

Report of the Committee
on
Early Childhood Education
2004



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Introduction

The most crucial factor in the holistic development of a child is parental love and care. A child tries to learn in the informal home atmosphere the first basic lessons necessary for her self-development. This process is spontaneous, natural and casual. For an effective transition of this learning process, Acharya Vinoba Bhave had emphasised that “home should enter the school and school should change into home.” Mutual co-operation between parents and pre-school is essential for the happy and all round development of the child. The programme of early childhood education supplements informal home learning for the balanced development of a child. This Report attempts to highlight the historical development of the sector and to address the issues of access, curriculum, instructors and quality, while suggesting strategies for its strengthening.

I Historical Perspective

India has a wealth of traditional practices in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) that date back to almost 5000 years. Early Childhood Education (ECE) initiatives in India have been documented formally in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The early pioneers of the ECE movement were Gijubhai Badheka, Tarabai Modak, Maria Montessori, and many others. The writings of great Indian educational thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Zakir Husain have also drawn attention to this important aspect of education in the formative years. At Independence, the need for pre-school education was primarily fulfilled by voluntary organisations. It was in the 1970s that child welfare services were expanded to the health, education, nutrition and other sectors. The National Policy for Children was adopted in 1974 and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme was launched as a sequel to it in 1975.

The provision of comprehensive health care and education to children in the early stages of development prior to entering primary school is given a special place in the national education policies and programmes. This received further impetus in recent years with a specific mention on the subject under the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution, which enjoins the State to endeavour towards providing universal access to such services through out the country.

The *National Policy on Education* (NPE) adopted in 1986 views ECCE as a crucial input in the strategy of human resource development, as a feeder and support programme for primary education and also as a support service for working women.

ECCE Policy Directions (1986)

5.1 *The National Policy on Children specially emphasises investment in the development of the young child, particularly children from sections of the population in which first generation learners predominate.*

5.2 *Recognizing the holistic nature of child development, viz., nutrition, health and social, mental, physical, moral and emotional development, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) will receive high priority and be suitably integrated with the Integrated Child Development Services programme, wherever possible. Day care centres will be provided as a support service for universalisation of primary education, to enable girls engaged in taking care of siblings to attend school, and as a support service for working women belonging to poorer sections.*

5.3 *Programmes of ECCE will be child oriented, focusing around play and the individuality of the child. Formal methods and introduction of the 3 R's will be discouraged at this stage. The local community will be fully involved in these programmes.*

5.4 *A full integration of childcare and pre primary education will be brought about, both as a feeder and a strengthening factor for primary education and for human resource development in general. In continuation of this stage, the School Health Programme will be strengthened.*

(NPE 1986, p17)

Article 45 (Directive Principles of State Policy) of the Indian Constitution directed the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen. The inclusion of the 0-6 year old children within this constitutional directive implied the intent to provide conditions for holistic child development with pre-school education as an important component. The Constitution (Eighty-sixth) Amendment Act, 2001 has split the age group 0-14 years into two clear categories to cover their interests under separate Articles in the Constitution. Article 21A has been introduced as a fundamental right after Article 21 to read "*The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.*" Articulating the intent to specifically cater to the needs of the 0-6 year old children the Eighty Sixth Amendment Act has substituted Article 45 (Directive Principles of State Policy) to read "*The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.*"

On the international front, India has been a signatory to the Jomtien Declaration and the Dakar Framework of Education. Other significant developments have included the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Persons with Disabilities Act, which have flagged this stage of education as important by itself. Indeed, the first Dakar Goal relates to ECCE.

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2003)^{*} document has reaffirmed this commitment to the young child. The approach outlined is:

- To reaffirm the commitment of the 'Development of Children' with a special focus on the early childhood development, not only as the most desirable societal investment for the country's future, but as the right of every child to achieve his/her full development potential.
- To adopt a Rights-based Approach to the development of children, as being advocated by the draft National Policy and Charter for Children (2002).

II Terminology and Scope

A number of terms are used in the literature and policy documents to refer to provisions for the age group of 0-6 years. A good start in life is the foundation for ensuring future development. There is a well-established body of evidence that indicates that services provided and actions taken by parents and society in the earliest years of childhood have a powerful and long-lasting influence on the progress of individuals, and on the wider progress of the nation. Quality care and protection in the early years is vital. The needs of children and the services required at each age and the stage of development are varied, ranging from maternal and child health to learning of skills and competencies for formal education.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) Term defines preparatory education of the child prior to formal education. This includes experiential, incidental and informal education imparting primarily life skills. Early childhood education focuses on learning programmes and issues in young children. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is used by those who are inclined to see learning as central to this tradition of growth and development in the years before the child starts schooling.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is an extension of ECE, with the care component added to the emphasis on education. The ICDS project has therefore adopted the approach of integrated and holistic services in the all round development of children from conception to six years, health, hygiene and nutrition issues. Early Childhood Development (ECD) is another term whose

^{*} *Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-2007*. Volume II. Planning Commission, GOI, New Delhi. 2003. p.265.

popularity is increasing. This emphasises a holistic approach to the child's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. By being comprehensive and focusing on the child instead of on social agents or on the process of care or education, ECD is gaining ground as one of the most accepted generic terms for the field.

To reinforce and focus on the care and education aspects for the growth and development of children, this Committee would use the term ECCE in this document.

III Magnitude and Coverage

According to *Early Childhood Care and Education—An Overview* (Ministry of HRD 2003), the Integrated Child Development Services programme of the Department of Women and Child is the largest ECCE programme in the country. ICDS was started in 1975 in 33 blocks as a programme for the holistic development of children under six years to break the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality. ICDS provides health, nutrition, ECCE and convergent services. ICDS also provides support to the national efforts for universalisation of primary education through increased opportunities for promoting early development which are associated with improved cognitive and social skills, enrolment and retention in the early primary stage. By releasing girls from the burden of sibling care it also enables them to participate in primary education.

ICDS now covers 3.44 crore children in the age group of 0-6 years in the country, with a total coverage for children in the 3-6 age group of 1,87,59,510. As the total 0-6 population in the country was approximately 15.79 crores according to the 2001 Census, ICDS covers almost 22 percent of the total eligible population. ICDS will continue to be the major programme in the Tenth Plan period for the provision of ECCE services.

