

## **PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Early childhood stage is very important stage as it lays the foundation for the inculcation of social values and child is ready to learn attitude and values which last a lifelong and get influenced by his environment. An impoverished environment can lead to negative consequences for a child's development. This paper will give an account of the growth and development of pre-primary education in India.*

**Keywords: Pre-Primary Education, Growth, Development**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The first 6-8 years of children's life is known as early childhood stage and it has been considered to be the most crucial years for lifelong development. Many recent researches in neurosciences have brought new clarity that children cultivate 85% of their intellect, personality and skills by age five. Children's learning and intellectual growth are profoundly affected by development in the early years. The 0-6 years are characterized by rapid growth and development of a child when the foundation of all domains of development is laid. Supportive physical, emotional, and

social environments catalyze the development of critical brain structures which further support the increasingly complex behavioral skills that enhance the child's abilities to learn from and shape his/her interactions with caregivers and the environment. (Diamond & Hopson, 1998; Fischer & Rose, 1998). During the period between the ages of 3-6, children gain confidence, start taking responsibilities for their belongings and interact with his outer world. The child must get appropriate environment as it leave adverse effect on his development which may be difficult to reverse in later stages of development. An appropriate environment includes educated parents or family members, age appropriate books, space for play, play equipment etc. These things help the child to develop confidence and trust which will help him in later life. There are many children in our country who are not able to get such type of environment because of low socio-economic condition, working hours of parents, lack of space for play and illiteracy. Today, there is a universal demand for pre-primary education in the whole world. Pre-primary education is an indispensable instrument for the proper personality development of a child. The pre-primary education was found significant on primary and secondary education. Good pre-primary education programme helps the child to develop intellectually, enhance his personality, inculcate social values, develop critical thinking, support emotionally and expand his communication skills.

Pre-primary education term has been used to refer to group of children between 3-5/6 years old and which is provided before primary education. Pre-primary education is basically designed in such a way which supports the child in all aspect of development. It has been called by several names such as Nursery, Kindergarten, Montessori, Pre-primary education, early childhood education, shishu vihar, shishu vaticas etc. The age of children before entering into primary classes is called pre-school age. Most of the pre-primary education programmes are running by voluntary and private agencies and government sector is running the ICDS programme which is the world's largest early childhood care and education programme and which is supporting 0-6 year old children, lactating woman, pregnant ladies, even adolescent girl.

## **NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

The need and importance of preschool education have been described by various commissions and committees. (Wood Committee, 1937), Central Social Welfare Board, 1953; Indian Children Education Conference; 1955 Education Commission; 1964-66, Committees of Members of Parliament on Education; 1967, U.S. Research and Policy Committee for Economic Development, 1971, Sargent Report, 1969 Central Advisory Board of the Government of India, 1944 Britain's Department of Education and Science, 1976 UNESCO, 1974 (etc) and eminent educationists and politicians like; Evans (1975); McDonald (1969); Zakir Hussain (1955); Murlidharan (1969),. Education Commission (1966) pointed out that preschool education is essential to develop the child's good physique; good health habits, social attitudes and manners, group participation; emotional maturity, to encourage aesthetic appreciation, intellectual curiosity child independence and creativity. The Indian Association for Preschool Education (1972) developed a National Policy for the preschool children.

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There are several reasons that emphasized the need of pre-primary education programme as in this fast growing society and due to financial pressure every parents seeks job in order to give a comfortable life to their children and this cannot be don't properly if they have to look after children as well so this condition has necessitated the need of pre-primary education programme. Early years are the very crucial period as child grow and develop in all aspect of developments and pre-primary education can provide the foundation of learning and support the developmental areas and this is the stage when child learn skills also and with proper guidance and proper training the child can acquire those skills which will help him in later life. Pre-primary education programme is that platform where the child's need can be fulfilled – physical, emotional, mental, psychological, social (Venkataranam, 1984; Mohanty, 1984). Early stimulation can promote creativity in young children. Pre-primary education dispels the older belief that early intervention of education can hinder the child's freedom and structured education system can impose the burden on children which will reduce their developmental pace. Arnold Gesell (1925) noted that brain reaches its mature level by the age of 5-6 and if we provide that stimulating environment which will advance them to their developmental areas and pre-primary education programme can provide such stimulating environment. Pre-school education prepares a sound base for primary education, thus reducing dropouts, wastage and stagnation in primary education (Saxena, 1971; Deenamal, 1978; UNESCO, 1974; Dass and Garg, 1985; Lal, 1986). Pre-school education

provides experiences to explore the outer world, and child develops qualities like leadership by playing with their peers. Pre-primary education provides foundation for primary education and prepare for formal school readiness. Rose Mukherji (1965) believes that the early childhood years are the root years for learning about self in relation to others, for concept formation, for language and for creativity.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

Most of early childhood education programme that exist today has been modified and evolved through several ages. Fredrich Froebel and J.J. Rousseau played a vital role in the development of pre-primary education and shaping the pre-school education. Froebel established first kindergarten school at Blacken burg in 1837 in Germany and proposed his theory and designed his school to meet the needs of the children through play-way method. Robert Owen opened the first infant school in 1816 which he called 'Institution for the formation of character'. Margaret McMillan established the first nursery school in London to meet the needs of slum children. Under the Fisher Act several free schools were established in Britain. In 1824, the first early childhood education centre was established in Belgium. The first kindergarten was setup in 1855 at Water town, USA. Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian Physician, established an educational system and worked for mentally retarded children and poor slum children. She established a school ca lled "Casa Dei Bambini" (children's home) in Rome and developed the self learning material. The main objective of Montessori programme was to learn through sensory-motor activities and to achieve the difficulty level by graded activities that move from simple to complex concepts.

