

Role of Various Stakeholders Towards Early Childhood Care and Development

Anjali Warbal*

Nancy Gogia**

Abstract

Children are an essential part of society. Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) plays a pivotal role in the holistic development of a child. It nourishes the child's cognitive skills and helps them to adjust to their social environment in a better way. The family takes care of each and every aspect of a child's life starting from birth until they grow up and become self-sustained. It acts as the first teacher to the child. Every child learns a lot from their family. The family develops cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills in the child. The role of the family is also very important in the child's academic performance. If the family provides a conducive environment for the child, then it will affect the development of the child. Society is that part of our life that we can never neglect. Through society, a child can learn many things; also, it can change their way of thinking. For the upliftment of the child, society plays a pivotal role. It creates a platform for the development of the child so that they become supportive, emotionally sound, intellectually strong, and physically healthy. Teachers are the epitome of God. They are the ones who, formally as well as informally, educate children. They are considered the guide, friends, and philosophers of the children. They are the motherly figure in the formative years of the children. They are filled with knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skills that are required to perform different tasks effectively. The present paper focuses on the role, problems and current issues that are faced by teachers, parents and society as a whole about ECCD. It explains the critical issues and challenges faced by various stakeholders. Furthermore, it also suggests some measures for further improvement.

* Ph.D. Scholar, Central University of Gujarat

** M.Phil. Scholar, Central University of Gujarat

INTRODUCTION

Children are an essential part of society. It has rightly been said that they are just like flowers whereas teachers, parents, and other society members are just like gardeners, nurturing and shaping them as a whole. Early childhood care and development (ECCD) focuses on the overall development of children, i.e., physically including control of gross motor skills, fine motor skills, emotionally stable, socially developed, and inculcation of inner and external discipline. It helps them to prepare for primary education.

ECCD plays a pivotal role in the holistic development of a child. It nourishes the child's cognitive skills and helps them adjust to their social environment in a better way. It is a stage that starts from the birth of the child and lasts until eight years. The Government of India has taken many initiatives like the establishment of Balwadi and Anganwadi centres, etc., for the development of early childhood care; for the upbringing of children, especially in rural areas as a part of integrated child development services programs to overcome child hunger and malnutrition.

Early childhood is a crucial period in a child's life. During this period, maximum development takes place. This is a period where the child needs utmost cooperation, support, and trust from the family, teachers and society. Most of the learning of a child's life begins from this stage.

Recently, there has been significant interest in ECCD in most countries. There are certain reasons for this current interest.

- For all-round psychological and social benefits to young children that high-quality early childhood care and education offers.
- It has been shown that good early years' experience has positive effects on educational achievement.
- ECCD contributes to a healthy and prosperous society by promoting the most effective and supportive family environment.

Researchers have demonstrated that high quality ECCD for young children contributes to their intellectual and social development in childhood, and their school success and economic performance. For most of us, learning starts at home with our family. The most common way in which children learn, in everyday life, is through observation. A child's learning and socialisation are most influenced by their family as a primary social group.

The family is considered to be the basic building block and the foundation stone for the child. If the foundation is not strong, then the whole building will collapse. Thus, the family is responsible for shaping a child and developing their values, skills, socialisation and security. Society is a system of organisation of the mutual relationship between human beings' implicit communities and institutions.

Bala (2014) examined a study in Nigeria on early childhood education and sustainable functional education. The purpose of the study was to effectively promote early childhood education through different models suited for effective learning depending on the peculiarities of the society. The major finding of the study was Bloom's Taxonomy as a foundation base for early childhood education and sustainable functional education in Nigeria.

Naomee (2013) conducted a study on the role of families in early childhood development and education. The study found that children of highly educated parents tend to cultivate high moral values and participate more in extra-curricular activities. It had been seen that their parents, i.e., especially the father of the family devoted less time to their children as compared to their mothers. The study depicted that the role of parents in ECCD is changing.

Harris & Barnes (2009) conducted a study on male and female teachers: exploring children's perspectives on teachers' roles in kindergarten. The major findings of the study tend to explain how the presence of male and female teachers influences children's behaviour. It was also found that boys perceive that male teacher teaches effectively because they act as role model for them.

ROLE OF FAMILY IN ECCD

A family is an informal agency of education. It plays a pivotal role

in the development of a child. It is only through the family that the child learns everything. It is the first place of education and development. From birth until adulthood, the family takes charge of all aspects of a child's life, serving as their initial educator. The family play a crucial role in shaping a child's cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities, and has a significant impact on their academic achievements. If the family environment is supportive, it will have a positive effect on the child's development. The parents should provide a joyful environment for the child so that they can share everything comfortably with their parents. In such an environment, it becomes very easy for the child to do everything. The parents should be like the role models who the child can look up to. Every parent wants their child to become a good individual without making any kind of effort.

The basic aims and objectives of ECCD are to meet children's needs and demands in a culturally rich and developed environment. Family-centred practices are one of the mainspring aspects of ECCD and education. Catering to the needs of children through and within the family arrangement has many reasons:

1. A well-knitted family acts as one unit. Everyone stands to benefit from such an arrangement. Children can be taken care of very well in such a kind of atmosphere. If the parents perform their duties

effectively, then their children will also work accordingly.

