

Early Childhood Education and Care How to Teach and Care Young Children for Optimal Growth and Development

Priti Kumari

Principal

B. S. Memorial High School, Balumath (Affiliated to CBSE Delhi)

Abstract:

Early childhood education takes part in a essential role in shaping the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development of young children. Teaching at this stage requires a specialized approach that recognizes the unique needs and learning styles of young learners. This article explores effective teaching strategies designed to foster optimal growth and development in early childhood settings. The very young pupils learn effectively through active engagement, exploration, and play. Therefore, play-based learning is emphasized as a foundational teaching method. Through guided play, children develop critical skills such as problem-solving, communication, and creativity, while building confidence and independence. In real sense the role of the educator or teacher is to create a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment that encourages curiosity and experimentation. The article highlights the importance of individualized instruction. Understanding the fact that each child develops at their own pace, teachers should get used to with their methods to accommodate diverse learning needs and backgrounds. This approach promotes inclusivity and makes it believe that each child has the opportunity to succeed in their life. Social-emotional development is another crucial aspect addressed. Early childhood educators must foster positive relationships and model empathy, cooperation, and self-regulation. These skills lay the groundwork for healthy interpersonal interactions and lifelong emotional resilience. The article discusses the integration of early literacy and numeracy skills in playful, meaningful contexts. Rather than formal instruction, these foundational skills should be introduced through age-appropriate activities that align with children's natural interests.

Key Words: Early Childhood Education, Growth and Development, Effective Teaching

Publication Timeline

Original Manuscript Received- July 22, 2025, Peer Review Completed- August 01, 2025, Revised Manuscript Received - August 06, 2025, Accepted & Published – August 11, 2025

Recommended Citation

Kumari, P. (2025). *Early Childhood Education and Care How to Teach and Care Young Children for Optimal Growth and Development*. Intelligentsia International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 1(2), 51- 64.

- **Introduction:**

In general, many teachers today tend to avoid teaching preschool children in early childhood education. There are two well known reasons for this: a desire to pursue higher academic qualifications, and a less interest in working with the learners of this age group. However, this perception is largely a misconception. The real issue often lies in the difficulty teachers' face in adjusting to the distinctive needs and behaviors of young children. Teaching at the early childhood level is not merely a task—it is a responsibility that demands patience, creativity, and deep understanding. Unexpectedly, yet individuals who have obtained professional training in early childhood education sometimes hesitate to engage with this age group. This raises an important question: how can one be called a complete teacher without having the ability or willingness to guide children through the most critical stage of their development? Early childhood is a foundational period in a child's life, where cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development takes place at a rapid pace (Manhas & Qadiri, 2010). Effective teaching in this phase of learning does not solely rely on academic delivery but emphasizes holistic growth—fostering curiosity, building emotional security, encouraging social interaction, and developing motor and language skills. Therefore, teaching young children is not about simplifying content, but about recognizing in what way children think, feel, and learn. To support optimal growth and development, educators must use child-centered, play-based, and developmentally appropriate practices (Chopra, 2012). They must create a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment that invites exploration, expression, and active participation. When done thoughtfully, early childhood education lays the groundwork for lifelong learning and success, making it one of the most noteworthy and rewarding phases of the teaching profession.

- **Foundational Elements of ECCE Philosophy**

Three key elements define the core of ECCE philosophy in India: freedom and joy in learning, social and human values, and self-control and self-discipline. The first element emphasizes on constructing a kind of environment that is joyful, stress-free, and engaging in nature. Children at the preschool age commonly like to learn things through play, exploration, and interaction—not through rote learning or formal pressure. By ensuring freedom in how they express themselves and engage with learning materials, educators can foster a sense of excitement and intrinsic motivation in children. The second element is the cultivation of social and human values. Early childhood is the best time to instill virtues like empathy, cooperation, sharing, kindness, and responsibility. Through group play and storytelling, children begin to understand their roles in society and the value of positive relationships. The third element is developing self-control and self-discipline, which refers to nurturing a child's ability to make decisions, manage emotions, and become increasingly independent. Children

gradually learn to regulate their behavior, solve conflicts peacefully, and take responsibility for their actions. Above mentioned principles are fundamental and indispensable for academic learning as well as for the development of character and emotional intelligence.

