure 5.1
Partnership needs
to happen in all
aspects of the
childcare setting*



The partnerships can be built stronger by following acts:

- Visits to homes planned at times convenient to the family.
- Encourage parents to visit the classroom to share a special interest and skill with the children such as story-telling or art activity.
- Encourage parents to accompany you during trips and field visits.
- Informing parents about the theme or topic that you're going to talk about.

(c) It helps children to adjust easily and in a short span of time

Children who have sisters or brothers in the centre previously usually adapt more easily than those who do not have. The teacher will find that her children also feel more secure and supported in the centre when their parents are involved in a variety of school activities. It is a wonderful opportunity for the working parents as well. They feel relieved of guilt that often accompanies them. It increases the interaction and communication with families when parents participate in ECE programme; the teacher is also able to get additional information about children and their family environment. All this helps her become more sensitive to their individual needs, concern and changes associated with the home environments.

(d) It helps parents to understand their child and perform their role in better way

The impact and quality of early childhood education programme will be greater if a parent is exposed to child development, strategies and activities. Much learning today occurs outside formal educational settings. Parents have the responsibility for transmitting values to their young children. Therefore, the linkage between home, preschool and community must be strengthened. Children, parents and teachers benefit from strong connections between home and ECE centre. Teachers and parents share common love and concern for the child and parents do have some expectations from the school. They may look up to the teacher for their queries as she is a trained person in child psychology and children's learning, and looking after their child's learning. They just feel that teachers have answers for all their questions and concerns. They may ask certain questions like –

- “Riku is 2 years old and still not speaking clearly, what can I do?”
- “How do I get Bhumika to stop colouring on walls?”
- “Sahil makes me so angry sometimes with his tantrums, then



I hit him. I'm afraid I am becoming too harsh with him. What should I do?"

- "Shreya is often found speaking to herself, I am worried, what do I do?"
- "Shahin is not learning to read, write and count. She only plays here, while my brother's daughter attending another nursery school is able to read and write.

5.2 How to develop vibrant partnership between ECE centres and others concerned – Role of the School

While the child is the first priority parents are the second priority in a quality ECE programme. Parents and schools are partners in helping children to learn. Schools have an important role in making parents partners in ECE programme. An ECE programme that does not respect the importance of the parent can never be successful. Parent involvement in the preschool is crucial to the formation of achievement motivation in children.

Parent involvement in the schools can take many forms. Schools who involve parents in their ECE programme need to set goals. Teachers need to listen to parents in an accepting way and should be skilled in the art of convincing. Before admitting the child, a good preschool encourages the parents to visit the centre and discuss

Awareness of the child's family situation is perhaps the most important way teacher can support the children and their parents. Try to become sensitive to the needs of individual children and their particular family situation and try to meet some of these in the classroom.



Figure 5.2
Treat the child and the family with respect and caring concern



ECE programme and its approach. Parents are suggested to fill the parents' pre-enrolment questionnaire. After enrolment, the school plans an orientation programme for parents at least a week before children start coming to school. A teacher needs to recognise each child's worth regardless of parenting style or socio-economic situation at home. The school should provide opportunities so that each child views herself / himself as a capable, worthy human being – one who can and will succeed.

Parents have a right to see and question everything that occurs in the centre. The school is expected to communicate child's progress to the parents regularly and frankly, suggest ways how they should interact with their children while watching television and computers, involve parents in classroom activities such as story-telling, early literacy etc. Remember that all parents want their children to develop optimally. The school has to be sensitive to the needs and expectations of parents. Try to solve problems jointly.

The school needs to plan parent education programmes well in advance. Teachers need to show genuine commitment and patience. For successful partnership there is a need to develop an atmosphere of mutual trust cooperation and interdependence. Finally, the school has to involve other members of family and community besides parents to provide quality ECE programme.

Parents as volunteers

There are several ways to involve parents and community members in volunteering, either directly in the ECE centre or indirectly. Teachers always find that there are some parents who cannot come to ECE centre during school hours. They can be helpful in—

- Making teaching-learning materials.
- Arranging field trips and excursions.
- Organising sports meet.
- Collecting and mending dress-up clothes from the doll's corner or dramatic area.
- Locating resources and materials to be used at the ECE centre.
- Mending stuffed toys.
- Minor repair work around the ECE centre.
- Arranging for light fittings, ceiling fan etc.
- Arranging outdoor visits for children such as doctor's clinic, fire station etc.
- Collecting items for the ECE centre's dramatic play area (for example, clothes, purses, used food containers and other "pretend items").



Remember all parents are different, with individual needs and interests.

Examples of partnerships between Anganwadis and community:

- In one of the anganwadi centres, there was shortage of space and the teacher was not able to conduct activities in the centre. The teacher and child development project officer met with the village Sarpanch and convinced him regarding the importance of early childhood education. Sarpanch readily agreed to provide the village chaupal area for play activities on those days when there was no panchayat meetings etc.
- Similarly, there was another incident where an anganwadi teacher planned a cultural programme with the help of mothers. All the mothers donated clothing, make-up things and helped the teacher to organise the programme. The village temple priest provided the place to organise the function. The village halwai (sweet-shop owner) distributed sweets for the children who took part in the cultural programme. Thus community people can be active participants in fund-raising projects.

Parents and the community members can be requested to work on holidays. They may help to plant a garden around the centre, prepare teaching-learning material. They can also be encouraged to donate collectively outdoor play equipment. That can be fixed in nearby park where all anganwadi children can go during their outdoor play activities. The experience of volunteering would benefit parents as well as children and the ECE centre. Therefore, in addition to encouraging parents to visit and observe the ECE programme, you should encourage parents to participate as volunteers. By participation, parents get a better understanding of children's behaviour and development.

Pre-enrolment Parents Questionnaire

Teachers should provide 'Pre enrolment questionnaire' to all the parents.

This would help her to understand the parents concern about their child's participation in the ECE programme. Not only are parents an invaluable source of information about their own children, they can bring special interests and talents to share with the ECE centre. This questionnaire also helps the teacher of another classroom when the child makes the transition.



Pre-enrolment Parent Questionnaire

1. What do you view as the most important areas of development for your child?
2. What are the most important concerns you have about your child being in ECE centre
3. Please list any areas or issues regarding child development about which you would like us to conduct workshop on session?
4. Is there any concern or a need with which you feel the ECE centre or programme could help you?
5. Parent involvement in ECE programme is very important. It is good for satisfaction of the parents and for the child's growth and development. Please tick the following ways in which you want to be involved in your child's ECE programme.
 - _____ Attending parent conferences/orientation.
 - _____ Attending monthly parent meetings.
 - _____ Collecting no-cost and low cost items and sending for monthly theme activities

Parents who are interested in working with children directly in the ECE centre should be encouraged. In order to have their constructive contributions it is better to have a record of the activities which could be volunteered by particular parents.

Volunteer Activity form can be given to parents and they can be asked to tick the appropriate activity and also write the date and time in front of the chosen activity. Volunteering helps parents to become more actively involved in the ECE setting; they gain self-confidence as well as confidence in the ECE centre.

Date	Volunteer Activity
1. _____	Telling story/poem or demonstrating any other activity of your interest to children of ECE centre.
2. _____	Helping in art and music activities.
3. _____	Helping during arrival and departure time.
4. _____	Accompanying during field trips such as picnic, traffic park, etc. Drive for Field trips under teacher guidance.
5. _____	Arranging for light fittings, ceiling fan (if required)



6. _____	Arranging a visit of your workplace for children such as Doctor’s clinic, Fire Station and so on.
7. _____	Bringing a ‘pet’ of yours to the centre during the topic Animals.
8. _____	Laminating or repairing the story books, workbooks.
9. _____	Tell about your job during ‘community helper week’.
10. _____	Collecting items for the centre’s dramatic play area (for example, clothes, purses, used food containers and other “pretend items”)
11. _____	Assisting a small group of children (under teacher’s guidance) in water play, sand play or science activity. Sponsor a one-hour game club on Friday mornings for 5 to 6 children. Anything else you are good at!

Plan for more than one type of involvement of parents and provide opportunities for parents to observe the classroom ECE centre before they begin working with children. Teacher can provide a clipboard to parents when they come to observe the classroom so that they can note their observations. Teacher can also plan an orientation meeting for the parents before they begin (volunteer) participating with children. Tell parents about the programme, sequence of activities and classroom rules.

5.3 What are the benefits of involving families and communities in ECE programme?

Parents have specific needs and expectations, and teachers cannot meet those until they know about them. A quality ECE program serves the family, not the child alone. For example, many parents from deprived sections do not know the importance of preschool and do not enroll their children. Even if they enroll their male child they do not enroll their girl child. Many times they send children to the anganwadi centres just for supplementary nutrition. They should be helped to understand that preschool activities help the children in getting ready for the primary school. Involving parents in ECE activities benefits the child, family, community and ECE programme. It has become more important as the percentage of working mothers has increased and many parents do not have



adequate and quality time for their young children. Some of the benefits emanating from strong partnerships are as follows:

- Children feel secure when their families and teachers work together.
- As parents participate in school and ECE programmes, they also learn how the teachers guide children's growth and development.
- Teachers are able to get crucial information about the child from the parents to understand the children better.
- Parents also get an opportunity to meet and develop relationships with other parents in the ECE centre.

Parents should provide following crucial information about their child to the teacher / school:

- Health, immunisation and growth
- Allergy to any medicine or food
- General routine of the child at home or the family lifestyle
- Child's relationships with other family members
- Child's fears (if any)
- How they convince the child if she/he throws temper tantrums
- How they are preparing their child for preschool.

Knowledge of above helps the teacher to meet the needs of the child and to understand her/him while observing. Sometimes when the child is very angry or hypermetric or shy, talking to the parents in details and having knowledge of child development helps her to solve the problem and react accordingly. As the teacher learns about each child, she should talk and share information about children with their parents; this helps in building positive relationships. Encourage parents to talk to their children positively about school.

Strategies that generally work for involving parents in the ECE programme

- *Communicate frequently:* Allow the parents to feel needed. Try to make frequent contact with them. Educate them concerning what an ECE centre does on developing the whole child socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically in a simple and easy language. Be sure to ask parents whether the information being shared is useful and simple to understand and how it can be improved, for example, school activities and upcoming events. Talk to them in their native language. Also talk to them about the benefits of preschool and the facilities available.
- *Make the most of drop-off and pick-up time:* Greet with enthusiasm and when possible, acknowledge their arrival in some special way.



- *Celebrate children's achievements through work sampling:* Show portfolios, scrap books, and/or other work and collections of children's experiences in the classroom for parents to look at whenever they visit the classroom.
- *Make useful resources available to parents.* Some parents will need help and guidance about their children's behavior management. Some will have concerns about their readiness skills or motor skills. A few will have doubts and questions about signs of risk for learning disabilities, and so on. Try to help and lead such parents by introducing them to different types of resources, either through a lending library in the school, through local agencies or via helpful resources on the Web. Make parents aware of helpful resources such as parent guide books, DVDs, pamphlets.
- *Regularly invite parents to participate in the activities of the ECE centre.* Although many teachers don't like parents in the classrooms, they can be excellent helpers. Make efforts to engage fathers, mothers and grandparents. Ask them to spend time in the classroom. They could be silent observers of activities or help with activities.
- *Plan special Activities and Events:* Plan activities such as, picnics, puppet shows, class trips and exhibitions featuring educational books and toys throughout the school year. organise mothers' meetings, etc.

Parent Resource Centre

A centre can be created for parents in an ECE centre. If possible one small room should be developed into a Parent Resource centre. The teacher needs to collect a variety of resource materials that may include books, parenting magazines, films, CDs., DVDs, posters and brochures on child development and behavior. A register need to be maintained for these materials so that parents can use them at the centre or get them issued for home. Similarly, child related (for the child) materials may also be issued for parents so that they may read aloud to their children.