Coverage under various Early Childhood Care and Education Schemes 1996-97

Programmes	Number of Centres	Beneficiaries Coverage	Percentage of Population in Age 3-6 Covered
ICDS (pre-school education age group 3-6 (2424 sanctioned projects)	40,00,000	1,10,81,000	18.23
Early Childhood Education (ECE)	4,365	1,53,000	0.27

Programmes	Number of Centres	Beneficiaries Coverage	Percentage of Population in Age 3-6 Covered
Crèches and Day Care Centres-age group 0-5 (estimated coverage on the basis of 25 children per crèche)	14,313	31,000	0.52
Balwadis –age group 3-6 (estimated coverage on the basis of 30 children per Balwadi)	5,641	17,000	0.29
Pre-Primary School	38,533	1,94,000	0.33
Total	--	1,33,83,000	19.64

Source: *Early Childhood Care and Education—An Overview* (Ministry of HRD 2003)

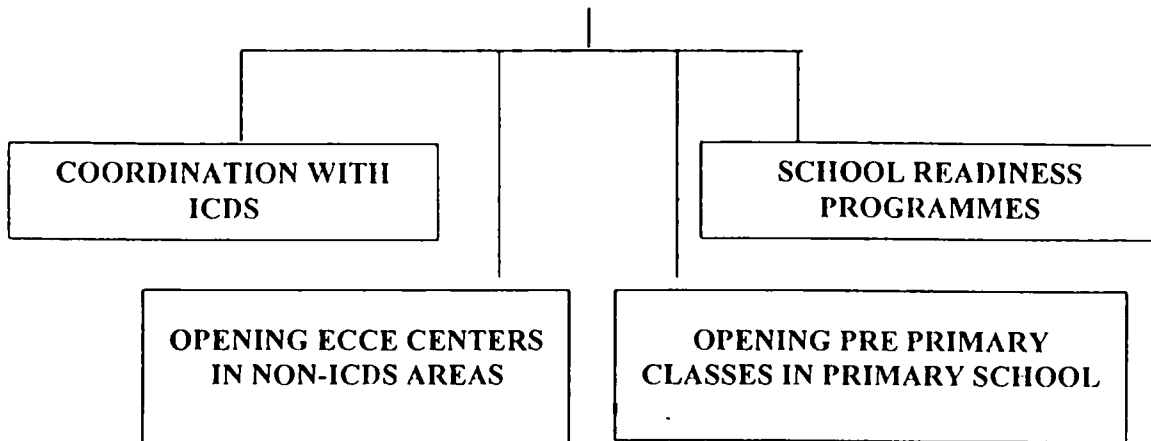
According to estimates, the number of children enrolled in private sector initiatives (including family day care homes, nurseries, kindergartens and pre-primary classes) during this period was about 1 crore. The total enrolment of 3-6 year old children in the government and voluntary sectors taken together was thus estimated to be 2.23 crores, which accounted for about 20 percent of the children in this age group (*ibid*).

Although the Programme of Action (POA) 1992 had targeted the setting up of 1 million ECCE centres in 1995 and 2 million in 2000, the coverage in 2001 was only about 0.55 million centres, covering approximately 19 percent of the total child population of about 886 lakhs in the age group of 3-6 years in 2001. It is recommended that an annual 10 percent increase of the 19 percent children enrolled may be a realistic target for the remaining period of the tenth plan.

Apart from the ICDS programme of the Department of Women and Child Development, efforts have also been made by the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy to impact the early childhood education through a variety of strategies under the District primary Education Programme (DPEP) and the Mahila Samakhya Project. DPEP is conceived as a holistic programme for

ensuring universal Primary Education, with an emphasis on the centrality of early childhood care and education as the foundation for achieving this goal. Since the ICDS programme was already present in a large form and was to be universalised, DPEP has worked closely with this programme.

ECCE STRATEGY UNDER DPEP



According to the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) of the Government of India, the major vehicle for the provision of ECCE services would remain the ICDS programme. However, SSA has a provision for taking up ECE projects on a small scale, making available upto Rs. 5 million per year in each district for such projects (each project not to exceed Rs. 1.5 million) under the “innovations” head. These can be utilised either for setting up of new centres in areas where there are no ICDS centres or for strengthening linkages with the ICDS programme. Further, under the National Programme for the Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL), which forms a part of the SSA framework, provision has been made for setting up of community-based child care centres in areas where such services are not provided under ICDS. Clearly, these are interventions aimed at increasing the coverage of children in the 0-6 year age group.

While a number of centres have emerged in the urban areas in recent years, their prime focus tends to be on the 3-6 year age group, with the centres supported through fees and managed either by NGOs or private managements etc. According to the 2001 Census, the share of urban population in the country is approximately 27.78 percent, and some states have reported this to be much higher such as for instance Delhi (93.01 percent), Gujarat (37.35 percent) and Mizoram (49.50 percent). A study by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (1998) found that the coverage of ECCE facilities in urban areas was as follows:

“What is the extent of coverage? ICDS is a well-known package of six services, targeted at specifically defined “vulnerable” groups, one of which is the “urban slum”. However, overall coverage of this category by ICDS is limited. The urban population of India constitutes 26% nationally, (expected to go up to

33% by 2001) though in some states, like Maharashtra, the proportion is as high as 38 %. It is also estimated that no less than 20% of the urban population is poor/ living in slums, with 40% in the case of metros. However, only 8% of all ICDS projects are located in urban areas, not always in the most needy areas/slums, so it is not clear to what extent the slum population is served. In global terms, this is already a shortfall. The reasons for this state of affairs could not be explored in this study.

In the seven cities studied also, there was an overall shortfall in terms of meeting the needs of the urban slum population. The coverage varied from 1/4 (Kanpur, Patna and Bangalore) to 1/2 (Ahmedabad, Amritsar) to 3/4 (in Trivandrum and Nasik) of the urban poor. (However, some of these estimates relate only to the age group 3-6 i.e. for preschool education)

Spatial gaps

“Coming to the population within the slums selected for the study, it was found that even there, the services were not reaching all the poor within the slum: most of the people were excluded for a variety of reasons, ranging from concentration of certain ethnic groups to mixed patterns of residence, non-availability of accommodation, unsuitable timings etc. The general impression was that the most needy groups seemed to be the ones left out. At the same time, however, even with limited coverage, there were some instances of duplication of services, indicating the need for spatial mapping before programmes are launched”.