Early childhood education (ECE) has a long history, starting way back in the 1500s. Even before that, people like the Greek philosopher Plato had big ideas about how kids should learn. Over time, many thinkers helped shape how we teach young children today. Their ideas are still important and have made ECE what it is now. These thinkers believed kids learn best through play, exploration, and support from adults (Kaul & Sharma, 2017). Let's look at some key people and their ideas, and how ECE has changed over the years. One important person was Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852). He started the first kindergarten, believing young kids need their own space to learn through play. He thought play helps kids grow and express themselves. Then there was Maria Montessori (1870–1952), who said kids should first learn through their senses, like touching and seeing, before learning facts. She saw teachers as guides who help kids explore, not just tell them what to do. Her methods help kids who don't learn well in regular classrooms. Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) believed kids learn by talking and working with others, like teachers or parents, who guide them through tasks they're almost ready to do alone. He also thought mixing kids of different ages helps them learn better. Jean Piaget (1896–1980) said kids learn by exploring their world, going through stages like sensorimotor (birth to 2 years) and preoperational (2 to 7 years). He believed kids make sense of new things by connecting them to what they already know. Erik Erikson (1902–1994) focused on how kids grow emotionally and socially, saying parents and teachers should support kids at each stage to help them succeed. Other thinkers, like Martin Luther in the 1500s, pushed for all kids to learn to read so they could study the Bible on their own. Jean Rousseau said education should focus on the child, using hands-on activities like singing and drawing. These ideas are still used today. Different teaching styles came from these thinkers.

Table : 01
Contributions of Western Educationists to Early Childhood Education

SI No.	Name of Educationist	Major Contribution	Key Ideas	Impact
1	Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852)	Founded the <i>Kindergarten</i> ("Garden of Children") concept, introducing play-based learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play is the core of child development, fostering self-expression. - Teachers and parents nurture a child's innate potential like a gardener nurtures a seed. - Activities like singing, storytelling, and hands-on tasks promote creativity and social skills. 	Established the foundation for modern preschool education; kindergartens worldwide adopt his play-based approach, emphasizing holistic and joyful learning.

2	Maria Montessori (1870–1952)	Developed the Montessori System, emphasizing real-life experiences and self-directed learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on sensory-based learning to stimulate children’s senses before intellectual education. - Eight principles emphasizing self-control and self-directed activity. - Classroom activities designed to foster social values like cooperation and sharing. 	Transformed early education by promoting independence and sensory exploration; Montessori schools globally support children who thrive in non-traditional settings.
3	John Dewey (1859–1952)	Established the Laboratory School to experiment with natural learning methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocated learning by doing through problem-solving and real-life challenges. - Supported self-study and discovery, aligning with Montessori’s philosophy. - Emphasized child-centered education with teachers as facilitators. 	Influenced progressive education; his problem-solving approach shaped experiential learning, encouraging critical thinking and practical skill development in early education.
4	Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934)	Introduced the concept of social interaction as a key driver of child development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning occurs through social interactions with more capable peers or adults. - Zone of Proximal Development: children learn best with guided support on tasks just beyond their ability. - Mixed-age groupings enhance skill and knowledge acquisition. 	Shaped modern ECE by emphasizing collaborative learning; influenced scaffolding techniques and peer-based learning environments in classrooms.

5	Jean Piaget (1896–1980)	Developed the Stages of Cognitive Development theory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children learn by actively exploring their environment through stages: Sensorimotor (birth–2 years), Preoperational (2–7 years), Concrete Operational (7–11 years), and Formal Operational (adolescence). - Learning involves assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration to process new information. 	Provided a framework for age-appropriate education; influenced curriculum design to align with cognitive developmental stages, widely adopted in ECE.
6	Erik Erikson (1902–1994)	Formulated the Psychosocial Development theory, focusing on emotional and social growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each developmental stage requires specific support from parents and educators for success. - Social-emotional development is critical for effective early childhood curricula. - Positive learning experiences at each stage foster lifelong success. 	Highlighted the importance of emotional support in ECE; influenced holistic approaches that integrate social-emotional learning into early education programs.