5.4 Strategies for Communicating with the Parents and families

The teachers should keep the parents informed about what is happening at the ECE centre, what is happening to their child, and how they can help both the child and the centre. Communication must be two-way in order to prove effective. Communication from the home will help the teacher to understand how to best meet the



needs of the individual child. The teacher should share with parents what she does in the classroom, why she does that and how children learn from that. Teacher may also inform the parents about the topic and activities that would occur in the classroom or at the centre. This points to the need and importance of communication with the parents. A sample of parents letter has been given in chapter 3.

There are numerous communication techniques that help establish a relationship between teachers and parents. What matters most is that teachers are the first to establish positive communication to the parents and to make sure the communication is ongoing throughout the year. Communication strategies range from informal to formal. As compared to formal strategies, informal techniques are quick and take little time. However, both are equally important for teachers and parents.

Following are some ways of communicating with families –

5.4.1 Informal communication strategies

Informal communication does not have any planned agenda. Teachers should utilise maximum opportunities to interact with the parents as and when possible. Instead of waiting for any formal meeting the teacher can use the following strategies to keep the communication channels open with the parents:

(a) *Daily Interactions or Contacts:* Daily Interactions or Contacts between parents and teachers which occur at morning hours and departure times are quite beneficial for sharing information in your daily planning. Keeping this point of view, a time slot may be provided when teacher is available to greet and receive the child as well as talk to the parents. Ensure not to discuss the child in front of her/him unless you're involving her/him in your conversations. Although the morning hours and departure times are busy and hurried, you should try to find some brief and quick moments for sharing and interacting. Try not to begin your morning interactions with negative feedback. You need to learn effective

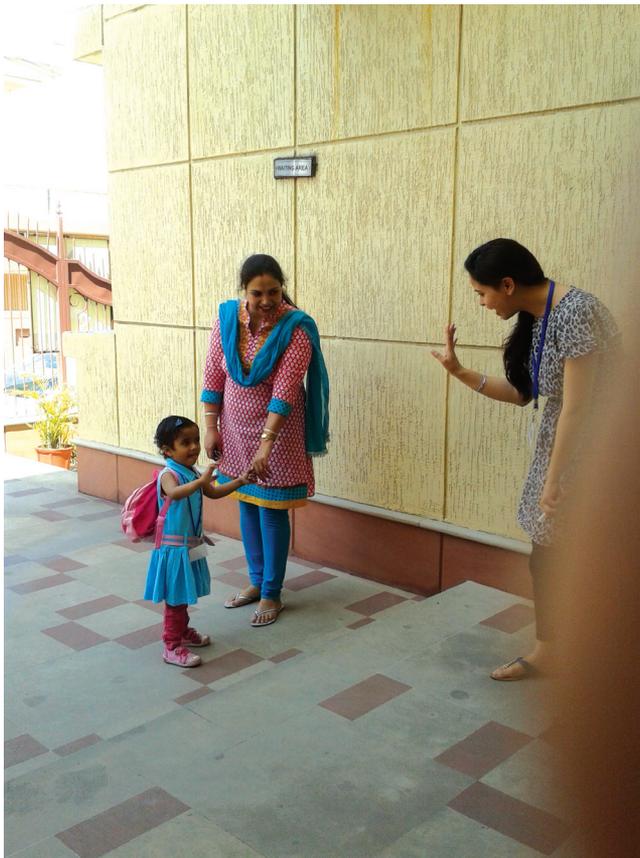


Figure 5.3 Daily interaction is possible during pick up time



communication techniques while talking to parents who visit the ECE centre.

Generally, parents want to know about:

1. What the child is doing and learning
2. What the child likes and dislikes at the ECE centre
3. How other children respond to their child
4. How child responds to other children
5. Whether or not the teacher is truly concerned about their child.

While talking to parents...

- Establish eye contact.
- Listen to parents patiently and attentively.
- Acknowledge their feelings.
- Make them feel comfortable.
- Maintain a friendly atmosphere.
- Give parents chance to speak.
- Use problem-solving skills when required.
- Treat parents as individuals.
- Ask open-ended questions and answer their questions.
- Share information.
- Understand parents' point of view.
- Encourage parents to volunteer in ECE programmes (suggest ways).
- Think about the words you use while talking.
- Control your own emotions.
- Show genuine commitment and patience.
- Assure them care for their child.

(b) *Phone conversations*: Telephoning parents is another informal technique to communicate with them. But it should not happen that the teacher calls up parents only when there is something wrong on the part of the child. She should also call them up to say something positive. For example, "Today your child Ria was very cooperative in sand play."

(c) *Email*: Computer-mail is a very fast and easy form of communication. As working parents may have limited time to participate frequently in the ECE programme, the teacher may mail the activity sheets and photos of children working on materials to them, if they have an access.



- (d) *A Note in the diary of the child:* A teacher can also write and send a personal note to the parent through child's diary. If they don't have a diary with them she can stick the small piece of note (circular) on to their lunch boxes. She can also create a folder of written informals in which she can put letters and other written information sent to the parents from time to time. In addition to letters and circulars, copies of articles related to parenting, healthy and nutritious recipes related to children, work samples, information regarding immunisation and photographs of children may also sent. A monthly circular for the topic taken in the classroom can be sent in this folder. The fun worksheet can be sent through separate activity folder. In this way parents are kept informed and have time to go through the work samples of their child during the weekend.
- (e) *Monthly Letter:* A teacher should try to send the monthly letter on a certain day, for example, last working day of every month, so that parents make it a habit to look for the letter on that particular day. Letters need to be written in a simple language. ECE centres can also take the help of volunteer parents to translate, if required.

The teacher may create ways to facilitate communication, especially with working parents by inviting them on quarterly Saturday tea at ECE centre. She may also send home weekly notes telling parents about some favourite activities of the children.

- Information about children's favourite and preferred activities or interests at home can be used as a starting point of preschool learning.
- Experiences at home can be used to develop and expand learning at ECE centre, for example, visits and celebrations.

- How does the child play with others?
- How does the child play in different interest/activity areas?
- Toys the child enjoys most.
- The child's favourite activities or stories at ECE centre.
- How does the child talk about her/his feelings?
- How is the child curious about new toy or material in the classroom?
- What does the child talk specific, if any?
- How does the child settle and handle separation from parents?
- How does the child ask for her needs?

- (f) *Bulletin Board for Parents:* ECE centres are expected to maintain separate bulletin board for the parents to display information, announcements and photographs of children. The teacher can also pin-up weekly programme on this board. Bulletin boards can be divided into two - one section to pin-up notices and other section to have a white board where you would write immediate and urgent notices for parents. Bulletin board should be kept at a prominent place so that all the parents can see it.



Let us see a few examples where the teacher tries to understand and solve criticism expressed by the parents.

- Parents want to know what happens to their child when she is in the ECE centre. They may find many rapid changes taking place in their child but all these may not be desirable for them. They may complain about it during parent-teacher meetings or when they meet you while they come to drop their child. They may share that their earlier quiet child has become more aggressive after joining the ECE centre. Some parents would be of the opinion that their child does not share toys as willingly as earlier. There may be a few parents who accept that their child's vocabulary has expanded but it contains certain words that the parents find quite strange and meaningless.
- Such criticisms should be attended very carefully and positively by the teachers to see whether the situations could be handled differently. It is also important to find out the reason behind the complaint(s). When a teacher accepts and understands the criticism made by the parent and tries to find a way out, mutual understanding develops. Interaction and frank discussion do not block but rather promote the relationships.
- Some parents have little or no time to observe their child and they are not interested in interaction with the teacher. They leave everything on the teacher. In this case it is the teacher's duty to find occasions and opportunities where she can talk to either of the parents. She can share what the child had done on a particular day, about her/his interests, etc. She should encourage parents to ask questions and know more about their child.
- A few parents are generally late in dropping and picking up the child. The teacher should have lots of patience and understanding to handle such situations tactfully. The teacher needs to accept the reasons given by the parent. But if a parent is regularly late, then she must discuss the situation and find out what can be done about the problem. While handling these kinds of problems she must take into account her own feelings as well as those of the parent(s).
- Some parents are very keen to visit the ECE centre or EC classroom unannounced at any time as they are concerned about their child's safety. You need to listen to parents with patience and respond with understanding, assuring care for parental concerns. However, the ECE centre should clearly communicate rules and procedures to all the parents when the child gets enrolled. Time to time, the rules and policies should be displayed on the 'parent bulletin board' or circulars should be sent to parents as reminders.



5.4.2 Formal Communication Strategies

Formal Communication Strategies have a pre-planned agenda. Newsletters, parent calendar or planner, parent meetings, and parent conferences and workshops are the formal ways to communicate to parents.

(a) *Parent meetings:* As discussed earlier, Parents' Orientation should be held in the beginning to provide information about the centre's philosophy, policies, rules and procedures. Later Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) may be organised once every month so that the teacher can share information about ECE programme, how the child is learning in the classroom and what is required at home front. Monthly PTMs also provide time and opportunity to parents to share important information about their child individually. It helps the parents and teachers to make decisions together. Quality PTMs help in strengthening relationships. Parent meetings can provide information and create awareness about children's growth and development.

Before organising the meetings, the teacher should know the purpose of the meeting and accordingly make the arrangements.

- After deciding the date and time, send a notice to the parents with return slips. Follow up with the parents who do not return the slip.
- Select a room where everybody can be accommodated.
- Check the seating arrangements, lighting and audiovisual equipments, if required.
- Display relevant posters, children's photographs and art work.
- Arrange for baby-sitters.
- Begin with ice-breaking activity to create a warm climate.
- Arrange for refreshments.
- Teachers need to wear name tags.
- Make special effort to greet and welcome parents.
- Begin and end the meeting on time. Ensure that it is not a very lengthy meeting.
- Establish rules such as no mobiles ringing, no smoking, waiting for one's turn.
- Provide information through lecture, discussion, film, puppet play, games.
- Provide some time at the end for discussion.

(b) *Parent calendar or planner:* A calendar or planner of year round activities can be prepared and given to the parents at the time of admission of the child. This calendar includes the activities of the centre and also the activities that a parent can do at home. It also



mentions the festivals to be celebrated at the centre, events to be organised, parent conferences, PTMs, vacations, etc.

(c) *Parent Conferences and workshops* is where you can talk to large groups of families. It should be conducted at least twice in a year. Be prepared for the conference and display file folders of each child containing the child's work samples and worksheets. As an advance preparation before organising the conference, the teacher should identify the purpose of the conference, set a convenient date and time, book a comfortable and quiet place for the conference. She should prepare a programme schedule and send an advance notice of conference to all the parents along with return slips. She also needs to view and set the child's records, update her activity folder and portfolio, include current copies of child's profile, weekly observation notes and other assessment data.

During the conference the teacher should distribute the conference agenda. Introduce the teachers, helpers and so on. Begin the conference with a positive note, and help parents feel relaxed and comfortable. Communicate with parents at their level. Avoid technical terms. Make positive comments about the child. Talk about the child's strengths as well as problems. Give time to parents to speak. Identify responsibilities. Ask open ended questions for parents' ideas and opinions. Have patience and listen to parents' opinion carefully. Ensure everything that was planned is covered. Summarise the major points and follow-up plan. Thank the parents for coming and their continued support.

(d) *Newsletters* are an interesting way to inform parents of school events and happenings. You can also ask parents to suggest ideas for newsletters. Every three months newsletter should be sent to the parents. Newsletters keep the parent informed about classroom activities. It also covers the special events, festivals that are happening in the school. It should also provide a section where parents learn about the activities they can do at home. Newsletter should also include short summaries of articles or books that parents may find useful. Any special project that children have completed may also be included in the newsletter. Special achievements and events of the centre may also be covered in the newsletter.

5.5 How to organise Parent Education programmes

The ECE centre has a responsibility for parent education. These programmes and workshops help parents to learn ways of supporting their children's learning. The parent education programme could be very effective in supplementing a child's school experiences. Today many parents are becoming aware of the role they can play.



FOR THE PARENTS

- To gain confidence and enhance parenting skills
- To share individual ideas and concerns about child rearing
- To understand child development at their level
- To learn effective communication skills and child guidance strategies.