(Swaminathan, Mina, *Process and Outcome Documentation of ECD in Urban Disadvantaged Areas*, National Institute of Urban Affairs 1998, Mimeo).

It can thus be seen that despite the significance of ICDS and the many private and voluntary initiatives in ECCE, much remains to be done by way of coverage before one can say with confidence that adequate provisions have been made in both rural and urban areas. There are also other critical groups in rural and urban areas that would need inputs of ECCE as a necessity rather than as a matter of choice, such as children with disabling conditions. There is therefore a need to think of multiple approaches to ECCE in order to ensure the coverage of diverse groups.

Recommendations

SSA is the major initiative of the Central Government in the area of elementary education, with a well-defined strategy for ECCE. Its scope should be enlarged by entrusting SSA with the specific role of (i) coordinating all efforts in ECCE with the district SSA plans, (ii) spatial mapping in both urban and rural areas for access in ECCE, (iii) coordination with the National Council for Teacher

Education (NCTE) for instructors qualification and training issues, (iv) coordination and supervision of quality and monitoring of the ECCE programme, and, (v) effective linkages with proposed State Resource Centres.

IV Manpower Needs of ECCE

Anganwadi workers are the largest number of service providers and are trained either through the network of NGOs or through institutions like the National Institute for Public Cooperation and Cooperative Development (NIPCCD) under the Department of Women and Child Development. The NCTE has reported 68 recognised courses at the pre-primary level out of the total 2871 courses recognised for all other levels. These are approved for an intake of 3021 students only, which is insignificant in relation not only to existing requirements, but also with reference to future demand. In addition, there are courses run by the Rehabilitation Council of India and by many NGO and other private systems that prepare manpower for their own requirements, but these do not significantly add to the overall pool of ECCE workers..

The state-wise scenario also deserves attention. Out of the 68 institutions reported by NCTE, twenty are in Kerala, twelve in Karnataka, ten in Delhi, eight in Gujarat and seven in Madhya Pradesh, while the remaining eight are spread across the country. No institutions have been reported from the North East region. All this indicates a pressing need to initiate the creation of appropriate databases and to plan and project manpower requirements in more systematic ways.

The POA 1992 had envisaged manifold growth in ECCE services and had committed that adequate training facilities will be available for all levels of functionaries. It had listed the following important parameters for meeting such training requirements.

- Initiating a two-year vocational course in ECCE at +2 level with the objective of creating basic skills which can later be adopted through job training for specific situations.
- Strengthening the educational content of ICDS functionaries training by providing appropriate training inputs, resources, materials etc., and extending it, where possible, to include a component on day care.
- Review of the existing training programme of ECCE.
- Working out flexible models for day-care training at field level.
- Taking steps for setting up a higher course in ECCE for senior level functionaries of ICDS, trainers in the various training institutions and the supervisory personnel.
- Creating a system of accreditation of training institutions dealing with ECCE.

Induction and in-service training programmes are provided to the Anganwadi Workers, Supervisors, and the Child Development Project Officers (CDPO) of the ICDS programme. NIPCCD is the apex institution in the country that coordinates training of ICDS functionaries. It provides technical input to the DWCD on all issues related to training, prepares modules, curriculum and training material. Training to the grassroots functionaries is provided in partnership between the Government and non-Government sectors through the Anganwadi Workers Training Center and the Middle Level training center for the Supervisors and CDPOs.

Provisions have been made in DPEP to train the ECE functionaries as well as the community representatives on ECE as the management of ECE Centers has been vested with the Village Education Committees and local level women's groups.

NCERT has initiated a year long training programme for those already engaged in provisioning ECE/pre-school services. The training programme caters to a variety of institutions and agencies of diverse backgrounds.

The National Council Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body, has the mandate to provide the norms and Standards for Pre-School Teacher Programme and for Nursery Teacher Education Programme.

Norms and Standards for Pre-School Teacher Programme: This lays down the following for pre-school teachers for children in the 4-6 age groups:

- Course of one academic year, 150 teaching days.
- Qualification of trainees should be Class X or equivalent
- Curricular transaction should emphasize approaches and methods like role playing, games, quiz, material preparation, project work, bal mela etc.

Norms and Standards for Nursery Teacher Education Programme: This lays down the following for pre-school teachers for children in the 4-8 age groups:

- Course of two academic years, 150 teaching days.
- Qualification of trainees should be class XII or equivalent.
- Curricular transaction should emphasize approaches and methods like role playing, games, quiz, material preparation, project work, bal mela etc.

V Proposed Age Group for ECCE

Since ICDS is the largest programme in the country taking care of ECCE inputs for the 3-6 year age group, this Committee is of the view that this age group

will be best served by this arrangement, and recommends that the Department of Elementary Education may continue to network with ICDS in this area. The age limit for early childhood education should remain three to six years (starting at 3+ and till the official age of entry to formal schooling), as this age is considered to be the most critical period for learning and it is imperative to provide maximum learning facilities and opportunities to develop motor, social, cognitive and language skills during this period.

VI Objectives of ECCE

In this background, and in the context of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution, the objectives of ECCE may be defined as serving the following two purposes:

- The comprehensive, holistic and balanced development of the young child in all domains (physical; mental including language and cognition—family, social, personal; emotional and aesthetic) through the provisions of appropriate care and support services.
- Preparing the young child for primary school.

While the aim is to reach every child in the long-term, this will have to be taken in steps, with priority accorded to the neediest and most marginalised. Although the aim is always to provide holistic developmental care of good quality, the models (or types of services) will have to be context-specific, (including location, culture and need), relevant, and flexible.