Similarly, Indian philosophers have significantly shaped early childhood care and education (ECCE) through holistic, value-based, and child-centric approaches. Rabindranath Tagore emphasized experiential learning and creativity, advocating for natural environments to nurture curiosity, as seen in his establishment of Santiniketan, which inspired play-based ECCE models. Mahatma Gandhi promoted education rooted in moral values and self-reliance, influencing community-driven anganwadi systems that integrate care and learning (Akshaya, 2023). Jiddu Krishnamurti stressed self-awareness and inquiry-based learning, encouraging ECCE frameworks that foster critical thinking from an early age. Swami Vivekananda's focus on character-building and universal education influenced policies like the National Education Policy 2020, which prioritizes foundational learning for ages 3–6. Sri Aurobindo's integral education philosophy, emphasizing physical, mental, and spiritual growth, has inspired alternative ECCE models like those in Auroville (Pattnaik, 1996). These contributions

underscore child-centered pedagogies, cultural rootedness, and holistic development, shaping modern ECCE initiatives like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to address cognitive, emotional, and social needs of young learners.

Table: 02
Contributions of Indian Philosophers to Early Childhood Care and Education in India

SI No.	Name of Contributor	Major Work	Impact
1	Gijubhai Badheka (1885–1939)	Introduced Montessori methods in India; founded Nutan Bal Shikshan Sangh (NBSS) in 1926 with Tarabai Modak; started Bal Mandirs in Bhavnagar; authored 223 books for children, teachers, and parents; published <i>Shikshan Patrika</i> (1925) to promote child-centered education.	Indianized Montessori's approach, making preschool education accessible; raised awareness through publications and low-cost teaching aids; influenced child education across Gujarat, Maharashtra, and beyond, emphasizing stress-free learning through play and stories.
2	Tarabai Modak (1892–1973)	Co-founded Nutan Bal Shikshan Sangh (1926); established Gram Bal Shiksha Kendra (1945) and coined "Balwadi" for rural preschools; started Vikaswadi in Kosbad; pioneered preschool teacher training in Dadar, Bombay.	Expanded preschool education to rural and tribal areas; introduced "Balwadi" model, now widely used in India; empowered underprivileged children, especially tribal communities, through accessible education; influenced the anganwadi concept in ICDS.
3	Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)	Proposed "pre-basic education" for children under seven; developed Nai Talim (1937) emphasizing learning by doing; collaborated with Montessori to Indianize her methods; supported Bal Mandirs and teacher training at Adayar.	Laid the foundation for child-centered, practical education; integrated Gandhian philosophy with Montessori's pedagogy; made preschool education inclusive, focusing on autonomy and community involvement; influenced national education policies.
4	Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941)	Founded Shanti Niketan (1901); promoted education in natural surroundings; incorporated music, drama, and arts in preschool curricula; met Montessori	Emphasized holistic child development through creativity and freedom; challenged colonial curricula; inspired modern preschool practices with arts and nature-based learning;

		and Piaget to advocate play-based learning.	influenced global education through Visva Bharati.
5	Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1872–1950)	Established Ashram School in Pondicherry (1943); advocated child-centered education focusing on creativity and spiritual growth; emphasized freedom in learning environments.	Promoted holistic education integrating mental, moral, and spiritual development; influenced early childhood education by fostering creativity and independence; Ashram School became a model for child-centric learning.
6	Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986)	Opposed conventional schooling; advocated small schools for integrated emotional and intellectual development; emphasized self-knowledge and creativity.	Challenged rote-based education; influenced modern ECE by promoting independent thinking and holistic development; inspired small-scale, child-focused educational models.
7	Savitribai Phule (1831–1897)	Co-founded one of India's first girls' schools in Pune (1848) with Jyotiba Phule; established a school for untouchable girls; advocated for education of marginalized children, including girls and lower castes; provided safe spaces for young children of widows.	Pioneered inclusive education for girls and lower-caste children; challenged social norms to promote early education access; laid groundwork for gender and caste equality in education, influencing future ECE initiatives.
8	Jyotiba Phule (1827–1890)	Co-established schools for girls and lower-caste children in Pune (1848–1852); opened a school for untouchables; promoted universal education to combat caste and gender discrimination; supported Savitribai's efforts in early childhood care.	Expanded access to education for marginalized groups; influenced early childhood education by advocating for inclusive, accessible learning environments; set the stage for social reform through education.
9	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891–1956)	Advocated education as a tool for social upliftment; emphasized early education for Dalit and marginalized children; established People's Education Society (1945) to promote education; fought for equal educational opportunities.	Promoted inclusive early education for oppressed communities; influenced policies to reduce caste-based educational disparities; inspired future generations to prioritize education for social equality and empowerment.