At the same time there is a good number of ignorant parents who pressurise their children at a very young age and expect them to behave like adults.

When working with parents of preschoolers, the goal is to help parents gain confidence and also help parents gain the knowledge that may improve their contribution to a child's development. The parent who feels confident enjoys her child and is able to understand the needs of her children. Provide a bulletin board especially for the parents where a teacher can pin-up or display interesting, meaningful and relevant material. Book rack can also be kept with parents' magazines, guide books and magazines related to child development and education. Teacher should listen to the parent patiently and understand what the parent wants to convey. The goals of parent education programme for parents as well as for the community are as follows:

With knowledge of child development the parents are able to understand that each child is unique and develops at her own pace and style. They can rationalise and their expectations for the child become more practical and reasonable. Research shows that the quality of the home environment strongly correlates with children's academic and life achievement. Therefore, it is essential that families are assisted so that they can create an environment that supports their children's development at home.

- Some suggested themes on which parent education sessions can be planned and organised:
 - Importance of play during early years
 - Child rearing practices
 - Brain research and early learning
 - Age appropriate play material and play opportunities
 - Importance of readiness activities and importance of talking with a child
 - Discussion and information about the way a child learns and how to help her/him to explore, discover and investigate
 - Discussion on Do's and Do not's during early years. How to enjoy the childhood of your child?
 - Health and Nutrition of young children
 - Transition from preschool centre to school
 - Child's development and growth needs
 - Behaviour disorders in young children
 - Sibling rivalry
 - Importance of activity areas or interest areas
 - Preparing the child for new/difficult situations
 - Helping the child to discover herself/himself

FOR THE COMMUNITY

- To build a network of mutual support
- To advocate for children and family issues and encourage community service
- To develop and use leadership skills
- To involve community leaders in advocacy of Quality ECE.



- Importance of talking with a child and ways in which a child is helped to develop competence in speech
- How to use home for early learning experiences
- Importance of picture books and story reading skills

The topics may be discussed using variety of methods such as workshops, round table discussions, dramatisation and buzz sessions.

To summarise, the school, the family and the community are the three major contexts in which children live and grow. Effective partnerships are based on understanding the culture, socio-economic, health, social and recreational needs and interests of families. ECE settings should identify and integrate resources from the community to strengthen their practices. Parents can make a valuable contribution to their children's learning and development by sharing their time, experiences and talents with the out-of-home setting of the centre.



Chapter 6

ACTION RESEARCH— ITS NEED AND RELEVANCE FOR QUALITY ECE

Action research is about putting ourselves in the driving seat of our learning...

Research is a systematic attempt to obtain answer to a meaningful question through the scientific procedure. It seeks to integrate and systematise its findings through objective verification of general theories. Action research is the type of research which aims at improving the existing practice(s) on the basis of self-experience. You may be aware that there are two types of research – Basic research and Applied research. Basic research is conducted to add to the existing stock of knowledge to verify the existing beliefs. It may not provide solutions to the immediate problem faced and it may not lead to implementation of the conclusions by the researcher himself. On the other hand applied or action research is conducted by the practitioner (teacher, worker, parent or any other interested) with a view to fine tune or improve the existing practice. This type of research is very important, especially for teachers who are faced with a variety of challenges in every-day teaching and who need to evolve their own ways of dealing with these challenges. For example, when you enter the class in the morning you find children quite noisy, some are crying, some are sitting alone not being friendly, some are fighting with others over their possessions and so on. The challenge is how to get every child's attention and how to involve everyone joyfully. You play some interesting music and everybody forgets the business they were involved in. They all start singing, some start acting and some are seen dancing. Before playing music you had a precise exercise, may be unknowingly, that you took a note of the situation and then thought of some solution. This is a small example of action research.

In fact all of us knowingly or unknowingly are carrying out action research in our personal and professional lives. When we try to improve our quality of living, are we not changing the ways of handling the tasks and settings? In the same way in classrooms when you come across problem which you had not faced earlier, don't you try to solve it on the basis of your experience and sometimes by your own experiment? This is nothing but simply action research.

In a home setting parents also deal with their children in different ways. That is also indirectly a process of action research. It should therefore be understood that action research is embedded into our way of life and it always helps positively in problem situations.

Earlier chapters in this handbook have been developed to give you sufficient idea about the need for quality ECE and various dimensions of quality early childhood education. Each chapter has been developed keeping in view different settings of ECE centres e.g. private pre-schools, ICDS centres and other types of pre-schools with examples of practical situations. Still there may be different contexts and you may be faced with certain new problems. Action research helps the practitioners to learn from their own actions and with their own understandings. This chapter aims to guide you on following issues in action research:

- What is action research?
- How is it different from basic research?
- Why is it carried out?
- Who can take up an action research?
- How is it carried out or what is the process of doing it?

6.1 What is action research?

Action research is research which is conducted by the practitioners for improving their own practices. It is applicable to specific settings and its results are normally utilised by the researcher himself or herself. At best these would be applicable if contexts and conditions are same. For example, in the area of early childhood education some problems and situations are common such as ‘separation anxiety’ when children get separated from their parents for joining the centre, behaviour problems of children, children with different home backgrounds and upbringing etc. In such situations if some teachers build up understanding for specific problems these can be of reference for their colleagues at the same work place or elsewhere.

As a preschool teacher you might have faced resistance problems from children. An example could be, one day in the class you ask one child to make a round shape. The child says ‘I will not do, you ask once again but he does not budge. You approach another child to do the same task and meet with the same response. This forces you to think because it had never happened earlier. However on the basis of your experience you just understand that children find it monotonous and uninteresting and they want to do something else. You then start thinking on how to divert them from this situation.

This is the process of action research when you are confronted with a problem and you start thinking in order to solve it. The



Action research is a way of professional development. It is a process where teachers examine their own practices carefully using the techniques of research. In this way you as a researcher are able to refine your skills.

problem is limited and you can solve it by your own actions or at best with the help of your colleague or a fellow teacher(s). Action research thus entails a process of self-improvement and begins with the discontent on the part of the researcher about his own performance or practice.

It is important for practitioners to understand the specific characteristics of action research so that hesitations could be overcome. Some of the features of action research which make it different and interesting from other types of research are as follows:

- The purpose of action research is not theory building, rather it is to solve a problem.
- It is always conducted in a specific situation and its findings are not generalised. However, it may serve as a reference in case similar situations are faced at the same level by practitioners.
- It is carried out on a small sample which the practitioner feels adequate to draw the results.
- The design of action research is generally simple and flexible, yet it is important to maintain scientific norms in identifying problem, formulation of action research hypothesis and carrying out action research. The researcher is free to make modifications in the design if it is felt necessary during the process of research.
- The practitioner herself should be able to carry out the research without depending upon outside expertise and financial aid.

The steps of action research are simple and it is up to the practitioner or researcher to decide about writing of the report. In case you feel that your experience would substantially help your fellow colleague you may write a report and share it upon getting an opportunity. However if you don't wish to document it you may not. Your experiences through action research can make you a sound teacher as well as a resource in your area.

6.2 Why Action Research

Action research is considered to be important for practitioners because through the process of action research–

- We develop a deeper understanding of our children.
- We develop a better and deeper understanding of teaching learning processes in preschool settings.
- We understand our role better and know exactly how to deal with the educational lives of children.
- We are able to explore and investigate our own practices in a new and innovative way depending on the needs of individual children as we observe the children closely and understand what they actually do, how they learn and what we should do.
- We are able to decide what works best in different situations.



- We are more committed to actual transaction and implementation of an ECE programme in the classroom.

Remember, action research is an on-going process rather than a programme and its principles can be applied equally to all the fields of education. It calls for improvement on a regular basis on the basis of self realization by the practitioner. It should be an integral part of a quality ECE programme.



Figure 6.1
Teacher observing
a group of children

6.3 How is Action Research different from Basic Research?

As already explained, fundamentally research may be classified into two categories - basic research and applied research. There are some inherent differences between these two types of research which are as follows:

Generation of knowledge: The objectives of basic research are adding to the existing knowledge or verifying the existing beliefs. However action research primarily attempts to improve the practices. It does not aim at generation of further knowledge.

Influence on educational practice: Action research has a greater and more relevant influence on the educational practices than basic research. The reason is that in case of basic research, a researcher may not be the practitioner but in case of action research researcher and practitioner are the same.

Research Design: In case of basic research, research design is somewhat rigid and researcher is expected to adhere to it until the investigation is complete. In case of action research design is not rigid. The definition of the problem, the hypothesis to be tested and



methods employed undergo modifications as interim results are validated or invalidated in practice.

Criteria of Quality: The value of basic research will be judged on the basis of the amount and quality of dependable knowledge it adds to the existing knowledge. In case of action research it is determined primarily by the extent to which findings lead to improvement in practices.

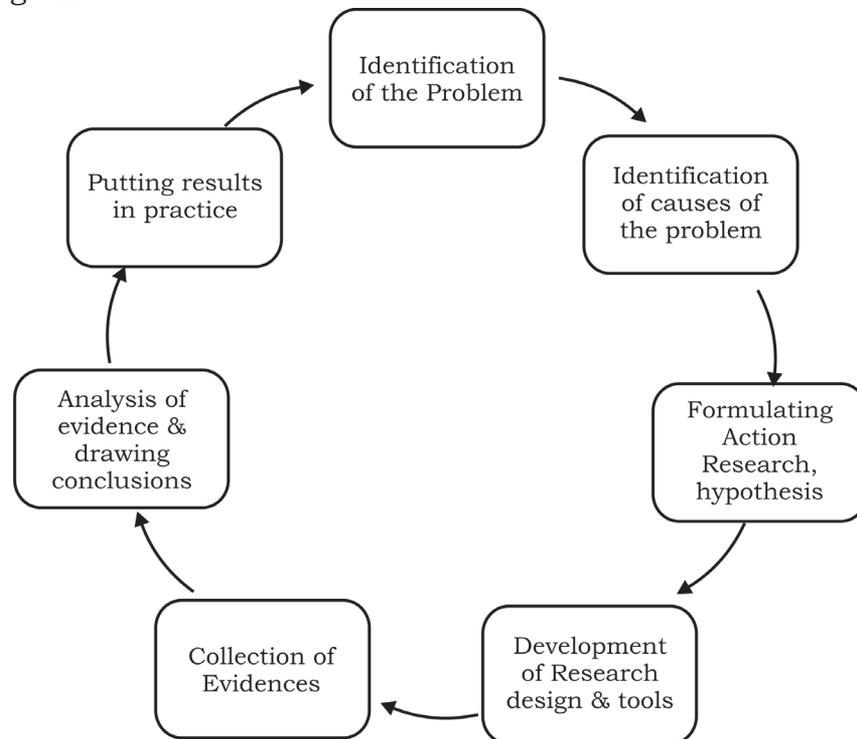
Generalisations resulting from research: The results arrived on the basis of basic research can be generalised for large population if conditions of population representation and random sample are met. However the purpose of action research is never to establish generalizations.

Research as a cooperative activity: Basic research is normally a team activity but action research is carried out either by individuals or at best by a small group of practitioners.

Time frame: Basic research is generally planned for a longer period of time as it involves rigid design, number of tools, more geographical area and relatively complex data analysis plan. However action research is a quicker activity as its aim is to provide solution to the immediate problem(s).

6.4 How to Carry out Action Research (Process of Action Research)

The process of action research can be understood by following diagram:



The steps of action research are given below:

(a) Identification of Problem

Identification of problem is the first important step. Sometimes a problem is stated quite generally, e.g. a teacher complains that indiscipline is a general problem in the class. However when the effort was made to collect evidence it was discovered that only 10 percent children were creating problems and largely it was not a problem. Thus the magnitude of the problem turned out to be quite small in comparison to what was expected. Before attempting the solutions it is important to pinpoint the problem. You will be able to design and carry out action research only after clear identification of the problem.