VII Access: Coverage and Location

The categories of children—many of whom are very poor—requiring ECCE coverage are indicated below. Many in these groups are still un-reached, and the categories are only indicative not exhaustive: others could no doubt be added.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Rural | 2. Urban |
| Isolated and remote hamlets | Pavement dwellers |
| Seasonal migrants | Unauthorized settlements |
| Road, construction and quarry workers | Small slums |
| Brick kiln workers | Construction workers |
| Nomadic | Temporary/seasonal workers |
| Fishing hamlets | Rural migrants |
| | Itinerants |

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>3. Children in difficult circumstances
Long-term patients
(AIDS, also TB, and leprosy)</p> | <p>4. Children with special needs
All forms of disability (Visual, hearing, speech, spastic, orthopaedically affected, polio, mentally challenged, and multiply challenged)</p> |
| <p>5. Others
Sex workers
Women prisoners</p> | |

For a population of approximately 300 people and 20 (+/- 5) children of the related age group, this Committee is of the view that one ECCE centre should be available within walking distance from the home of the child. The provision of home-based ECCE facilities should be encouraged and experimented with for smaller communities, scattered populations, and tribal and hilly areas. Naturally, the population of children who should be covered under different categories would vary at different locations and pockets.

Clearly, norms also need to be flexible to address local and specific needs. For example, it is difficult for conventional ECCE interventions to cater to children with disabilities such as visual impairment or Down's syndrome. In the absence of such services however, many such children have suffered further development delays, and it is essential to ensure the provision of custom-made ECCE facilities for these groups of children.

In order to make such provisions many alternatives need to be provided. Some of the possible models would include:

- ECCE centres with proximity to the local primary school
- ECCE centres with proximity to the community
- Centre-based models with peripheral feeder schools

VIII Strategies to Reach the Unreached

- *Scattered groups*: Children are sometimes found in small and scattered groups, which cannot easily be catered for by conventional centre-based programmes. These would require innovative home-based and community-based programmes, outreach services, mobile services, and imaginative use of media, such as radio for effective outreach.

- *Change of norms:* Many of these unreached groups are found in clusters, which may be only slightly below the existing population norms laid down for government provisions. It is clearly time to review, for example, ICDS norms for opening of Anganwadis, which were laid down in 1974.
- *Relocation:* Due to changing demographic trends, some centres which were set up to meet earlier residential patterns, no longer cater to local needs and are now found to have very few children enrolled. Further socially and economically upwardly mobile families often prefer to send their children to locally available private alternatives. This also leads to low attendance of children in government-managed facilities, and in such cases, the ICDS centres could be relocated to areas of real need where there are large unreached numbers.
- *In urban areas:* It should be made compulsory by amending the building construction rules for every housing co-operative society to provide for space for an ECCE centre. If necessary, the Floor Space Ratio may be amended to provide for this extra facility.
- *Parental need:* Many children whose parents, especially mothers, are working in the unorganized or informal sector, and who are in need of day-care, remain unreached. This could be rectified by recording the occupation and work status of both parents (with special reference to mothers) of children along with basic information such as birth, parent's name and address, which are usually recorded at the time of admission of the child to the centre, or by rapid survey of the community. This would enable ICDS and other services to recognize their needs and attempt to reach them.

IX Approaches for ECCE

There are multiple players in the field of ECCE, who can be classified into three main groups:

- Government sector—at all three levels (Centre, State and local) involving Departments of Social Welfare, Health, Education, Women and Child Development, Rural Development, Tribal Development, Urban Development and others, as well the public sector and semi-government organisations.
- Private sector—throughout the country, and most visible in urban areas, involving corporate sector as well as independent organisations and individuals, recognised and unrecognised schools, aided and unaided institutions.

- Voluntary or not-for-profit sector—ranging from large national/international denominational groups and charitable trusts to smaller NGOs, registered societies and individuals.

All the three sectors provide a variety of services of different types and of varying quality. In terms of coverage it may be safely stated that while the first two sectors are the largest, providing the maximum services, the voluntary sector is small and unevenly spread. While the largest component within the Government sector is the Integrated Child Development Services programme (ICDS), which is estimated to reach about 1.87 crore children in the 3-6 age-group, the reach of the private sector may be almost as large, although no concrete statistics regarding the latter are readily available.

Keeping in mind the vast expansion of services required, as well as the need for quality services to reach every child, it is clear that a variety of strategies will have to be used to enable all three sectors to play a meaningful and useful role in attaining the objectives. In this context, the following roles are envisaged for the three sectors:

❖ ***Government***

- Service provision, particularly to the poorest, unreached and marginalised
- Funding
- Encouragement and support to NGOs for innovations and for working in marginalised and unreached areas
- Support for quality improvement in all three sectors through different strategies, including:
 - i. Advocacy with State governments to recognize ECCE
 - ii. Awareness generation
 - iii. Capacity building, including training
 - iv. Accreditation of training institutions
 - v. Development of norms and standards
- Safeguarding child rights

❖ ***Non Government Sector (Voluntary/NGO & Private)***

- Service provision
- Awareness/Advocacy

- Innovations and dissemination of best practices through
 - i. Training
 - ii. Models of community involvement
 - iii. Demand-based and culture-specific models

It is also evident that Government will have to devise different instrumentalities and modalities to deal with each of the three sectors, and in varying time frames.

In order to get information (at present not readily available) about the number, distribution and type of services in the country in the private and voluntary sectors and also to provide wider coverage and improved quality of services, the first step could be the registration of all ECCE centres. While some members of this Committee were of the view that a definite regulatory framework should be established in order to supervise and monitor the activities of ECCE centres in the country, other members pointed out the difficulties inherent in such an approach. After much deliberation therefore, this Committee has arrived at the conclusion that as an initial step, it would be sufficient to aim at the registration of such centres. Accordingly, it is recommended that all Education Surveys should include information on ECCE provisions. NCERT, NIEPA and NCTE may also be requested to have academic and professional consultations to look at the issue of certification/recognition for ECCE.

