

**PRE PRIMARY (EARLY CHILDHOOD) TEACHER EDUCATION: A NEED OF AN HOUR****Vishakha Hendre & Archana Chaudhari, Ph.D.***Asst. Prof. MIT School of Education & Research**Scholarly Research Journal's is licensed Based on a work at www.srjis.com***Introduction:**

“Teaching is a profession that carries with it a high degree of responsibility and the qualifications and skills of those who take on this responsibility constitute a major factor that affects, be it positively or negatively, any education system”. (<http://www.teindia.nic.in>). This has serious implications for the preparation of teachers at all stages of education, including at the Early Childhood Stage which requires creation of a learning environment for children which is joyful, play based and developmentally appropriate. The demand for Nursery school is increasing day by day, particularly in urban areas. To cater this need a large number of nursery schools are coming up and along with it the numbers of preschool teachers training institutes are also increasing. Having a degree in early childhood education can be a factor in a teacher’s effectiveness, but a degree alone does not guarantee teacher competence. The role of teachers today is changing. Student engagement is higher as it combines various instructional styles. And each student gets exposure to world-class education, something that was just not available in a chalk and talk approach. Preparation of teachers for this stage would therefore require teacher educators who possess knowledge and skills of advance pedagogy and ICT along with sound educational philosophy of ECCE. This study is an attempt to find out the future of pre primary teacher education.

What is Early Childhood Education?

- Early childhood education is a program, which provides a stimulating play environment for Physical, Intellectual, Language, Social and Emotional development of the child.
- It prepares children for the primary and it focuses on the holistic development of the child.
- It lays the foundation for the development of reading, writing and number work.
- It is a program which encourages interaction with the environment, active participation in-group activities and enhances creativity and problem solving in children.
- It stresses on providing first-hand experiences to children in ways that would ensure, development of skills related to the process of learning.
- Early childhood education is a program which indirectly promotes self control and thereby inner discipline in children.

The importance of early childhood education is now a well recognized fact, that children need enriched environment, intellectual stimulation and plenty of opportunity for socialization of the same age group.

Along with this awareness there are some economic and social factors which are also compelling people to put their children in schools from a very early age.

All these factors have created a large demand for pre-school education in the country and as such the number of pre-schools and enrolment of children in pre-schools has been increased considerably.

The number of teachers working in Primary School has also increased with minimal of required training.

The success or failure of a Pre-school depends on the teacher who is the backbone of the Pre-primary school; the success of the developmental plan in pre-school education depends to a large extent on the quality of the teacher education program in the country.

Therefore adequate and extensive teachers training program is important for proper awareness and expansion of pre-school education program in this country.

Objectives of pre-primary teacher education:

1. To train the students in organizing and management of pre-schools.
2. To impart knowledge and skills in planning and implementation of pre-primary educational programs.
3. To Train the students in organizing parent education programs.
4. To Train the students to set up pre-schools under self employment schemes.

Skills to be provided to pre-primary teachers:

1. Planning the pre-school program.
2. Planning long term and short term pre-school programs.
3. Organizing and conducting developmental activities in the pre-school.
4. Preparation of teaching and educational materials.
5. Maintenance of records and registers
6. Conducting P.T.A. meetings
7. Arranging guest lecturers in relation to developmental aspects of pre-school children

Present condition of preschools teacher education:

At 3 to 6 years of age, the rate of development of child is so rapid that he/she is able understand almost anything, if it is given to them in a form in which they can understand. Therefore the responsibility of preschool teachers increases in providing rich experiences to the child and help in developing good habits, proper attitudes and questioning mind. But it is very sad that there is no legal framework that specifies requirements and standards of ECCE teacher training programs in India; instead various education channels provide different types of training. Some higher education institutions implement the Nursery Teachers Training program (two-year) approved by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). The diploma granted to teachers who completed the NTT program is considered as an essential qualification for teaching in some public schools and government-run preschools. Many private institutes run the diploma in ECCE. There are few government recognized certificate courses are also available. There are also online ECCE teacher training programs offered by online educational institutions.

There is no fixed curriculum. Every institution sets its own curriculum. So there is no uniformity in the content.

In terms of methods employed, an overall dominance of the lecture method and blackboard teaching in the classrooms as actually observed. What this perhaps indicates is that the awareness regarding participatory methods may have improved over the years, but this has not yet translated into actual practice in the classrooms. These observations definitely point to the need for teacher educators to move towards more progressive and interactive and adult learning methods of teaching learning.

Researches on Pre School education have shown that children taught at an early age usually have improved social skills, fewer behavioural problems and better grades without special and attention. Self confidence gained by learning in a playful manner adds to the personality development of the child.

The child's positive learning attitude, the basic foundation in language, comprehension and management, help the teacher facilitate the child's learning at higher levels of education.

Moreover childhood education specialists claim that young children learn best when they have an opportunity to interact with their peers, and their parents and instructors treat them kindly. They bloom well in a tension free environment. Besides they comprehend and learn things better if they are introduced to new things in small portions.

It's no secret that the face of education has changed dramatically over the past ten years or so. Teachers across the country are working hard to equip children with the skills needed for success in the 21st century world. In addition to instilling in students the flexibility to readily adapt to changing technologies, teachers must foster learning environments that encourage critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, global awareness, and social responsibility.

Strategies of early childhood teachers can be used future ahead:

1. Integrated technology

To connect with the kids, teachers must learn to speak their language and become conversant with the technology that comes so naturally to the young. Integrating technology means tapping into students' interests and strengthening their technical skills, all while providing enriching learning opportunities.

2. Cooperative learning structures

Cooperative learning sparks engagement in classrooms by encouraging interaction among the students themselves. The teacher, rather than calling on one student at a time, allows children to discuss class materials with buddies or in groups, thus maximizing the level of participation.

3. Differentiated instruction

Teachers can tailor learning experiences to differentiate among the individual needs of students in the classroom.

4. Goal setting

Involving children in the goal-setting process is an excellent way to encourage them to take ownership of their learning.

Recommendations for future preschool education:

1. In 2010, the Indian government enacted the Right to Education Act (RTE Act) in order to ensure universal access to elementary education for all children. It clarifies that every child in the six to fourteen age group (stage of primary education) has a basic right to receive free elementary education, and the government has the obligation to provide such education to these children. Although children under the age six are outside the scope of the "basic right to education," the RTE Act directs that "with a view to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years, the government may make necessary arrangements for providing free pre-school education for such children" (Section 11). Currently, the government is working to set up a one-year ECCE course at all government-run schools in Delhi. (<http://www.childresearch.net>)
2. NCTE should adopt a more proactive role in not only regulating but also promoting quality in preschool teacher education by organizing theme specific and periodic orientation programmes for teacher educators.
3. There is a need for the development of policies in ECCE, both for the provision of facilities and their regulation.
4. There is a need for a standardized curriculum for teacher education across the country.

Conclusion:

It can be concluded that currently the field of ECCE is filled with conflicts, confusion, fragmentation and lack of clarity in terms of vision, appropriate practices, regulation, policy issues, monitoring and support systems. In future preschool teacher education will be more structured, with apt policies all over India. Technology and child centered pedagogy will play a very important role in ECCE teachers training.

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