(b) Identification of causes of the problem

There can be many reasons for a problem to occur. It is important to identify the real causes before planning any action. Let us take an example. A teacher trainee during her internship realises that she has a good knowledge of all types of approaches and theories of ECE, yet in the classroom she is not able to implement these approaches and deal with the children as effectively as she would like to. She discusses the problem with the supervisor who points out that she is generally in a hurry and she has her own goals while taking the class. She is not able to handle the classroom according to the response of the children and this may be one of the causes for her feelings. She must observe the children, take a note of their responses and then proceed patiently. She plans certain strategies, for example, interacting with the children during activities, add new activities, encourage children to participate in classroom happenings, and implement them one by one. The process continues till the teacher trainee reaches a level where she feels satisfied. This is the process of action research. Thus action research gives the teacher or the practitioner enough opportunities to solve their problems but without knowing the causes strategies cannot be thought of.

(c) Formulation of action research hypothesis

Formulation of action research hypothesis refers to searching possible alternatives that would eliminate some of the causes. Action research hypothesis provides you with the premise on the basis of which improvement in practice is anticipated. Let us understand that there is always an element of uncertainty in a hypothesis or



you may say that hypothesis formulated may or may not work. That is why it is important to test it in order to verify its applicability in the context. There can be more than one hypothesis and we go on experimenting one by one till we find an optimum solution. However it must be built up around the main or central causes. There are some causes which are beyond our control, for example, a teacher finds that the students who are first generation learners are not good in learning English. If action hypothesis is to make their parents literate, perhaps it will not deliver results immediately. However if remedial teaching or extra attention is planned, the results will be better. This becomes an important consideration while designing action research hypothesis.

(d) Development of tools for collection of evidences

The next action after designing the hypothesis is development of necessary tools for collection of evidences. Since action research is for the consumption of the practitioner only, the tools should be kept simple. They may be user friendly and may not involve too much statistics related analysis. The basic characteristic of the action research is that it should be carried out by the teacher or practitioner with minimum resources and out of the time available to her/him. Keeping this in mind tools should be developed. While developing the tools two important considerations may be – what type of data is required and how it would be collected. Suppose the problem lies within the classroom processes, classroom observation can be an important tool. If the problem is related to the time planning, time activity chart may be helpful. If the problem is with regard to parent-teacher involvement, a questionnaire or a structured interview schedule may be prepared for collection of evidence or information.

(e) Collection of Evidence

Research activity cannot be completed without collection of required data and its analysis. It is important to gather the data appropriately. What is data? The observations recorded and the interview inputs become data when we draw findings based on that. The data is information coming from different sources, helping the researcher to draw conclusions scientifically. The quality and usefulness of the inferences are highly affected by the quality of data gathered. The researcher should never lose sight of the objective throughout the process. At the same time s/he should be patient while collecting the information.



(f) Analysis of the data

Analysis of data would suggest the action to be taken. This will also indicate whether the action hypothesis was accepted or not. However, during the process, if at any point of time it was felt by the researcher that hypothesis needs correction it should be carried out at that time only (Refer Table 6.1 with different examples given at the end of this chapter). The analysis will help the researcher to draw conclusions and come out with action for implementation. It is also possible that final action is a combination of more than one action hypothesis.

(g) Putting results into practice

Analysis of data yields the action to be implemented to improve the practice. The researcher finally applies the results of the action research in actual settings and verifies how far they are helpful to him.

It is important to understand that action research is flexible. It depends upon the level at which it is being carried out and type of the problem. Problem could be at micro level or at macro level. In case the action research problem is related to the classroom and class teacher is doing it, the scope of study would be limited to that class only. This would be identified as micro problem. However, for the Head-teacher the area may be relatively larger if her concerns are like, how to build up healthy partnerships with parents or how to distribute the tasks amongst the work force or how to ensure quality in the institution etc. The Head-teacher may design a proper research methodology in order to evolve specific strategies. Thus, action research permeates short term planning and daily schedule. It can precisely be defined as a reflection to solve a problem in a community. In a classroom, community action research is often used by the teachers to improve student performance and behavior. Teachers who have used action research say that it becomes a way of life in their daily teaching.



Table 6.1
Some Examples showing Action Research Problems and Approaches

S. No.	Identification of a Problem/ Topic	Probable causes	Formation of Hypothesis/ alternative solutions	Development of tools	Collection of Evidence	Analysis	Strategies and Approaches
1.	Child is not willing to play on the slide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After interaction, I discovered that the child is scared to go up the ladder as she has never done it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -take the child near the slide and encourage her to climb -show the child other children sliding -give child a low height slide and put him with a small friendly group of children 	Observation schedule	The teacher would apply all these alternative solutions and take down the observations for each solution.	The teacher analyses observations in different situations and tries to find out the best solution by her systematic understanding.	The teacher decides "In such a situation I shall provide the child with a low height slide and put the child in a small friendly group".
2.	Child is active and happy but hesitates in interacting with the teachers and other children.	The child is bilingual – the language spoken at home is 'Bangla' which is different from the one spoken at ECE centre. She does not enjoy the other language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -continue talking with the child, using actions and print rich environment, at a slow pace. While talking, reinforce the correct vocabulary and encourage the child to speak. -make the child sit and play more in small group activities -give more opportunities of storytelling and music sessions 	Observation schedule	The teacher would apply all these alternative solutions and take down the observations for each solution.	After analysing alternative hypothesis and analysing observations it was found that all the strategies had positive effect on the child. However first strategy seemed to be more appropriate.	The teacher decides "In such a situation I should talk to the child intimately, provide her with print rich environment and give her confidence that she can speak very well in the language spoken at the centre".
	Identification of a Problem/ Topic	Course for a Problem	Formation of Hypothesis/ alternative solutions	Development of tools	Collection of Evidences	Analysis	Strategies and Approaches
3.	Sahil often kicks the block building structures developed by other children in groups.	-he is hyper-active and his physical energies are not properly channelised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -interaction with the parents to know his behavior and routine at home. -involve the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -interaction schedule (with the parents) -Observation schedule 	The teacher would apply all these alternative solutions	The teacher analyses observations in different situations and tries to find	The teacher decides "I will interact with the parents to understand



		<p>-he is attention seeker and does not get attention adequately either at home or at the centre.</p> <p>-he is an extra-pampered child at home.</p>	<p>child along with other children in making classroom rules and set limits for behavior.</p> <p>-provide such materials and toys to the child so that his physical energies are positively utilised and then he gets ready to sit for quiet activities</p>		<p>and take down the observations for each solution.</p>	<p>out the best solution by her systematic understanding.</p>	<p>child's natural behavior and help the child to channelise his physical energies properly".</p>
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Annexures



Annexure – A

Activities and Ideas for different domains of Child Development

While providing activities the teacher should always encourage and motivate her children with plenty of positive reinforcement for their efforts, no matter how proficient their skills. All ages and developmental stages are approximate and should be used as a guide. The teachers should use their best judgment to create and plan developmentally appropriate activities for the children.

Eye-Hand Coordination (visual motor)

Also referred to as Visual Motor Integration, this is the ability to control hand movement guided by vision. Visual motor skills can be enhanced through lots of practice in the activity itself. Studies have shown that spending time on hand-eye coordination activities improves children's ability to learn to read.

Activities and Ideas

1. **Picture Puzzles** should be sturdy, colourful and may be related to different themes of interests of young children. The puzzles vary from simple to complex i.e. two piece puzzle to 6 – 8 piece puzzles. Puzzles help develop hand-eye coordination because learning to control hands and fingers according to information received from sight is a coordination skill that aids children in early attempts at reading and writing. Determining which piece goes where, working to fit pieces into place by making adjustments, and seeing a sequence develop in an organised pattern can be a great learning experience as well as very satisfying for children. Puzzles, matching games, etc. are also important to help children learn visual discrimination. Visual discrimination is the ability of the brain to quickly tell the difference among visually similar letters, like “p,” “b,” and “d” or between words such as “man” and “men.” Children with difficulty making these distinctions often struggle with learning to read, write, and spell. Playing games, engaging in activities or with toys that help children discriminate among similar objects can be fun for the child and help them master an important preliteracy skill.
2. **Sorting or Classification Material** such as buttons, bottle caps, blocks, corner chips, different shapes, beads etc. can be classified by their size, shape and colours. Sorting provides



experience in noting likenesses and differences as well as for developing eye-hand coordination.

3. **Templates** (made of plastic or wood) have preferably both inner and outer edges so that children can feel the shapes. Circles, squares, triangles, diamonds and clove shaped templates are very good for writing readiness. Medium sized templates can be used on sheets of paper at activity table. First, each child should be encouraged to hold the template and feel it with both hands. Then a child can place the template on the paper and can trace around the template with crayon. Templates help to develop greater sensitivity to form. You can also prepare templates of the letters of the alphabet in three dimensional forms.
4. **Writing in sand** with a stick is very good before the child begins writing on slates/chalkboard and starts using pencil.
5. **Block play** serves many purposes and is especially recommended for eye-hand coordination. Children also learn planning, cooperation, vocabulary and many other concepts while building blocks. They also learn matching shapes, identifying and sorting colours, size of blocks and their weight. Nested cups / blocks are also good for eye-hand coordination. Children get many experiences such as matching and identifying shapes, colours, sizes, textures, inside and outside, top and bottom, filled and empty and so on.
6. **Beach balls** (large balls) for young children are best used for catching, throwing, rolling and bouncing experiences. You can also plan many organised outdoor games such as “Dodge ball”, “Kick the ball”, “Throw the ball at target”, etc. Rolling a ball back and forth helps the child with learning how to direct the ball; she is learning how to use her hands to make the ball go where her eyes are looking. Tossing a beanbag or ball into the air and catching again is a good hand-eye coordination exercise.
7. **Form Boards or Inset Boards** are the ones in which such forms such as circle, triangle and various other shapes will fit into the groove of the same shape. These are very good for eye-hand coordination. Each figure or shape has a little knob so that a young child can easily manipulate them. These are also called shape sorters. Shape sorters are similar to puzzles in that your child is learning to manipulate objects with his hand until they fit into the space his eyes are seeing.



8. **Play dough** such as plasticine and potter's clay are excellent for eye-hand coordination and for developing young children's creative power. The teacher can also prepare homemade dough in the school kitchen by adding different edible food colours to it. Practice making play dough balls with the children, using shape-cutters, and rolling out long play dough "snakes". For an older toddler who is learning the shapes, you can try making shapes together.
9. **Manipulative toys** such as shoe-lacing devices, beads and strings, take apart toys, hammering toys, assembling toys, nuts and bolts etc. are all good for the improvement of finger dexterity.
10. **Running Chalkboards** are very good for use in early childhood classrooms. Colourful chalks may be given to children to encourage scribbling and early writing attempts. Encourage children to follow directions such as up, down, straight line, vertical line, etc. at the chalkboard.
11. Provide **straws** to make different forms and patterns.
12. **Blunt scissors** for cutting coloured paper, favourite pictures from old magazines help young children to gain control of hand and finger muscles. Eye-hand coordination is important in all such activity.
13. **Painting with large brushes** is another excellent activity to provide the feel of painting, experiment with colour and to create different forms. Children also learn how to hold the brush, and make strokes on the paper. Let the children paint at easel or attach a large drawing paper on the wall.
14. **Drawing and colouring**– Children begin drawing by scribbling randomly. Some may scribble up and down in a vertical direction, side to side, and in circles. Drawing is an excellent way to develop hand-eye coordination. Let the child experiment with different mediums...try painting, pencils, crayons, chalk, and other writing implements.

Drawing within a large space such as on running wall, chalkboard, dry erase board or easel helps children learn about the movements involved in the shapes and strokes they are learning.

Draw shapes with a highlighter or a thick sketch pen for the child to trace over.

15. **Cutting play dough** with a plastic knife.



Free outdoor Play

Free play should always be encouraged and every day teacher should provide free outdoor play time on equipment. Take a few minutes of every day and offer something new – then let the children enjoy some unstructured time in large motor play. Other than that a teacher should plan for some organised gross motor play.