X Instrumentalities: Outcomes, Norms and Standards

- Outcomes, indicators or standards will have to be defined in relation to the objectives laid down. It is recommended that the Central Government play an important role by implementing a centrally sponsored scheme of setting up State Resource Centres (SRC) for ECCE either by strengthening the SCERTs or by identifying voluntary organisations which have a proven track record of working in this field to implement this scheme. This has been successfully tried in the NLMA and a similar model of functioning and funding with appropriate changes can be developed. These State Resource Centres for ECCE can be entrusted with the task of developing the outcomes, curriculum, content, qualifications and capacity building programmes for the instructors, parents, community and the VECs.
- The State Resource Centre is visualised as technical support at the State level for ECCE, covering a range of activities to boost the expansion and quality of ECCE. The range of activities would include:

- *Curriculum*: Development of programme and content for certification of instructors and care givers of long and short duration taking into account local requirements and content for ECCE programmes
 - *Training*: Conducting capacity building activities for in-service training of instructors in ICDS and those of private organisations and NGOs in coordination with NCTE and in accordance with their guidelines
 - *Monitoring and Evaluation* of the programmes for ECCE
- It is recommended that the specification of norms, content and duration essential for recognition of pre-service training courses may be delegated by NCTE to SRCs at the State level. A parallel may be drawn with the practice followed by AICTE which mandates that while the norms for recognition of diplomas may be left to the State governments, those for recognition of degrees are decided by AICTE itself.
 - SRCs may either be located in existing SCERTs or run by reputed NGOs where SCERTs are not in a position to take up this responsibility. If located in the SCERT, the major expenditure would relate to the creation and operation of appropriate posts, while training funds would have to be provided in addition to any existing provisions. In the case of NGOs, it would also be necessary to provide—in addition to the salaries for the contractual positions—funds for equipment, establishment of the resource centre and training. In either case, the staff and infrastructure requirements would need to be worked out in detail. While the Committee is of the view that this would work out to approximately Rs.50-60 lakhs per annum per State plus the cost of setting up the district units described in the following paragraph, it is suggested that the Department formulates a detailed scheme in this regard, duly costing the recommended inputs.
 - The Committee further recommends that for the purposes of training, the SRC should have individual District Resource Centres (DRCs) which could carry out both pre-service and in-service training courses for the local ECCE workers, obviating the need for them to travel outside the district for this objective. The exact structure of these DRCs and their costing will also have to be worked out by the Department while formulating the scheme for SRCs.
 - Another important step essential for the involvement of parents, communities and local authorities in monitoring and promoting quality standards is the creation of widespread awareness about ECCE, its purpose

and nature, as well as advocacy for quality ECCE. Here the Government has to play an important role, particularly in providing funds and involving the mass media in promoting positive examples of good practices in ECCE and giving negative publicity to poor quality and its negative impact. Previously available sources of funding, such as the National Children's Fund, should be mobilised. Separately, the Department may consider the provision of upto Rs 50 lakhs per year for media activities, possibly through SSA.

- Inclusion of nutritional support and health checkups in ECCE centres was a vital area for the success of these centres. The Committee found that whereas ICDS and some State-run Balwadis provide both these facilities for ECCE, primary school children also receive nutritional support under the Mid-day Meal programme and school health checkup programmes. Therefore, ECCE centres run by other Departments of the Central and State Government, like SSA/DPEP etc. should also extend nutritional support and health checkup to those ECCE centres run by them, as leaving this group of children out would leave out a significant group of pre-schoolers across the country. In fact, the Committee was of the view that nutritional support and health checkups must be an integral norm for all ECCE centres in the country, whether of the Government or private.

XI Quality and Content Areas of ECCE

(i) The education component for ECCE should be of at least two years duration beginning from 3 years + to the age of admission to Class I. The following aspects are important:

- Importance of the role of parents in enhancing quality of ECCE
- Recognition of every child's right to optimal development
- Realisation about the holisticity of child development with emphasis on health, nutrition and early learning in an integrated manner
- Importance of the best possible start for learning by way of preparing children for school
- Advocacy for right kind of pre-school education based on scientific concepts and removal of misconceptions and myths about early introduction of 3 R's
- Emphasis on cultural context and local specificity of curriculum
- Focus on community-based interventions (both home-based and centre-based)

- Enhancement of the role of mothers/family through proper parental education and sensitisation
- Availability of minimum basic facilities adhering to minimum specifications laid down by the NCERT for ECCE
- Institutionalisation of a mechanism for regulation of ECCE centres, particularly in the private sector
- Need for joyful learning and play-way method besides discouraging ECCE from becoming a downward extension of primary education
- Focus on quality of teacher preparation and training institutions
- Convergence and coordination between different service departments for integrated planning, implementation and monitoring of ECCE programmes
- Institutionalisation of monitoring and supervision mechanisms for enhancing quality
- Enhancing training facilities in ECCE through SRCs and DIETs
- Flexibility in the nature of pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes

(ii) *Curriculum/Syllabi for ECCE*

The curriculum for ECCE should ensure readiness to learn among children, while reducing unhealthy and harmful loads on children whose neuro-muscular capacities are not yet adequately developed. It is the time when pleasure, perception and participation need to be emphasised. Formal teaching of subjects, reading and writing must be clearly prohibited. Learning at this stage should be characterised by group activities, play-way techniques, language games, number games and activities directed to promote socialisation and environmental awareness among children. Children should be provided with ample opportunities for developing the essential skills of identification, comparison, matching, naming, seriating, drawing and counting without subjecting them to formal ways of learning numbers etc. Child-to-child interaction and child-nature interaction should also be promoted apart from organising activities helpful in developing positive attitudes and habits for healthy social participation. Children should also be encouraged to play with pets, recognise common birds, animals, plants and means of transport and some celestial bodies such as the sun, moon and stars. With this background, the following points need to be borne in mind:

- a) Any ECCE programme has to be joyful and stress-free. Clearly, the curriculum needs to be developmentally appropriate and balanced for different age groups of children. The focus has to be on total development

and not only on reading and writing. Exploration of the environment outside the classroom should be given due importance and the curriculum should be made more environment based.

- b) The methods of ECCE have to emphasise the activities arising out of the child's interest and not due to teacher initiatives. There has to be more focus on free play activities rather than guided and controlled activities.
- c) The basic approach to early childhood education has to be "learning by doing" and "learning through exploration". The play component is the central theme for promoting quality early childhood education. Pretend play, dolls' play, puppet play, playing with blocks, puzzles and variety of local specific games are important ingredients of quality.
- d) Variety in experience helps children to grow into more fulfilled individuals by addressing individual differences. It is therefore necessary to use different mediums such as dramatisation, role-play, puppetry, story telling, nature walk, etc.
- e) The curriculum of ECCE has to be balanced in terms of developmental activities in different areas like physical-motor development, language development, socio-emotional development, cognitive development and development of aesthetic and creative expression. The programme must also have holistics in terms of provisions of nutritional and health care components.
- f) Inculcation of values during early childhood stage is most important from the personality development point of view because this is the stage when impressions are long lasting and permanent. Suitable activities for promoting scientific and social ideals as well as spiritual, secular and human values should be an integrated part of the ECCE curriculum.
- g) The curriculum should lay emphasis on activities like stories, rhymes, music, clay work, drawing and painting and other forms of play. Local plays, games, cultural contents should be appropriately integrated into the programme.
- h) All ECCE programmes should identify and appropriately integrate children with special needs.