- **Concept of ECCE**

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) refers to the structured and intentional approach to the development and learning of children from birth to six years of age. It encompasses both care and education as equally important, inseparable aspects that support the holistic development of young children. ECCE starts from birth, primarily in the home setting, and later extends to community-based and formal institutions like anganwadis, preschools, and kindergartens. At this stage, a child's brain is developing rapidly, and it is critical to provide stimulating, nurturing, and safe environments that promote learning through play, exploration, and guided experiences. ECCE is not just about preparing children academically for school; it is about building a foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. It includes the development of physical health, social skills, emotional security, creativity, communication abilities, and basic cognitive understanding. In the Indian context, ECCE also plays a key role in addressing developmental gaps due to poverty, malnutrition, and lack of access. The concept is deeply aligned with the belief that early intervention can break cycles of disadvantage. ECCE programs are designed to be inclusive, culturally relevant, and community-based, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow into a confident and capable learner.

- **Components of ECCE**

ECCE consists of several vital components that cater to different stages of early childhood. These are typically divided into two developmental stages: early stimulation (0–3 years) and organized preschool education (3–6 years). The first stage focuses on infants and toddlers, where brain development is most rapid. During this phase, sensory and motor stimulation is critical. In India, this is supported by programs like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which provide health, nutrition, and early stimulation through anganwadis. The program also targets adolescent girls and mothers, recognizing their role in a child's development. The second stage, for children aged 3 to 6 years, involves organized education through preschools, kindergartens, and preparatory schools. Here, learning becomes more structured, but still revolves around play-based and developmentally appropriate practices. Children are introduced to concepts through songs, stories, group activities, and games that encourage socialization, communication, and early literacy. Health and nutrition remain essential, but are often managed by private institutions, which run nearly 90% of such programs in India. Overall, ECCE components work together to support every aspect of a child's development—cognitive, social, emotional, and physical—while ensuring a smooth transition into formal schooling.

- **The Dual Focus: Care and Education**

ECCE is founded on the understanding that care and education are two inseparable pillars of early childhood development. While traditional views often separate physical care from learning, modern ECCE philosophy recognizes that both must be integrated to support the child's holistic growth. Care refers to ensuring children's basic needs—nutrition, health, hygiene, safety, and emotional security—are met consistently. This creates the foundation for children to feel safe, secure, and emotionally supported, which is necessary for any meaningful learning to take place. Physical care also includes immunization, regular health check-ups, clean surroundings, and a nurturing atmosphere where children receive love and attention. On the other hand, education in ECCE focuses on stimulation and guided interaction to promote early learning. This involves play-based activities, storytelling, music, movement, social play, and basic pre-academic skills like recognizing shapes, colors, and language patterns. The goal is not formal instruction but developmental support that helps children become confident, expressive, and curious. Children learn best in environments where care and education blend seamlessly—where a child who is well-fed, emotionally connected, and encouraged to explore can truly thrive. This dual focus recognizes the child as a whole being and ensures that early programs nurture all aspects of their identity and potential.

- **UNESCO's Perspective on ECCE**

UNESCO defines Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a broad and integrated set of processes aimed at promoting a child's early development and lifelong learning. According to UNESCO, ECCE includes not just formal education, but also health care, nutrition, physical care, intellectual stimulation, and emotional and social development. It emphasizes that early childhood experiences shape the brain's architecture and have long-term implications on a child's learning, behavior, and overall life trajectory. Therefore, quality ECCE must involve families, caregivers, and communities in supporting the early years. A key aspect of UNESCO's approach is the interconnectedness of services—education cannot succeed without proper nutrition and health, and emotional development is incomplete without strong caregiver relationships. The organization also supports inclusive education, advocating that ECCE programs should reach marginalized groups, children with disabilities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This ensures equity and access for all children. UNESCO promotes the idea that early childhood programs should be play-based, culturally relevant, and developmentally appropriate, respecting each child's background and individual pace of learning. Ultimately, UNESCO views ECCE as a human right and a public responsibility. Investment in ECCE is seen not just as an educational strategy but as a cornerstone for achieving social justice, gender equity, and sustainable development.