Activities and Ideas

1. **Walking** in a line, walking forward and backward, running, galloping, etc. can be demonstrated and then to music.
 - Walking between two drawn lines.
 - Walking on a balance plank.
 - Walking on a narrow line one foot in front of the other along the ground.
 - Walk upstairs one foot to a step (alternate feet).
 - Walk downstairs one foot to a step (alternate feet).
2. **Climbing activities** – using a range of large apparatus such as,
 - Climbing on a jungle gym.
 - Climb over, up, down carton boxes, stairs, child height rope ladders, planks, logs, etc.
 - Along an obstacle course using a variety of equipment of differing heights etc.
3. **Jumping**
 - Over safe objects such as, string, line, box, etc.
 - Jumping obstacle course, low planks, string, blocks, boxes etc.
 - Jump up to reach hanging objects, balloons, toy, toffees, etc.
 - Stand and jump from one shape to another,
 - Jump on mattresses, tyres; jump to music while doing music and movement activities.
 - Jumping from a step, box or similar (40 on high) and land on two feet with bent knees.
4. **Obstacle courses** such as rope ladders and frames.
5. **Balancing** activities – using a range of both small and large apparatus. Encourage the children to walk on a piece of string or tape, a low beam or plank at the playground.



6. **Ball play**- Medium and large balls to catch and throw; small balls for older children; Bouncing medium and large balls.
7. **Bean bag or Target activities** – A range of team games involving throwing bean bags at a target, or putting bean bags into a bucket, hoop, etc., or games involving kicking or throwing. Ask the children to aim for a specific target such as squares with letters, numbers, shapes or colours in the squares.
8. Play games that incorporate **movement and stamping** the feet while calling out –‘left-right-left-right’.
9. **Crawling**
 - Treasure Hunt - crawl to find hidden objects
 - Crawl through an obstacle course - through (boxes, tyres, pipes, hoops, and tunnel) under objects (table, large fixed equipment, chairs, rope,) around objects (tree, box, chair, fixed apparatus) over objects (pillow, box, and mattress, etc.)
10. **Hopping races**
 - Around obstacles - boxes, trees, reels, tyres, fixed equipment hoops
 - Hop into/out of circles and hoops.
 - Make patterns on the ground of shapes, colors, dots. Hop on one shape, colour, etc.
11. Start making the child aware of the left and right sides of her / his body through spontaneous comments like, “kick the ball with your right leg”, and so on.
12. **Stone cold** – Give each child a number, then ask them all to run around in different directions. If their number is called they have to stand still like a statue until the next number is called when they can move again.
13. **Statues** Encourage the children move to music. When the music stops they stop and balance on one foot.

Music and movement activities

Play music and let children dance and move their bodies. And if you do not have a CD player then make up action songs that get your students to stretch, bend, twist, march, and jump.

Singing games set up games for a small or large group



- **“Five little elephants went balancing”:**

*Five grey elephants went balancing
Step by step on a piece of string
They thought it such a wonderful stunt
That they called for another elephant.*

- **Singing activities** – Substitute the word ‘run’

*“Run, run, run everyone
On a chilly winter day
This is how the children run
On a chilly winter day”.*
(jump, swim, walk, shake, hop)

- **“Head Shoulders Knees and Toes”**

Start out by singing ‘Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes’ at a normal pace. Once the children get the concept, sing it slower, faster, super fast, or substitute other body parts in for a change of pace.

*“Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes
And eyes and ears and mouth and nose
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes”*
(Repeat, and sing faster each time)

- **“The Wheels on the Bus”**

*“The wheels on the bus go round and round (Roll hands over each other)
Round and round, round and round (Roll hands over each other)
The wheels on the bus go round and round (Roll hands over each other)
All through the town”.*

- **Ten Little Apples**

*“One little , two little ,three little apples,
Four little, five little, six little apples,
Seven little, eight little, nine little apples,
Ten little apples on the tree.*



*Ten little , nine little, eight little apples,
Seven little, six little, five little apples,
Four little, three little, two little apples,
One little apple on the ground.”*

- **Hands on Shoulders**

*“Hands on Shoulders, hands on knees,
Hands behind you if you please.
Touch your shoulders, now your nose,
Now your chin and now your toes.
Hands up high as can be,
Down at your side and touch your knee.
Hands up high as before,
Now clap your hands , One -Two- Three-Four”.*

- **“Roll the Ball” (to the tune of “Row , row, row your boat...”)**

*“Roll, roll, roll the ball
Roll it round and round
Roll to me, I roll to you
We roll it on the ground.*

*Bounce, bounce, bounce the ball
Bounce it round and round
Bounce to me, I bounce to you
We bounce it on the ground.*

*Throw, throw, throw the ball
Throw it in the air
Throw to me, I throw to you
We throw it everywhere”*

Circle games

- Let all the children stand in a circle with teacher in the middle. Sing a chant, such as catch the ball Mitali or kick the ball Mitali. Throw the ball for each child to catch in turn, in time to complete the chant.
- Ring-around-the-rosie is a perfect example of simple activity that get children moving, running, jumping, sitting, and standing.



Organised games based on different themes–

“What Time Is It Mr. Fox”

Mr. Fox stands with his back to the other children. The children ask “what time is it, Mr. Fox?” Mr. Fox answers with a time. If he says two o’clock, the other children must take two steps toward Mr. Fox. Once one child gets close enough to touch Mr. Fox, the fox turns around and tries to catch one of the children. The children attempt to run back to the starting line.

The teacher can play this with any variation of animal that the children are interested in.

- **Animal games and movements**

Encourage children to imitate the way certain animals walk such as ---‘Hop like a bunny’, ‘Walk like a elephant’, ‘slither like a snake’ and so on

- **Transportation**

-Let the children do the actions while they sing along to “Row, Row, Row Your Boat...”. Start by singing the song at regular speed/tempo. Then sing fast, then very slow.

Make a sequence of vehicle sounds and let the children dramatise the vehicle movements. The teacher can set the area and add props also.

Traffic Light– This is an active game also used for the theme ‘my five senses’. A teacher needs to discuss what traffic has to do at the lights. Ask the children that they will be the traffic and have to obey the traffic lights. Then the teacher holds up colours and children will act accordingly.

Simon Says

Draw large shapes, letters of the alphabet, numbers, etc. using coloured chalk. Say “Simon says stand on the yellow square,” or “Simon says sit on the number 5.” For more advanced children, try multiple step instructions like “Simon says run to number’ 5’, then hop over to number ‘7’ This is a fun way to work on matching and identification of numbers, letters, etc. instead of saying Simon, call out any child’s name.

“Touch” Game

The teacher gives directions, saying: “touch a tree,” “touch something blue,” “touch something high,” etc. and the children run to find and touch whatever it is.



Language and Literacy Development– Listening and Speaking Skill

Often it has been seen that speaking and listening are merely used as a tool to support and guide reading and writing readiness. Moreover, discussions are also often dominated by the teacher and children have limited opportunities for productive speaking and listening. Teachers should do lots of listening and speaking activities so as to develop good readers and writers.

As children mature, their listening and speaking skills continue to develop. Young toddlers communicate their needs using three or four words. As young children are introduced to richer language experiences and, vocabulary, they begin to express themselves in longer statements with more descriptive language. Preschoolers are able to communicate their needs in full ideas. As children grow, their listening and speaking skills also grow. They are able to express themselves using the experiences they have been building on since infancy. The developmental journey in language is the foundation for early literacy and future academic success. Oral language is the critical foundation upon which reading and writing builds.

Activities and Ideas

1. Challenge children to **listen to all sounds** on their way to school. Discuss which ones are loud, irritating, nice etc.
2. Ask children to **close their eyes and listen** for any and all sounds. After three to four minutes ask them what they heard.
3. **Asks questions**, e.g. Who? What's that for?, When?, Why? How?
4. **Play' Simon says'** (Call out any child's name, for example 'Arnav', says) :-The teacher gives quick changes in direction such as "Arnav says, 'touch your nose'," "Arnav says, 'Touch your knees'." If the teacher gives a direction without prefacing it with "Arnav says", those children doing the act have not listened carefully and will be out of the game.

You can also vary this game by giving instructions such as "Arnav says, go and touch the door, then the window and then the chalkboard and come to me".

5. **Use of toy animals** – Ask children to practise following spatial instruction such as – Put the monkeys on the blocks, put the ducks in the pond, put the dog behind the door.



6. **Listening to stories and creating stories.** Ask the children to create a story. Write it down and read it back to them. This activity promotes language and literacy development, and creativity!
Play “story chain.” Everyone in the classroom will enjoy this. Encourage one child to begin a story (“Once upon a time, there was a little girl who lived in a forest, one day...”), and then let another child contribute the next sentence, and so on. Because each child has to listen to what came before to advance the story, this game enhances listening skills.
Puppets and masks have traditionally been associated with oral dramatic presentations.
7. **Giving an explanation** – Ask children to given an explanation about what happened?
8. **“Fruit Basket”** – Each child is given the name of a fruit. The child as a leader calls out two fruits and the children must exchange seats. The leader tries to capture one of the seats as the exchange is made and the child without a seat becomes the “leader”. The leader may call, “Fruit Basket Upset”, and all players must exchange seats.
9. Encourage children to **repeat after you a series of digits**, lines of poems, rhyming words, etc. as a good listening and memory span experience.
10. **Acting out a story** that uses positional words.
11. **Play ‘Chinese whispers’** game.
12. **Show and tell activity:** This activity is a brief talk by a child describing a favorite object .
13. **Play ‘rhyming game’.**
14. **Dramatic play**
15. Bring a tape recorder to **record sounds** the children hear. Next day play the tape and see if the children remember the sounds.
16. **Picture reading:** Collect five or six interesting pictures related to one theme. Show the pictures to them and continue the discussion as long as the children are interested. (What do you see in the picture?; what do you think is happening?; what would if... And so on.)
17. **How many can you name?-----** ask the children to choose a category and encourage them to name as many as they can that fits into it such as ---fruits, things that fly, things made



of wood, breakfast foods, things to drink, ways of travelling, zoo animals etc.

18. Encourage **discussion and questioning skills** through the use of puppets.
19. **Group conversations and discussions:** Conversations is somewhat informal, unstructured and spontaneous whereas Discussion is topic based, focused and has some purpose. Discussions help the children to listen to other people speak and also participate.
20. **Story Boxes:** A teacher should place a variety of objects into a box or large bag.

Then she should ask each child to close her or his eyes, reach into the box or bag, and pull out one object. After the children examine the object and think about it for a while, they should each make up a story that includes the object in some manner.

21. **Wordless picture books:** A wordless picture book tells a story through pictures alone.

While turning the pages slowly, the “child reader” adds the narration and dialogue to create a complete story. When young children see the wordless book strategy modeled by the teacher, they quickly pick up on it and begin telling stories themselves.

Emergent Literacy (early reading and writing development)

Emergent literacy suggests that the development of literacy is taking place within the child. It also suggests that it is a gradual process and will take place over time. For something to emerge it needs to be there at the beginning (the child’s own natural learning ability), and things usually only emerge under the right conditions (Hall, 1987). It has been seen that preschools are doing lots of developmentally inappropriate literacy activities that is a downward extension of a grade one programme. Speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing are all interrelated. Emergent literacy is the development of early reading and writing attempts and concepts that precede actual reading. It begins at birth and continues throughout the preschool years. During this early period of language development, children learn important skills that contribute to the development of reading. In this emergent literacy period children gain knowledge about reading and writing, not through instruction or formal method but through observing others and participating themselves in informal literacy activities and events.



Quality preschools and developmentally appropriate activities support the importance of an understanding of emergent literacy. It includes:--Rich conversations, Read aloud stories, Phonological awareness, alphabet activities.