• XII Building Instructor/Child Care Worker competencies

A key responsibility of Government is that of training and capacity building of instructors and child care workers. Among other things, the Government must:

- Provide directly as well as indirectly (by encouraging, promoting and supporting) training and capacity building at all levels, through diverse and flexible training courses catering to multiple levels from the grassroots to the highest academic level, while guided by the same basic principles

- Define and set up quality standards at all levels, both for services and for training, and develop appropriate measures and procedures for encouraging their maintenance
- Develop, and support the development of curriculum, both content and process, at all levels, encouraging diversity while maintaining basic principles.

This Committee acknowledges the importance of retaining flexibility in approach and recommends that a variety of certificate courses with varied duration be recognised, as long as the overall outcomes are of satisfactory quality. It is recommended that NCTE may deliberate and make further recommendations in regard to expected outcomes.

XIII Qualifications and Desirable Profiles of Instructors

A. Qualifications

An important aspect for ensuring the development of children of this age group is the attitude and aptitude of the instructors, since they have a direct impact upon the developing child. It is recommended that an attitude and aptitude test for persons engaged as ECCE instructors should be developed, and this should be a qualifying test for persons seeking admission to diploma/degree courses in early childhood education. Certificate and diploma level courses could be designed keeping in view the different aspects of such education, with foundation papers related to child psychology, parents, community participation etc.

B. Capacity Building

1. Instructor training in the area of ECCE is available in a variety of forms, with no formal mechanism to regulate the same.
2. Restructuring of existing pre-service courses in the area needs to be undertaken on priority.
3. A basket approach for the qualification of instructors has to be evolved in view of the enormous diversity in the country. A two-year pre-service teacher-training programme leading to a diploma in Early Childhood Education could be introduced. However, other certificate courses may also be evolved as per the needs in the States. Wherever possible, such courses should include a judicious mix of classroom teaching and actual fieldwork in rural and urban areas. In keeping with the POA 1992 and existing guidelines of NCTE, it is also suggested that while for certificate courses upto a duration of three months, the minimum eligibility criteria

should be completion of Class VIII, this may be Class X and Class XII for the one-year and two-year diploma courses respectively.

4. Strict adherence to norms developed by NCTE/NCERT/proposed SRCs for recognition of teacher training institutions in ECCE must be ensured. It is recommended that norms based on outcomes rather than inputs only should be developed, and the specification of these norms, content and duration essential for recognition of pre-service training courses may be delegated by NCTE to SRCs at the State level.

C. Capacity Building Programme for Anganwadis/Balwadis under ICDS

1. Instructors working in Anganwadis and Balwadis under the ICDS programme need to be trained effectively. Due to inadequate training, the pre-school education component, which is one of the six components of ICDS, remains mostly unattended. Therefore an in-service programme for Anganwadi and Balwadi workers is urgently required, which could be taken up by the proposed SRCs in co-operation with NIPCCD, through the subordinate District Resource Centres.
2. The in-service programme should be of short duration, perhaps for a fortnight, and residential in nature at the cluster level.
3. Anganwadi workers wishing to upgrade their skills in order to achieve upward mobility may be encouraged to enroll in appropriate professional training courses run by the SRCs and other organisations.
4. Funds for training of such workers should be provided to the SRCs in addition to those available under ICDS.

XIV Linkages

ECCE is not an isolated stage in a child's growth and development, and must therefore ensure continuity in her life from the early years to the school years. A smooth transition from preschool to the primary stage could possibly be facilitated by keeping in view certain core principles and practices:

Developing a shared understanding among teachers of preprimary and primary stages since children are our main concern. The dialogue will help transfer the knowledge about each child from one teacher to the other. Preparing and maintaining a portfolio of changing development profiles of each child can do this.

- Breaking the mental barriers of two different/distinct stages. This can be done by focusing on themes/concepts, skills and competencies to be developed in primary classes rather than lessons/syllabus to be completed.
- Having a continuous dialogue at the CRC and BRC levels between ECCE workers and primary teachers to discuss age appropriate curriculum inputs, activities, and methods of transaction to be developed, keeping in view the growing needs of the child.
- Locating the ECCE centres near the primary school and synchronising the timing with the primary school would help in establishing better linkages between the two.
- Strengthening home-school partnerships and recognising the continuity of the child's life from home to school and school to home, as well as the need to reorient parents for complementing these roles rather than contradicting.
- Working towards developing a wholesome personality of the child.

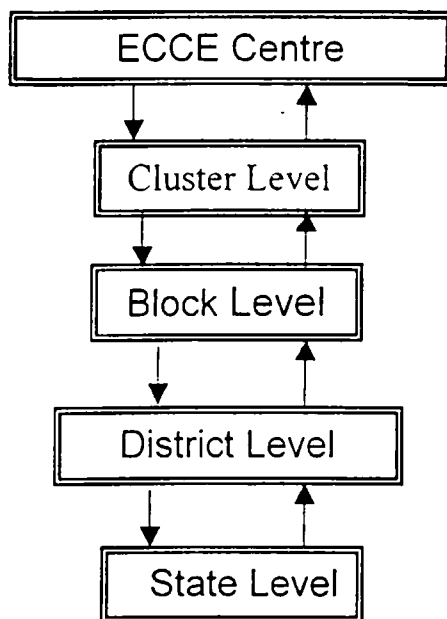
XV Monitoring Mechanism

To begin with, it must be acknowledged that ECCE is an integrated and indivisible complex of three functions. It serves as an extension of family in bringing up children, it aids the process of child development and it is concerned with the child's basic rights and her enlightenment both as citizen and a child. It is thus imperative that we ensure quality in early childhood programmes, which can be encouraged through the development of suitable monitoring mechanisms. As a first step, the Central Government needs to evolve a scheme of external evaluation of ECCE programmes by reputed institutes of social sciences and research, as has been recently done under SSA. This Committee further recommends that:

1. The community owned and community managed approach be adopted. For this purpose, parents being the first teachers and the family being the first school, education of the parent in the importance of early childhood education should be given an important place. Parents should be motivated and equipped with the knowledge and skills required for ECCE. They should also be made aware of the activities of the ECCE centre and their role in its effective running. Awareness camps may be organised for this purpose.
2. After parents and family, it is the community where children of this age group interact and learn from the environment of the community. Thus, the community members also need to be oriented and motivated for active participation in the programmes of ECCE.