The development of pre-primary education in India was very slow and took several years to get into proper structure of formal schooling. Many educationalists played a vital role to establish the foundation of pre-school education in India. Maria Montessori educational philosophy influenced the pre-primary education system in India. India's first convent school for young children was established in 1874. St. Hildas nursery school was founded at Poona in 1885. Mrs. Annie Basant and Rabindranath Tagore made a movement to shape the pre-primary education system in India. Maria Montessori came to India in 1918 and set-up the teacher training centre at

Adyar near Madras. The first formal centre was established as Nutan Bal Shiksha Sangh in Maharashtra in 1925 for the slum children. Mahatma Gandhi Pre-Basic education scheme was formulated for young children. Jugatrambhai Dave, Nanabhai Bhatt and Tarabai Modak were most prominent pioneers of pre-school education movement in India. In 1944, Sargent Committee was established and it was the first committee which emphasized the importance of pre-primary education and it will help the younger child to perform better in primary schooling as it will provide the foundation for better adjustment in primary grades. Formally, the need for pre-primary education was first realized in the first year plan (1951-1956) and for the next five year plan also no financial provision was made to improve the condition for pre-primary education system. And in the third five year plan (1961-1965) CSWB (Centre Social Welfare Board) appointed a committee to survey and report the child care condition of young children in India. In 1963, a unit for child study was established in NCERT. In 1964, Indian Association of Preschool Education was established for the education of young children. For the first time Kothari Committee (1964-66) was in favor of the need of the free and compulsory education for young children. In 1967, Member of Parliament on Education prepared a document and suggested that "Greater attention need to be paid to the development of pre-primary education. Voluntary organizations conducting pre-primary institutions should received encouragement and financial assistance, especially when they are working in rural areas, urban slums or for children of weaker sections of the community". (p.6). The government of India launched the ICDS Scheme in 1975 which is the world's largest early childhood education programme. In sixth five year plan (1980-85) Rs. 905.37 Crores were allotted for the early childhood education. National Policy of Education (1986) emphasized that more financial support need to be made in the field of pre-primary education for the development of younger children and especially from the weaker section and who are first generation learners. In 1992 government constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Yashpal and suggested the ways to reduce the academic burden on pre-school children. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE, 2009). While RTE 2009 did not include children below 6years, it addressed ECE under Section 11 as follows "***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 appropriate Government may make necessary arrangement for providing free pre-school education for such children***". Recently several

initiatives have been taken to improve the standard of pre-primary education system as National Policy on ECCE was approved by Government of India in 2013. And Ministry of Woman and Child Development comprises a framework on Quality Standard for ECCE in 2013. National Early Childhood Care and Education curriculum Framework was proposed by Ministry of Woman and Child development in 2017. This document was the first curriculum framework on ECCE which explained the goals of early child care and learning; pedagogical approaches to principle of programme planning; suggested developmentally appropriate practices from birth to six years old children; programme planning and practices; essential learning play material, assessment of child's development and learning and role of ECCE teachers and partnership with parents and families.

### **PRESENT SCENARIO AND PROBLEMS OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA**

Most of the nursery schools are managed by private organizations and especially in urban areas and they are well organized and appropriately planned according to the need of the urban lifestyle. Over the last few years mushrooming of nursery school has been seen in urban areas and most of them are functioning like a mini form of primary schools and following the downward extension of primary education and burdening the child with reading, writing and arithmetic at pre-primary level which should be avoided and children have to bear unnecessary pressure and load. There are some nursery schools which try to follow the foreign educational pattern like Montessori based school. There is needs to design our classroom settings in such a way that will provide the age appropriate activities and according to their levels of capacity and grasping power, this will contribute to their speedy development. A well organized and well planned early childhood education programme can raise the standard of living and will enable the children to receive further education easily. Interviewing the child for taking admission in private nursery school has result the pressure and anxiety for both parents and children and has done harmful effects on children psychology. Many pre-primary schools are following the downward extension of primary education, heavy curriculum and exposes to rote learning when they are not developmentally ready for it. The curriculum which pre-primary schools are following that is not developmentally appropriate and ignore the developmental needs of the child. Many Private schools are overcrowded and they are not following the norms of NCTE

that ratio of teacher and student should be 1:25 and teacher is unable to handle to give individual attention to each child and they don't have an assistant teacher also with whom they can handle the class very effectively. In such kind of classrooms many activities cannot be done and all-round development of the child is been ignored. Teachers are following the 3R's method and ignoring the developmental needs of the child like indoor free play, outdoor free play. There is a lack of awareness of and concern about the all-round development of children. Teachers don't emphasize on evaluating the child from the developmental point of view. Children often get homework at this stage and this task robs their free time when they can have a good time with their peers. Teachers are not qualified and untrained about the teaching. The teachers teaching at pre-primary level getting very low salary and don't get other facilities which is their right. Many pre-school think that they can start a pre-school in small area and don't design their infrastructure according to the developmental age of the children. There is no accreditation system at pre-primary level. Heir is no financial assistance to pre-primary schools from the state and central government. Private schools are charging high fee and it has become difficult for common person to provide pre-school education to their children. Lack of teaching material and recreational material is another problem of pre-schools.

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