Activities and Ideas

1. Use Children's Play to Facilitate Reading and Writing.
2. Provide opportunities for reading and writing, and oral communication throughout the day and in various activities.
3. Point out words on signs and logos on food boxes and games.
4. Point out details in pictures and talk to the children about them, or encourage the children to describe what is happening in the picture.
5. Print awareness refers to the ability to recognise print and understand that it carries meaning. This is a necessary pre-reading skill. Preschool classrooms should be print-rich environments with plenty of books and written words. For example, label words on various objects in the room such as "door", "window" and "almirah". Keep letter magnets, foam letters, and letter blocks available in the language area.
6. Focus the child's attention on books by pointing to words and pictures as you read.
7. Use every day, natural occurrences where children can visually compare letter shapes and sound similarities of words and letters. For example, using alphabet sorting boxes, alphabet books and puzzles etc.
8. Make Reading and Writing a Part of the Daily Routine of the Classroom:-Write in front of the children, let them see how you write, why you write. All activity areas of the ECE centers and all themes should offer opportunities for children to engage in oral communication and to read and write.
9. **Phonological awareness**– Read rhyming books, and sing songs and finger plays containing rhyme. For example one child will say, 'roti', next child:-'moti' ,third child:-'goti'. Sound matching i.e., deciding which of several words begins with a specific sound' and so on. Children enjoy playing with rhyme, which is important for development of phonological awareness in preschoolers. Provide activities that increase children's awareness of the sounds of language.
10. **Learning letter names and sounds**– Sound discrimination– For example,



- Encourage children to say the initial sound they hear in their own name, such as, “Rakshit – ‘Ishika”.
 - Use finger-paints to color in letter outlines or letter templates /stencils.
 - Trace letters in sand or inside the letter stencil.
 - Glue seeds inside of letters drawn on paper.
 - Sing alphabet songs based on letter sounds.
 - Provide attractive wonderful alphabet books.
11. **Alphabet activities**– Provide children with print rich material that promotes identification of letters of the alphabet.
 - Name cards with picture and name puzzles
 - Play with magnetic letters
 - Play with alphabet blocks
 - ABC books.
 12. Put all the children’s first names on one side of the chalkboard. Encourage them to find which should come first for an alphabetical arrangement, which next, etc. as you write them on the opposite side of the chalkboard.
 13. Help children to make individual picture dictionaries. Paste a printed letter on each page and let the children paste the pictures with each letter. Use old books and magazines for pictures. Let children themselves select the pictures.
 14. Sing songs that emphasises on phonics.
 15. Challenge children to think of the words that begin with the initial sound ब (B), क (C) and so on.
 16. Let children copy their name on paper from their name card.
 17. **Phonic games**
 - Think of rhyming words.
 - Think of words beginning with the same sound as one’s own name.
 - Fill in rhyming words of a poem.
 18. **Sequence**
 - Pictures may be cut from magazines or newspapers, from old children’s books or drawn by the teacher. They should be of familiar objects and situations. Collect a series of pictures that tell a story and put them in the correct order. Ask a child to retell the story. Mix the sequence and ask the child to correct it and tell the story.



19. **Wrapper/ Packet match**

Collect empty food packets, biscuits/ chocolate wrappers and put them with their labels in a grocery bag. Also keep the children's names cards with their initial letter highlighted in a separate bowl or in an envelope. Move your index finger underneath the words on the empty food packet and ask 'can you read this?' Then for example, say "Noodles" and "Neetu", both start with the same sound. Continue until each child has a turn.

20. "I spy with my little eye", someone whose name begins with d/Dd/ as in doll. Show the 'Dd' card so that the children begin to connect the letter symbol with the sound.

21. "I went shopping":

"I went shopping

And now I am back

With so many things

In my bag".

Take one item from the bag and ask any child to read the label on that item. Move your finger underneath the label to hint.

22. **Jumping Bananas**– Make banana shaped cards out of thick chart paper and write one letter of the alphabet on each banana. Create five or six 'jumping banana' cards by drawing a banana with a funny face on the card. Keep all the banana cards in an empty can and label it as 'JUMPING BANANAS'.

Make children sit in a circle. Explain that each child will take out a card out of can, say the letter on the card, and then pass the can to the child sitting next to him. If the child takes out the special jumping banana card, he calls out "jumping banana..", and all the children stand and jump up and down. In the beginning, use letters that are easier to discriminate and identify. Remember that the children must have done the matching of letters first. Always follow the three step magic formula: 'MATCHING, IDENTIFICATION & NAMING'.

23. Keep children's name cards along with their logos in interest areas such as literacy area so that they can trace their names and copy their names. In the beginning, instead of logo, you can include each child's photograph on her/his name card.

24. Keep alphabet stamps and textured letters in literacy area.



25. Use name cards during transition activities. Make a separate set of name cards and keep them in a colourful paper bag. Select a card (without showing it to children) and slowly reveal one letter at a time, naming each letter as it becomes visible to the children. One by one ask children to choose an activity area/ game when they recognise their names. Help them wherever necessary.
26. Take a ball and ask children to keep on passing it by saying on their turn—
for example,
 - “My name is Romila and I sell Roses”.
 - “My name is Sandhya and I sell Sunglasses”.
 - “My name is Bobby and I sell Books”.
27. Give your children access to writing and art materials, and give them daily opportunities to attempt writing and drawing.
28. Story Telling- Story books with repetitive text are highly recommended for the preschoolers. Also encourage children to tell their own stories. Reading aloud to children on a regular basis is very beneficial to young children. By listening to the printed word, children can develop a feel for the patterns, the flow, and the nature of written language. Children learn the left to right and top to bottom sequence while looking at books, learn that pictures provide context clues and build a sight vocabulary, among other things.
29. Engage children in rich conversations in large group, small groups and one-to-one settings.
30. Provide a variety of materials to encourage drawing and scribbling. Display writing materials—paper, pencils, crayons and markers in areas on the tables and in the language area where children can access them easily for writing.
31. Connect parents and community with programmes to help them improve their own literacy.
32. Discuss with parents about books that children enjoy.

Cognitive Development

Young children are at an age where their brain is growing at a rapid rate and teachers and parents can encourage this cognitive growth through activities that promote thinking and problem-solving.

Cognition means to know and cognitive development includes the ways children solve problems and learn. Young children build



knowledge and learn about their environment as they develop cognitively.

Memory, close observation, problem solving, sequential thinking, predicting, reasoning are all cognitive skills. Children need to meet certain cognitive developmental milestones. The following are certain activities that can encourage these cognitive skills in young children.

Activities and Ideas

Sensory play is an important part of early childhood development. Every day children are learning about things by the five senses. Young children's development relies heavily on the senses. Senses are the doorways for receiving outside experiences. Without these senses, children will not be able to recognise these things. Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates a young child's senses: touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing. The teacher should provide lots of experiences and activities for all the five senses. Adding tools for sensory play is always very important. The teacher should keep baskets filled with cups, laundry lids, shovels, measuring spoons, tweezers, magnifiers, and other items and she should rotate the items frequently so that children use those items in the sensory tubs.

Sensory Development

1. Name that smell- Ask children to think about the smells of home: mother's kitchen when she cooks vegetable, fries puries, paranthas, cleans clothes and bathroom.
2. Discuss pleasant and unpleasant smells.
3. Encourage children to become more aware of environment smells.
4. Drawing in a tactile medium such as wet sand.
5. Collect various items and point to each item, and ask your child what each item feels like. Then ask the children to classify it into hard and soft.
6. Feeling and talking about the qualities of plasticine, sand, clay, paper, cotton, water, wool etc.
7. Name that sound:- Blindfold the child for this activity. Collect random items such as a bell, a music box or a rattle. See if the child can guess what makes these noises.
8. Clapping games (loud / quiet, on knees together, etc.)
9. Blindfold the children and perform a basic taste test. Spoon a



few different things into each child's mouth. Ask the children to identify the object and how it tastes.

10. Textures– Sand play and water play.
11. Modeling clay and dough is a wonderful tactile activity because the children use their hands and their sense of touch in order to create new objects with the clay.
12. Tactile Letters:--(sensory alphabet) Children feel alphabet letters that have been cut out of felt or some other material. They hold the letters and touch them with their hands while saying the name of the letters out loud.
13. Sensory mystery box:- The teacher places items inside the box and asks each child to put her /his hands into the hole to feel the object and guess what it is. The child must rely on her/his tactile sense in order to identify the object, without the assistance of her/his other senses.
14. Play with plasticine and play dough
15. Take children for field trip and encourage them to observe different things in the environment.
16. Create a sensory tub and fill it with variety of objects for the children to feel with and allow them to explore.

Activities and Ideas for cognitive skills

1. **Observation**– The very important cognitive skill gained in ECE center is the ability to examine objects closely.
 - Take children out for a nature walk and encourage them to look at different things in the environment. Show them nests, leaves, houses, ants, pebbles and veins in the center of the leaves and so on. Carry small baskets while going out and also a magnifying lens.
 - Play games based on observation skill such as 'Follow the Leader'.
 - Play 'I spy games'.
2. **Classification or Sorting**– These activities require children to organise items or objects into groups based on a common characteristic such as size, color, shape, texture or flavor, and also explain why they grouped the items as they did. Encourage children to sort objects such as bottle caps, blocks, environmental materials etc. into similar categories. When the children are comfortable in sorting objects based on an obvious characteristic (such as color), challenge them



to sort a more diverse group of items. Make sorting a part of daily routine.

- Sorting magnetic and non-magnetic things
- Sorting with buttons / leaves / bottle caps / lids / shapes/ colours/envelopes and so on.
- Play “I spy games”.
- Parts and wholes: Ask children to match lids to containers, or put bolts and washers together.
- Which does not belong and why?----“Cup, plate, spoon, or book”?
- Name the category and encourage the child to think of items that fit into it.

3. Patterning

- Use blocks, beads and other manipulatives to build spatial reasoning and patterning skills. For example, ‘Threading and patterning activities using colour’.
- Follow the pattern or copying patterns
- Completing the pattern.

4. Memory games

- “What is missing”?
- Pairs of cards mixed up and turned upside down; a child can work to flip the cards and make matches by memory.
- Matching by colour dominoes / buttons / leaves / bottle caps, etc.
- “What did I repeat? ---“pig, hen, pig, goat”.(the child says –‘Pig’).

5. Sequential thinking

- Sequential thinking cards which the children organise according to the logical sequence of events. Encourage left to right placement of objects or cards.
- Repeating orally a sequence of three numbers between 1 and 10.
- What comes next?—“flower, flower, butterfly, flower, flower,...”(the child says, “Butterfly”).
- Seriation:- Putting things in order (biggest to smallest, tallest to shortest and so on)

- 6. Problem solving skill:** Problem solving activities help preschoolers to develop basic problem solving skills and hand-eye coordination.



Completing simple jigsaw puzzle initially and gradually a difficult one, for example, starting with two piece puzzle to 5-6 piece puzzle. Puzzle activities can include traditional jigsaw puzzles that are made for all age and ability levels.

Inset boards (shapes, animals, transport, birds, fruits and vegetables).

- Ask your children questions----'what if' questions such as –
“What do you think will happen next?”
“What would happen if?”
“What do you do if?”(what do you do if you are locked in the classroom?)
 - Find the hidden picture
 - Creating Mases:-You may create a floor mase in the ECE center or with chairs.
7. Drawing a person with head, arms and legs.
 8. Collect and sing counting rhymes and songs.
 9. Create number learning area where you can keep board games, number lotto games, etc.
 10. Buzz game – Children stand in a circle. The first child begins by saying '0'. The next child says '1' and so on until the chosen number is reached and that person says 'buzz' and sits down. Continue until there is one child left standing.
 11. Touching objects and say the number (touch and count).

Social and Emotional Development

Young children’s social and emotional skills are important for school readiness and are key building blocks for cognitive development and knowledge acquisition at very young ages. In order to develop social and emotional skills, teachers and parents need to give their children the opportunities to play with others, explore their own abilities and express their feelings. The teacher can promote social-emotional development in her classroom by embedding her teaching practices throughout the day.

Activities and Ideas

1. Time for free play– Let the children interact and play with other children. This will also begin to lay foundations for sharing, caring, listening to others, dealing with one’s own emotions and understanding others etc.