3. While ECCE programmes may be managed by the government, NGOs and private institutions, local, cluster, block and District level coordination committees consisting of representatives from government, NGOs and private institutions may be formed for better coordination and motivation.
4. At the local level, activities of the ECCE centres should be monitored by the community/VEC/PRI/Local Bodies.
5. Proper linkages between ECCE and primary education must be established through school readiness programmes and by instituting joint in-service training of ECCE workers and teachers of early primary grades.
6. With the long-term goal of professionalising ECCE programmes, bridge courses may be planned for ECCE diploma holders. The Government may also consider giving such persons opportunities to become primary level teachers in the near future.
7. The cluster level committee should also monitor and supervise the activities of the ECCE centre.
8. The cluster level committee should provide its observations regarding the ECCE centre to the block level committee, which after analysing the data received from the cluster level would report to the District level. The District level committee after collecting comprehensive data from the block level committees would report to the State committee. The mechanism envisaged has been indicated in the following figure.

MONITORING & FEEDBACK MECHANISM



XVI Financial Requirements

It would be difficult to articulate a definite time frame for total access to ECCE across the country. Nevertheless, this Committee is of the view that it should be possible to estimate the technical requirements, inputs required, financial projections for setting up the SRCs, capacity and environment building measures, mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation needs, etc., etc., and the Department of EE & L is urged to work out and cost these aspects in the form of a detailed scheme as a component of SSA or a separate scheme. At a rough estimate, the Committee feels that the annual requirement of funds for these activities per State would be approximately Rs 2.00-2.50 crores, but this would need to be calculated in greater detail. Naturally, this requirement would be in addition to the funding already allocated by the Government to the ICDS programme.

The Committee is heartened to note that the allocation of Rs 1039.17 crores to ICDS during the Tenth Five Year Plan matches closely with its own calculations of funds required on the basis of a 10 percent increase in coverage per annum, referred to in Section III above. This allocation represents a more than 100 percent increase over the outlay for the Ninth Five Year Plan, and is considered adequate for the level of expansion envisaged.

On the question of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the area of ECCE, the Committee notes that while such investment flows mostly to the private sector, details of the nature and amounts are not readily available. It is also noted that the administrative Ministry has not defined a policy for its regulation, and as such in terms of existing Government of India guidelines, FDI in ECCE would be permissible under the automatic route without any bar. As the level of FDI in ECCE is not likely to be significant, the Committee does not feel the need to recommend any regulation of such investment at the present time.

XVII Summary Of Recommendations

- SSA is the major initiative of the Central Government in the area of elementary education, with a well-defined strategy for ECCE. Its scope should be enlarged by entrusting SSA with the specific role of (i) coordinating all efforts in ECCE with District SSA Plans, (ii) spatial mapping in both urban and rural areas for access in ECCE, (iii) coordination with NCTE for instructor's qualification and training issues, (iv) coordination and supervision of quality and monitoring of the ECCE Programme, and, (v) effective linkages with proposed SRC's.
- To reinforce and focus on the care and education aspects for growth and development of the children the Committee has used the term 'ECCE' for

Early Childhood Education and has delimited for its reference ECCE for the age group from 3 to 6 years (starting at 3+ and till the official age of entry to formal schooling).

- For a population of approximately 300 people and 20 (+/- 5) children of the related age group, one ECCE centre should be available within walking distance from the home of the child. The provision of home-based ECCE facilities should be encouraged and experimented with for smaller communities, scattered populations, and tribal and hilly areas. Norms should be flexible to address the local needs.
- As the existing ECCE programmes cover approximately 19% of the total child population in the age group 3-6, it is recommended that an annual increase of about 10% of this figure may be realistically aimed at during the remaining period of the Xth Plan.
- Locating the ECCE centres near the primary schools and synchronising its timings with the primary schools would help in establishing better linkages between the two. While this could be the major strategy, provisions for other alternatives like ECCE Centers with proximity to the communities, or with peripheral feeder school may also be explored if the local situation so demands.
- While the aim is to reach every child in the long term, this will have to be taken in stages, with priority for the neediest and most marginalised. To provide holistic developmental care of good quality, ECCE models (or types of services) will have to be context specific (including location, culture and need), relevant and flexible.
- Keeping in mind the vast expansion of services required as well as the need for quality services to reach every child, a variety of strategies will have to be used to enable all the three sectors (i.e., Government, voluntary and private) to play a meaningful and useful role in attaining the objectives.
- For effective coverage of unreached groups which are found in clusters and may be below the existing population norms laid down for opening of ICDS centres, it would be necessary to review the norms for opening an ICDS centre as well as to reallocate those centres where the attendance has declined.
- In urban areas it should be made compulsory by amending building construction rules to provide for space for an ECCE centre in every cooperative housing society. If necessary, the Floor Space Ratio may be amended to provide for this additional facility.

- Government will have to define instrumentalities and modalities to deal with each of the three sectors. In view of the diverse levels, needs and contexts no single uniform standard should be laid down for all. While several examples of best practices can be used as models to be emulated, there is a need to define the minimum outcomes.
- In order to get information about the number, distribution and type of centres in the country, the first step could be the registration of all ECCE centres by the District SSA projects. All education surveys should include information on ECCE provisions.
- Government should promote awareness about ECCE to involve parents, communities and local authorities through a well-planned mass media programme.
- In order to have standard norms across the country for ECCE facilities, all ECCE initiatives, Government or private must include nutritional support and health checkups to children in these centres.
- For developing curriculum, content, qualification, capacity building of instructors, outcomes, norms and standards for ECCE programmes, it is recommended that a centrally sponsored scheme be developed for setting up State Resource Centres (SRCs) for ECCE, either through strengthening existing SCERTs or by identifying voluntary organisations which have a proven record of working in this field. This has been successfully tried in the National Literacy Mission and a similar model of functioning and funding with necessary changes is recommended.
- Specification of norms, contents and duration essential for recognition of pre-service training courses may be delegated by NCTE to SRCs at the State level.
- SRCs are visualized as technical resource support at the State level for ECCE, covering a wide range of activities to boost the expansion and quality of ECCE. These activities would include developing the outcomes, curriculum, content, qualifications, recognition of pre-service training courses, and capacity building programmes for the instructors, parents, community and the VECs.
- In order to assist the SRC in providing training, each district should have a District Resource Centre (DRC) reporting to it, which would be responsible for the pre-service and in-service training of local ECCE workers.