- **ECCE as a Precursor to Productive Adulthood**

ECCE plays a critical role in shaping an individual's future by providing the foundation for lifelong learning, health, and economic productivity. Studies have shown

that developmental gaps begin very early in life, and if not addressed, can lead to long-term educational and social disadvantages. Nobel Laureate James Heckman's research demonstrates that intervening early—before formal schooling—yields the highest returns on investment. In fact, early education programs have shown to increase adult earnings by as much as 25%, as observed in Jamaica's ECCE interventions. Developmental delays due to poverty, malnutrition, or lack of stimulation are difficult to reverse after the early years. Economist P. Scott Ozanus notes that by the time children reach school, learning gaps may have widened significantly—by as much as 18 months. ECCE helps to narrow these disparities, ensuring all children have a fair start in life. UNICEF also highlights the role of nurturing environments in early brain development. Through responsive caregiving, reading, play, and nutrition, children develop stronger neural connections, emotional resilience, and social confidence. In short, ECCE doesn't just prepare children for school; it prepares them for life. By developing essential life skills early on, children are better equipped to become successful adults who contribute meaningfully to society and the economy.

- **Why ECCE Drives Productive Adulthood**

There are several compelling reasons why ECCE is crucial for building a productive and equitable society. First, early care, nutrition, and stimulation directly influence brain development. A well-nourished and emotionally supported child develops stronger cognitive and emotional skills, setting a strong foundation for school readiness and lifelong learning. Poor early experiences, on the other hand, can lead to delays in language, behavior, and learning, which are difficult and expensive to address later. Second, ECCE has been shown to yield substantial economic benefits. According to multiple studies, every \$1 invested in ECCE returns between \$4 to \$12, through improved academic performance, higher future earnings, reduced crime rates, and lower dependency on social services. In other words, ECCE isn't just a social good—it's a sound economic policy. Children who receive quality ECCE are more likely to complete school, pursue higher education, and secure stable employment. Third, ECCE fosters resilience and self-regulation, which are key predictors of success in adulthood. Children learn to solve problems, work with others, and manage emotions—skills that are just as important as academic knowledge. By closing developmental gaps early, ECCE ensures that every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to grow into a capable, confident, and productive adult.

- **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in NEP 2020**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, marks a transformative approach to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), recognizing it as a critical foundation for lifelong learning (Government of India, 2020). NEP 2020 emphasizes universal access to quality ECCE for children

aged 3–6 years, aiming to ensure holistic development through play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-driven methods. It integrates ECCE into the formal education system by introducing a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, where the foundational stage (ages 3–8) includes three years of pre-primary education and Grades 1–2. This stage prioritizes cognitive, emotional, social, and physical growth through flexible, multilevel, and child-centered pedagogies. NEP 2020 advocates strengthening *Anganwadis* and establishing *Bal Vatikas* (pre-primary schools) to deliver ECCE, ensuring health, nutrition, and early learning are addressed. It emphasizes training educators in modern pedagogical approaches and developing the National Curriculum Framework for ECCE to standardize quality. The policy also promotes inclusivity, targeting underserved communities to bridge educational gaps early. Multilingual education, incorporating mother tongues, is encouraged to enhance cognitive development and cultural connection. By focusing on early stimulation and play-based learning, NEP 2020 aligns with global research, such as UNICEF's findings on high returns on ECCE investment. It aims to prepare children for primary education, reducing learning disparities and fostering productive adulthood. Implementation challenges, like infrastructure and teacher training, persist, but NEP 2020's vision positions ECCE as a cornerstone for building a skilled, equitable society, with long-term impacts on India's educational and economic landscape.

- **Prospects and Challenges**

India has one of the largest populations of children aged 0–6 years, approximately 170 million, representing about 15% of the country's total population. Of these, around 60 million children are aged 3–6 years, the primary group for early childhood education (ECE) or early childhood care and education (ECCE). Surveys indicate that nearly 80% of children aged 3–6 are enrolled in some form of ECCE program, though participation varies significantly across states (e.g., Uttar Pradesh at 43.7% and Karnataka at 86.6%). About half of these children attend private facilities, particularly in urban areas, while 51% of children from the lowest wealth quintile attend government-run anganwadi centers under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which operates 1.37 million centers nationwide (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2019). In contrast, 62% of children from the highest wealth quintile attend private facilities. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes universal access to quality ECCE for ages 3–6 by 2030, integrating it into the formal schooling system as part of the foundational stage (ages 3–8). However, challenges like fragmented governance, insufficient funding, lack of qualified teachers, and socioeconomic disparities limit access and quality, particularly for rural and disadvantaged groups.