2. Imaginative play such as role-play, drawing / painting, dance, constructions, language, games etc.
3. Help children value the contribution of others.
4. Encourage children to cooperate with other children in small group activities.
5. Provide self-help skill activities such as hanging bag to hook, using toilet on their own, button and unbutton and so on.
6. Create emotionally supportive environment so that children separate comfortably from parent.
7. Encourage children take turns and share with others. Give the children such games to play that require cooperation.
8. Encourage children to be helpful.
9. Help children to show concern for others and learn how to treat others well. Show interest and understanding for a child's feelings.
10. Read storybooks and talk about feelings. Play a game asking children to label emotions in picture.
11. Help children use words rather than physical aggression to solve problems.
12. Ensure that every child has a chance to talk.
13. Help children to make friends. Ask children to create rules for the playground while the teacher writes them down and at the same time encourage the children to negotiate differences in opinions.
14. Plan small group activities and also pair children to work on a task.
15. "Simon says" - This well known game can help children to identify various parts of their body. Instead of Simon you may use each child's name. For example, 'Arnav says touch your ears' and so on.
16. Dramatic play area and Dolls play- Dramatic play area can help children develop socially and playing with dolls can be a great stress-reducing activity.
17. Cooperative musical chairs – This game is played like musical chairs but the rules are quite different. When the music stops everyone must be seated on a chair or on someone's lap. This will help children develop the co-operational element rather than that of competition.
18. Make 'classroom rules' and 'family rules' and involve the



children while making them. Talk about the need for rules, for example why we need traffic lights or rules for games.

19. Tell the story of ‘the three Pigs’—how the elder pig worked harder and was responsible.
20. Discuss how the child can become responsible—keeping the toys back to the storage, helping in setting the table etc.
21. Tell a story that illustrates the values. Concentrate on a specific value for about a month. Story books are a great way to reflect on positive and emotional behaviours.
22. Play with puppets:- Puppets are wonderful toys to develop social skills. Children enjoy wearing and talking to the puppet which is great for communication and social skills.
23. Develop a ‘children’s wall space’ where all their work may be exhibited.
24. Develop ‘the book of me’. It is a large scrap book recording the child’s early life milestones and achievements. You can include child’s photo, photos of milestones in age sequence, hand and finger prints, family tree, list of what the child can do and so on.
25. Creative art and dramatic play activities help children to express their feelings and emotions.
26. Bubble blowing: Let the children blow bubbles and burst as many bubbles as they can.
27. Praise the positive: Give children feedback and attention if they are doing positive things instead of only giving feedback when they have done something wrong .
28. Offer children choices so that they can begin making their own preferences. For example, “Do you want to play in dolls area or with blocks?” or “Do you want the red ball or the blue ball?” are examples of questions that teachers should pose to help young children make their own decisions.
29. Help the children learn how to express their emotions in appropriate ways. When they display strong emotions like anger or jealousy, encourage the child to talk about how she/ he is feeling without acting out inappropriately. When they display unsuitable emotional responses, such as pinching, hitting or shouting, make it clear that such actions are not acceptable, but always offer an alternative response. The teacher should always model the type of behavior she expects to see.



30. Develop a play based developmentally appropriate ECE programme that is engaging and relevant to young children's lives and culture.
31. Respect the child and value children's cultural and language backgrounds.
32. Teacher as a role model for effective social behaviour: - Social and emotional skills should be continually modeled by the preschool teacher and revisited on a regular basis. Social and emotional skills are behaviour skills, and they should be used within the everyday routines in the classroom. Model polite use of language and encourage children to imitate you.
33. Teacher should engage with parents in a two-way relationship to build children's social-emotional skills.

Remember positive relationships with children and parents are key to children's social-emotional development.



Materials and Equipment for Different Developmental Areas

Areas of Development	Materials and Equipment
Physical and Motor Development a) Gross Motor Skill b) Fine Motor Skill	<p>Large size blocks, wheel toys, climbers, tyres, balls of different sizes, balance beams, ladders, jungle gyms, tyre structures, tunnels, slides, swings, sea-saws, hanging bars, pushing and pulling toys, tri-cycles, toy cars, trucks, aeroplanes, bean bags, hula hoops, ropes, balance planks.</p> <p>Button frames, shoes for lacing, beads for stringing, building blocks, puzzles, fastening frames, locking devices, interlocking blocks, lego blocks, zipping frames, sewing cards, geoboard, foam blocks, sieves, blunt scissors, weaving cards, hammering toys, sand tools, unit and hollow blocks, adequate space for block building, sewing cards, spools to string, eye-dropper, funnel.</p>
Social Development	<p>Activity prop boxes, including materials related to the child's experience, such as post office, doctor's kit, house-keeping materials, toy telephones, grocery, puppets and puppet stage, toy money, pictures of helpers, dolls, doll house, name puzzles, name cards, dress-me dolls, musical instruments and so on. Activities or experiences that allow two or more children to work and share together, discarded telephones, old cameras.</p>
Intellectual or Cognitive Development	<p>Sensory material (feely bag, touch cards, texture books, etc.) magnifying glass, dominoes, different shapes, colour cards, matching games, building block props (stop sign, toy trucks, etc.) manipulative materials (puzzles), material for one-to-one correspondence, bingo-type games, colour lotto, seriated shapes, pink tower (montessori), peg boards, nuts and screws, inset boards, geoboard, colour dominoe, shape dominoe, number dominoe, stacking and nesting toys, counting books, ordering set of objects (shortest to tallest, biggest to smallest number rods, abacus, take apart toys), pan-balance, texture numerals, leaves, stones, pebbles, twigs, flowers, picture cards, pin-wheels, water-play toys, mirrors).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collections of real objects for sorting and counting: buttons, shells, keys, pebbles, seeds, nuts and so on. - Dice - Cuisenaire rods - Geoboards and rubber bands - Play money - Balance scales - Counting books - Pre-number concept books - Sound jars - Smelling jars - Magnets - Funnels - Locks and keys - Seeds, small containers and potting soil. <p>Sequential thinking cards, reasoning cards and other such material that allow a child to reflect on, act on and learn from.</p>



<p>Creative Development</p>	<p>Varied kinds of paints, varied sizes and textures of paper, sketch pens, markers, clay (plasticine, potter's clay and home-made dough), mixing bowls, glue, cloth / fabric pieces, weaving frames, blunt scissors, thick crayons, brushes with long handles, yarn / wool, rolling pins and cooking cutters, coloured chinks, sponges, paper plates, water colours, nuts and bolts, plastic squeeze bottles, egg cartons, easels, open shelves, rhythm instruments (cymbal, rhythm sticks, bells, xylophone) for music and movement activities, materials for making print (fork, rolling pin, spoons, vegetables, blocks), dress up clothes, straws, wood scraps and any such other materials that children can use to represent their world.</p>
<p>Language Development</p>	<p>Concept books, picture books, chalk board, word-less pictures books on familiar subjects, story books, information books, puppets, finger puppets, dress-up clothes, cassettes of stories and rhymes, language games, picture charts for language experience, textured letters, picture dominoes, letter-picture dominoes, letter-picture puzzles, puzzles of story characters, story cards, finger plays, reading-readiness material - picture lotto games that have pictures labeled with words, picture dictionary, name puzzles, road and traffic signs, manipulative alphabet material, old typewriter, computer, conversation charts on different topics, pictures of all kinds of objects, plants, animals and people, rhyming sound cards, alphabet board, flannel board with cutouts characters, alphabet books, teacher and child made books.</p> <p>Writing Readiness Material</p> <p>Magic slates, running small chalkboards, chalks, sand trays, writing templates (circle, square, triangle and clove shape), name cards, alphabet chart pasted on the wall in literacy area, bulletin board to display samples of childrens' writing, variety of white and coloured paper, thick crayons, thick pencils, erasers, alphabet letter print set and stamp pad, rug, storage and display rack for books, discarded rubber stamps.</p>



Annexure – C

Teacher's Self Assessment Tool

1. Theme/topic
2. Class
3. Total number of children in the class Boys Girls
4. Number of children who were Boys Girls
absent in the last 3 months
 - (i) absent for one day
 - (ii) absent for two days
 - (iii) absent for three days
 - (iv) absent for four days
 - (v) absent for five days
 - (vi) absent for more than five days
5. Number of days I was on leave:
6. Which topics do I think I taught well? How?
7. Which concept/idea/activity I could not teach to my satisfaction? Why?



- I give enough time to my children to move around and for outdoor play.
- I ask probing questions that stimulate thought.
- I spend time to observe children at work and play.
- I change my classroom activities according to the situation and mood of the children.

12. My suggestions concerning songs, stories and games:

13. My other suggestions:

Name and Signature of the Teacher

**Signature of the Teacher
incharge Supervisor
with date**



Annexure – D

Books to Read to Children and a list of Audio CDs

A. List of Books

1. *Batuni Kachua* (CBT)
2. *Bolne Wali Gufa* (CBT)
3. *Balloons For Me* (CBT)
4. *Chatur Khargosh* (CBT)
5. *The Flying Rhino* (CBT)
6. *Mahagiri* (CBT)
7. *Pyasi Maina* (CBT)
8. *Samaj Ka Pher* (CBT)
9. *Budhiya Ki Roti* (NBT)
10. *Haathi Aur Kutta* (NBT)
11. *Haathi Aur Bhorein Ki Dosti* (NBT)
12. *Juja Aur Tomas* (NBT)
13. *Lal Patang Aur Lahu* (NBT)
14. *Matsaya* (NBT)
15. *Rupa Haathi* (NBT)
16. *Phool Aur Madhumakhki* (NBT)
17. *Chilbil Silbil* (NCERT)
18. *Chuhe Ki Baraat* (NCERT)
19. *Ghar Ki Khoj* (NCERT)
20. *Meri Bhavnaey* (NCERT)
21. *Meri Jaisi* (Barkha Series, NCERT)
22. *Mujhe Dhundo* (DEE, NCERT)
23. *Tota Aur Billi* (NCERT)
24. *Motu Aur Chimpu* (IBH)



B. List of Audio CDs developed by the CIET, NCERT

25. ACD-1 (*Katha Kahani*)
 - (a) *Chiriya or Kaua*
 - (b) *Rajkumari Hans Padi*
 - (c) *Topi wala or Bander*
 - (d) *Asman Gira*

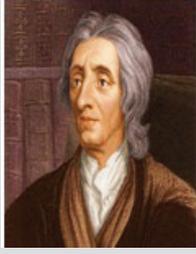
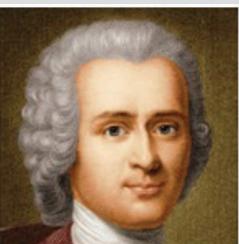




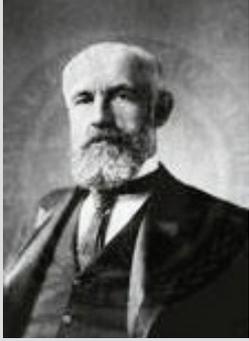
25. ACD-8 (*Gulak Merya Geeto Ki*)
- Hum Chhote-Chhote Bachhe hein*
 - Mela ka Geet*
 - Chu-Chu Gana Ga Chiraiya*
 - Yah jo ped hai Jamun ka*
 - Chuhiya Dodiyo Re*
26. ACD-40 (based on Rimjhim for class I)
- Bander or Gilhari*
 - Main Bhee*
 - Bander Gaya Khet Mein Bhag*
 - Laloo or Peeloo*
 - Chakai ki Chakdum*
27. ACD-41 (based on Rimjhim for class I)
- Aam ki Tokri*
 - Chhuk-Chhuk Gadi*
 - Choocha Maynau So Rahi Hai*
 - Makdi Kakdi Lakdi*
 - Hathi Challam Challam*



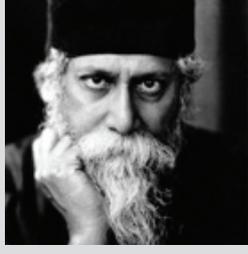
People Who Influenced Early Childhood Education

1592 – 1670	John Amos Comenius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasized on the importance of play. Children should study topics closely related to their experiences and intelligence. Children learn best through concrete material and first hand experiences. The foundation of instruction lies in the child's sensory perception. Foundation of all learning are during the early years. Lessons need to be based on the child's interest and ability to learn them.
1632 – 1704	John Locke 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's body and mind need to be developed in such a way so as to become healthy, virtuous and successful in life. Learning should begin with simple experiences and then lead to complex ideas in a spiraling manner. The mind as a blank state – a tabula rasa absorbs from sensory experiences simple concepts that later become associated or combined with other simple concepts to form complex understanding.
1712 – 1778	Jean Jacques Rousseau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouragement to child-centered education that was practical and sensory. ECE programme or curriculum should have a direct relationship to the interests of children. Emphasized the importance of a child's education beginning at birth. Stages of development are independent and should not be viewed as preparatory.
1746 – 1827	Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early education – the best means to eradicate the evils of society. Education should be based on child psychology. Early experiences must include sensory experiences, clear understanding and careful observation. Learning process should be from simple to complex, concrete to abstract and familiar to unfamiliar. Teachers should consider and respect each child's interests, needs, readiness for further learning, freedom for expression. No harsh and physical punishment.