- ECCE programmes have to be joyful and stress free. Therefore, the basic approach in curriculum development has to be “learning by doing” and “learning through exploration”.
- A key responsibility of Government is that of training and capacity building through diverse and flexible training courses catering to multiple levels, encouraging diversity while maintaining basic principles.
- The Committee emphasises the importance of retaining flexibility in approach and recommends that a variety of certificate courses with varied duration be recognised, as long as the overall outcomes are of satisfactory quality. Eligibility criteria for selection of students for the various courses should be completion of Class VIII for certificate courses upto a duration of three months, and Class X and Class XII for the one-year and two-year diploma courses respectively.
- Restructuring of existing pre-service courses needs to be done with utmost priority. A flexible approach for qualification of instructors has to be accepted in view of the enormous diversity in the country. While a two-year pre-service teacher training programme leading to a diploma in ECCE would be at one end of the spectrum, certificate courses which have been evolved as per specific local needs in the States would be at the other end. It is recommended that the specification of norms, content and duration essential for recognition of pre-service training courses may be delegated by NCTE to SRCs at the State level.
- In-service programmes of short duration at the cluster level should form part of the SRCs extension activities and the SSA district projects.
- With the long term goal to professionalise ECCE programmes, bridge courses may be planned for ECCE diploma holders and they may also be given opportunities to become primary level teachers in the near future.
- Development of shared understanding amongst instructors of ECCE and primary school teachers through cluster level meetings should be an important strategy for developing effective linkages. Proper linkages therefore should be established through school readiness programmes and by instituting joint in-service training of ECCE workers and teachers of early primary grades.
- Periodic monitoring and evaluation of the ECCE programmes should be done through reputed institutes of social science and research. Provision for such external evaluation should be inbuilt into the centrally sponsored scheme of setting up SRCs.

- Strengthening home-school partnership, recognizing the continuity of the child's life from home to school and school to home, and awareness and motivation amongst the parents is crucial. Regular interaction with them should be an important activity at the ECCE centre, and at the VEC and cluster levels.

XVIII Conclusion

The formulation of detailed policies for ECCE and expanding its coverage to provide services to all eligible children may seem to be an ambitious goal. This Committee considers the role of the Government crucial to making these provisions, and recommends that while some of the strategies suggested here may be implemented with immediate effect, others may be considered in the medium term and in the long term. Notwithstanding the time frame for implementation of these recommendations however, the Committee considers it critical for the Government to recognise the importance of early childhood care and education and to take appropriate steps to ensure the provision of ECCE facilities to all eligible children at the earliest. The Committee urges the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy to work in closer coordination with the Department of Women and Child Development, the State Governments and the voluntary/private sector to ensure the comprehensive provision of ECCE services throughout the country.

**Members and TOR of the Committee on ECCE of the Ministry of HRD
(Department of Elementary Education & Literacy):**

The terms of reference for the Committee are as under:

- (i) India is committed to expand and improve comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education as per the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act and the first EFA goal of the Dakar Conference. To look at the coverage of ECE facilities and to recommend the requirement, including financial requirement for additional facilities so as to provide Early Childhood Care and Education to all children in the age group of 3-6 years.
- (ii) To look into the feasibility and make recommendations for promoting convergence between the school system and the ECCE, including issues of location of ECE centres, synchronization of timings with the primary school, continuity in curriculum from the pre-school stage to the primary stage.
- (iii) To look into the need for providing a minimum essential quality in terms of infrastructure, materials, programme content, worker/teacher quality etc. as a norm for ECCE.
- (iv) To look at the need and feasibility of regulating pre-primary education/ECE centres in the private and public sector, including the flow of foreign direct investment into this sector.
- (v) Any other matter which the Committee deems relevant for the purpose.

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16. Shri Lalit Pande, Uttarkhand Sewa Nidhi, Mall Road, Jokhan Dehi, Almora – 263 601, UTTARANCHAL
17. Dr. Madhuri Deshpande, Managing Director, Centre for Opportunities in Education & Rehabilitation, Fergusson College Campus, Pune – 411 004.
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**Setting up of sub-Groups of the Committee on "Early Childhood Education" –
(i) Committee on ECE for Policy Formulation, and
(ii) Quality and content areas of ECE**

The terms of reference for these groups will be as follows:

- (A) **Sub-Group on Policy formulation:** To recommend the policy formulation:
1. Look at the data available.
 2. Age group to be covered.
 3. Location of ECCE Centres viz-a-viz population / schools, etc.
 4. Government/NGO role – multiple approaches, etc.
 5. Urban situations and ECE facilities.
 6. Linkages with elementary education programmes – as school readiness, support systems, etc.
 7. Norms to maintain standards, what sort of regulations to be put in place, who will enforce them, role of State Governments, NCTE be defined.
 8. To examine post reports on ECCE and provide a historical summary as well.
- (B) **Sub-Group on Quality & Content Areas of ECCE:** To make recommendations on quality and content areas of ECCE as well as on qualifications of instructors, desirable profiles for instructors, etc. Curriculum/syllabi for ECCE & the approach and Monitoring would also be considered.

Members of the Sub-Group on Policy Formulation

1. Dr.(Ms) Sudesh Mukhopadhaya, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration, New Delhi
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3. Joint Secretary (Child Welfare), Department of Women & Child Development, New Delhi or nominee
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11. Director (in charge of ECE) (Presently Shri Praveen Kumar)

Members of the Sub-Group on Quality And Content Areas Of ECE

1. Shri K.K. Vashsishta, Head, Department of Elementary Education, NCERT, New Delhi or nominee
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10. Ms. Sunanda Imamdar, Director, SIET, Pune
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12. Member Secretary, Committee on ECE (Presently Ms. Ira Joshi)