- **Challenges in Early Childhood Education in India**

Early childhood education (ECE) in India, targeting children aged 3–6 years, is critical for fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning. With approximately 60 million children in this age group, India has made strides through initiatives like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which operates 1.37 million anganwadi centers, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes universal ECE access by 2030. Despite these efforts, significant challenges persist, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, untrained educators, and socioeconomic disparities hinder equitable access to quality education. Fragmented governance and inconsistent policy implementation further exacerbate the problem, leading to uneven progress across states. Low parental awareness and cultural barriers also limit enrollment, while the lack of a standardized curriculum impacts learning outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including increased funding, teacher training, and systemic integration. The following are the key challenges-

1. Limited access to quality ECE in rural areas persists.
2. Insufficient funding hampers infrastructure and resource development.
3. Shortage of trained teachers affects educational quality.
4. Socioeconomic disparities restrict access for marginalized communities.
5. Fragmented governance leads to inconsistent policy implementation.
6. Inadequate monitoring of anganwadi centers reduces effectiveness.
7. Low parental awareness limits enrollment in ECE programs.
8. Overcrowded facilities compromise individualized attention for children.
9. Lack of standardized curriculum hinders uniform learning outcomes.
10. Poor integration of ECE into formal education systems.

- **Suggestions for Improvement**

To address the multifaceted challenges in early childhood education (ECE) in India, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is essential to ensure equitable access and quality education for all children aged 3–6 years. First, increasing budgetary allocations for ECE, particularly for rural anganwadi centers under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), can enhance infrastructure, learning materials, and nutrition programs, addressing issues like overcrowding and resource scarcity. Second, a robust teacher training framework aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 should be prioritized, focusing on specialized ECE

pedagogy to equip educators with skills to foster holistic development. Third, streamlining governance by establishing a unified regulatory body can ensure consistent policy implementation across states, reducing disparities in access and quality. Public awareness campaigns targeting parents, especially in underserved communities, can boost enrollment by highlighting the long-term benefits of early education. Additionally, developing a standardized yet flexible curriculum that incorporates play-based and culturally relevant learning can promote uniform outcomes while respecting regional diversity. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems through digital tools and regular audits can improve accountability in anganwadi centers and private facilities. Partnerships with private organizations and NGOs can supplement government efforts, particularly in training and resource provision. To bridge socioeconomic gaps, targeted subsidies or scholarships for low-income families can increase access to quality private preschools. Integrating ECE seamlessly into the formal schooling system, as envisioned by NEP 2020, requires clear guidelines and infrastructure upgrades to ensure a smooth transition to primary education. Finally, leveraging technology, such as low-cost educational apps or community-based learning platforms, can enhance access in remote areas, provided digital literacy and infrastructure gaps are addressed. By implementing these measures, India can move toward universal, high-quality ECE, fostering cognitive and social development for its youngest citizens and laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

References

1. E, Akshaya. (2023). Contribution of Indian philosophers in early childhood care and education during the pre-independence period. *International Journal of Home Science*. 9. 238-241. 10.22271/23957476.2023.v9.i1d.1436.
2. Chopra, N. (2012). A study of early childhood education programmes in Delhi, India. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 20(2), 159-174.
3. Government of India. (2020). *National education policy 2020*. Ministry of Human Resource Development. <https://www.education.gov.in>.
4. Kaul, V., & Sharma, S. (2017). Early childhood policies in India: a historical analysis. *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Policy, California: SAGE Publications*, 32-48.
5. Manhas, S., & Qadiri, F. (2010). A comparative study of preschool education in early childhood education centres in India. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11(4), 443-447.
6. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2019). *Annual report 2018–19: Integrated child development services (ICDS)*. Government of India. <https://wcd.nic.in>.

7. National Statistical Office. (2020). *Household social consumption on education in India: NSS 75th round (July 2017–June 2018)*. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.
8. Pattnaik, J. (1996). Early childhood education in India: History, trends, issues, and achievements. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 24(1), 11-16.
9. Reetu, C., Renu, G., & Adarsh, S. (2017). Quality early childhood care and education in India: Initiatives, practice, challenges and enablers. *Asia-Pacific journal of research in early childhood education*, 11(1), 41-67.
10. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2021). *India: Early childhood education data*. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/in>.