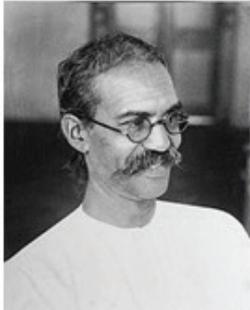


1782 – 1852	<p>Friedrich Wilhelm and August Froebel</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualized “garden of children”, a school for children before the age of six. Teacher should be a replacement of mother – motherly teacher. • Foundation of the Kindergarten. • Emphasized the importance of play and use of concrete objects to enhance learning. • Encouragement to self-expression, physical activities, dramatization, drawing and social development as essential elements in ECE. • Children’s play should include lots of songs, poetry and stories supported by frequent nature walks and gardening. • Through “gifts” and “occupations” the children are learning to explore the nature of objects and actions around them.
1804 – 1894	<p>Elizabeth Peabody</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Froebel’s most enthusiastic and well-known follower. • Combination of mother-education with his concept of playful learning. • This was considered an early example of parent education.
<p>The Twentieth Century Progressive Education Movement</p>		
1844 – 1924	<p>G. Stanley Hall</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origination of parent education. • Interests Focused on childhood development, evolutionary theory and their applications to education. • He was the first President of the American Psychological Association. • His maturationist theory of child development was based on the premise that growing children would recapitulate evolutionary stages of development as they grew up, and that it was counter productive to push a child ahead of its developmental stages.



1859 – 1952	John Dewey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group projects and field trips. • Curriculum based on child's interests. • Recognition of individual differences. • Whole-child perspective. • Focus on varied concrete material and first-hand-experience initiated activities. • Child-initiated. • Child-friendly classrooms. • Teachers as facilitators of learning. • Attentive to physical and emotional needs of children. • Classroom as a miniature society.
1860 – 1931	Rachel Mc Millan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created first nursery school in London in 1911. • Creativity and play was placed on top priority in the nursery programme. • Focus was also on self-caring skills, perceptual motor learning as well as activities for academic readiness.
1861 – 1941	Rabindranath Tagore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Envisioned a system of education that was deeply rooted in the child's immediate surroundings and yet connected to the wider world. • Emphasized the need for a curriculum to revolve organically around nature and in natural settings. • Nature walk and field trips were key elements of the curriculum. • Aesthetic development of the senses was as important as the intellectual development.
1869 – 1948	Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education should be child-oriented or child-centered. • Emphasized the harmonious development of the child. • Child's creative urge should be channelized and manifested through creative and at the same time, productive activities. • Emphasized 'learning by doing' and stressed on education through constructive and useful activities. • Home is the first centre of a child's education.



1870 – 1952	<p>Maria Montessori</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education as self-activity leading to self-discipline, independence and self-direction. • Senses need to be trained for the child to become more knowledgeable. • Devised specific materials and procedures that allowed intensive stimulation of each of the five senses. • Emphasis was placed upon teaching academic skills through the Montessori materials. • Muscular education, gardening and nature study were also included in Montessori programme. • Montessori programme included activities for self-help skills that would help children function independently. • Activities for developing readiness for reading, writing and number work should also be included to provide a strong foundation for later schooling.
1880 – 1961	<p>Arnold Gesell</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studied the development of motor behavior, language, visual capacities, adaptive behavior, and personal and social relations in children. • Emphasized the crucial role of maturation in all aspects of development. • Need to consider the maturational readiness of the child while planning ECE programme.
1885 – 1939	<p>Gijubhai Badheka</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspired by Maria Montessori's pedagogical philosophy. • Set up the Nutan Bal Shikshan Sangh 1925. • Vision was focused on the child and the need to align the educational process with her needs and interests, and the environment in which the child was living. • Classic publication is titled Divaswapna.



1892 – 1973	<p>Tarabai Modak</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the concept of 'Anganwadis'. • Persuasion of parents to send children to ECE centres. • Helped Gijubhai to establish Nutan Bal Shikshan Sangh in 1926. • Awardee of 'Padma Bhushan' in 1962. • An educational thinker with visions, thoughts, practices and activities to perform. • Adapted Montessori principles and materials. • Carried out experiments in Gramin Bal Shiksha Kendra – Balwadi, Anganwadi, Vikaswadi. • Meadow School. • Teacher Training – Single Teacher School. • Learn and Earn Experiment. • Gram Sevika Training. • Bal Sevika Training. • Emphasis was on recycling of waste for preparing educational tools. • Evolved an integrated approach for child education among weaker sections like tribals in 1957.
1896 – 1934	<p>Lev Vygotsky</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children grow cognitively not only by acting on objects but also by interacting with adults and peers. • Child's culture determines what and how the child learns. • Children who are provided words and labels form concepts more readily. • Major importance to language.
1896 – 1980	<p>Jean Piaget</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical thinking unfolds in stages. Most children in 2 – 6 years age group are in the pre-operational stage when they have not yet developed the ability to think logically. • Since children learn best through active experience, play is basic for young children's thinking. • Young children learn best through direct encounter with the environment. • Children need opportunities to interact with others. • Cognitive experiences planned should be organized in terms of four major areas: Physical knowledge, logic or mathematical knowledge, social knowledge and representation. • Identified four major stages of cognitive development: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The sensory motor stage (birth to two years). 2. The pre-operational stage (two to seven years). 3. The concrete operational stage (seven to eleven years) and 4. The formal operational stage (eleven or twelve through adulthood).



1902 – 1980	<p>Erik Erikson</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial development. • All individuals go through eight unique stages during the course of their lives trust vs. mistrust (infancy), autonomy vs. shame and doubt (ages 1-3), and initiative vs. guilt (ages 3-5). • Views healthy development as the resolution of conflicts that are characteristic of particular ages.
1920 – 1994	<p>Loris Malaguzzi</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founder of Reggio Emilia Approach • Concept of the 'rich child' • Children are active and valued partners in co-constructing knowledge.
1980	<p>Bernard Spodek</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.Sp is Professor Emeritus of ECE at the University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign where he has taught since 1965. • Teacher, mentor & writer • He is widely published in the field of early childhood education. • Observed and interacted with young children in a programme in New York City Day School.



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CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS

A child is every person under the age of 18 years. Parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The State shall respect and ensure the rights of the child.

Dignity and Expression

- I have the right to know about my Rights. *(Article 42)*
- I have rights being a child and no matter who I am where I live, what my parents do, what language I speak, what religion I follow, whether I am a boy or a girl, what culture I belong to, whether I am disabled, whether I am rich or poor. I should not be treated unfairly on any basis. Everyone has the responsibility to know this. *(Article 2)*
- I have the Right to express my views freely which should be taken seriously, and everyone has the Responsibility to listen to others. *(Article 12,13)*
- I have the Right to make mistakes, and everyone has the Responsibility to accept we can learn from our mistakes. *(Article 28)*
- I have the Right to be included whatever my abilities, and everyone has the Responsibility to respect others for their differences. *(Article 23)*

Development

- I have the Right to a good education, and everyone has the Responsibility to encourage all children to go to school. *(Article 23, 28, 29)*
- I have the Right to good health care, and everyone has the Responsibility to help others get basic health care and safe water. *(Article 24)*
- I have the Right to be well fed, and everyone has the Responsibility to prevent people from starving. *(Article 24)*
- I have the Right to a clean environment, and everyone has the Responsibility not to pollute it. *(Article 29)*
- I have the Right to play and rest. *(Article 31)*

Care and Protection

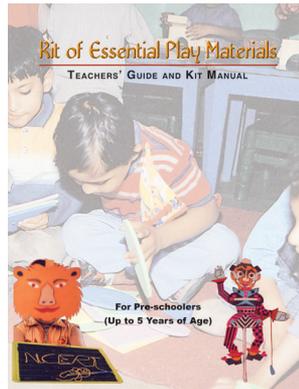
- I have the Right to be loved and protected from harm and abuse, and everyone has the Responsibility to love and care for others. *(Article 19)*
- I have the Right to a family and a safe and comfortable home, and everyone has the Responsibility to make sure all children have a family and home. *(Article 9,27)*
- I have the Right to be proud of my heritage and beliefs, and everyone has the Responsibility to respect the culture and belief of others. *(Article 29,30)*
- I have the Right to live without violence (verbal, physical, emotional), and everyone has the Responsibility not to be violent to others. *(Article 28,37)*
- I have the Right to be protected from economic exploitation and sexual exploitation, and everyone has the Responsibility to ensure that no child is forced to work and is given a free and secure environment. *(Article 32,34)*
- I have the Right to protection from any kind of exploitation and everyone has the Responsibility to ensure that I am not being subjected to be taken advantage in any manner. *(Article 36)*

IN ALL ACTION CONCERNING CHILDREN, THE BEST INTERESTS
OF THE CHILD SHALL BE A PRIMARY CONSIDERATION

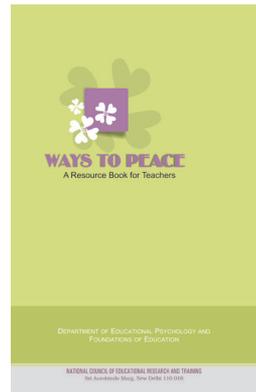
All these rights and responsibilities are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. It contains all the rights which children have all over the world. The Government of India signed this document in 1992.

Source: National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Government of India

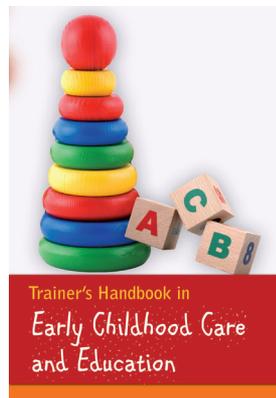
Some other NCERT Publications



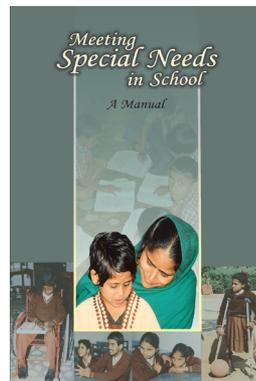
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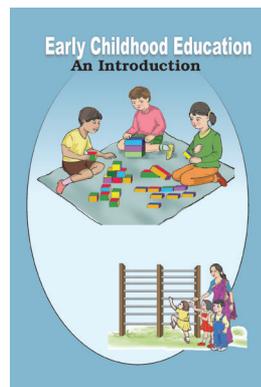
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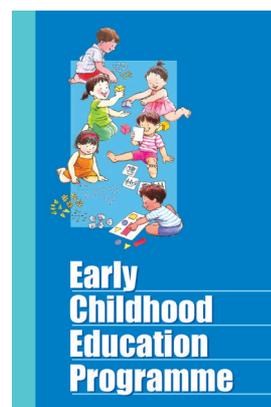
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