2. Parents gain an outlet to access fittingly affordably healthcare means that the whole family including children will be healthier and when the children are healthier, they accomplish more.
3. In fact, early childhood professionals say that the family approach should be followed if any stakeholder wants to help children, teaching parents, how to understand and tackle students how to satisfy their needs, whims, and wishes in the right direction and act as a supporting base in the learning process.
4. Family support to children at a very early stage in their process of growth and development leads to an increase in school achievement and success. It will reduce child neglect. Thus, it will lead to a better and sound quality of life for both the child and their family.

In the current scenario, it can be seen that in most families, the parents are so busy with their work that they do not even care about their child. This can be seen in most families where both the parents are working. They send their child to crèches, day-care centres, or play-way schools and think that their child will learn everything from there.

The following are some of the efforts which should be taken by schools to create a parent-friendly environment within the school premises:

1. Exhibit that the school cares

The school must air that they care about the child. The parents should be constantly informed about the child's learning and progress. This will develop a good relationship between teachers and parents. The school should call the parents in different co-curricular activities and tell them to participate with their children.

2. Communicate frequently with parents and the community

If both sides communicate and listen to each other in a constructive manner, then they will remain updated about the child. This can take place every alternate day or on weekly basis.

3. Obtain feedback from parents

The school should gather information about the child from the parents regarding the child's likes and dislikes, motor skills, physical activities, thoughts, etc. It should ask for any further progress or change that needs to be brought and also request parents' opinions and suggestions.

4. Consider family needs

The school should encourage staff members to meet the parents at a time which is convenient for them. They should provide before and after childcare enrichment programs like cooking, dancing, magic play, etc.

ROLE OF SOCIETY IN ECCD

Society is that part of our life that we can never neglect. Through society, a

child can learn many things; also, it can change their way of thinking. For the upliftment of the child, society plays a crucial role. It creates a platform for the development of the child so that they become supportive, emotionally sound, intellectually strong and physically healthy. It provides an environment where a child interacts with other children; such interactions will increase their confidence level, ability to cooperate, critical and logical thinking, etc.

In recent trends, it is evident that professionals are seeking new thoughts and opportunities to link the community with different stakeholders like teachers, parents, etc. Using society in teaching is a magnificent way to help children. It is an echo of what masses and organisations in one's community would use to help to teach children, the importance and value of the community in which they live.

The role of society in child care and development can be stated as follows:

1. Understand students and their needs

Different stakeholders in society are required to be keen observers. They need to discuss each and everything about the child through discussions, etc. They should know and identify barriers and hurdles which could come in the path of children's learning and development and discover the kind of help needed by the children.

2. Ask for help and support from parents, teachers and other family members

Society should involve parents, teachers, as well as other family members, and take everyone's support for the development of a child at an early stage. It needs to invite and involve them personally.

3. Develop a directory of community agencies

Society should have a sharp eye on business pages, phone directories, etc., and suggest useful agencies to help parents.

4. Involvement of stakeholders with community-based programs

Different stakeholders should join hands together to provide essential services, such as the organisation of child play activities, dance, drama, puppet shows, etc., to the children. Sometimes, through these activities, the hidden talent of the children suddenly pops out.

BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH SOCIETAL AGENCIES

1. Society as an agency

Society as a whole works with families to strengthen communication between the home and the school. Different stakeholders can communicate with school authorities by initiating discussions, refraining from problems, and helping to set up a conversation.

2. Agencies provide a wide variety of family support

Children whose parents receive a lot of support from society are less prone to stress at home and thus can learn more. This makes it more effective for the community in making the child more confident, have high self-esteem, etc.

3. Counselling services

Society agencies' volunteers are mostly aware of obvious resources to help families in urgency such as calling the parents for providing free counselling services to them and their children.

Society as a whole must make an extra effort to involve, integrate and engage with parents who fall through the cracks. It needs to value them. When the parents feel that society values them, they are more likely to be involved and would happily send their children to school. The community should arrange for periodic visits, seminars, and conferences for parents, teachers, etc. where they can talk about how they can improve themselves, how they can get involved with children in their activities and projects, and how they can contribute to making the children more disciplined, and good and loyal citizens of the country.

ROLE OF TEACHERS IN ECCD

ECCD covers children under the age group of 3 to 8 years. Teachers need to handle these children with utmost care. They provide the frame book

and help the children in their growing years. They support the children in the development of skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing; help them in expressing their emotions; promote their physical, social, religious and cultural development, and so forth.

Teachers of ECCD stage children should focus on five key concepts:

- Friendliness
- Flexibility
- Fun
- Fast
- Focused

The teachers should aim to build a bond with their students similar to the bond parents have with their children. This can be done by:

1. Building trust

Teachers should have friendly relations with their students so that they can easily trust the teachers enough to share their views and thoughts with them.

2. Giving timely responses

It is the foremost duty of the teacher to respond in a timely manner to each and every question of the child.

3. Rewarding/Reinforcing them

Teachers should reward those students who achieve their objectives or goals because when a teacher provides a reward to the students, it will attract or motivate the other students also.

4. Predicting needs and emotions

It is the responsibility of the teacher to predict children's needs and emotions and provide them with choices to achieve small milestones.

5. Planning of everyday schedule and practices

Young children should be encouraged to follow good habits like washing hands, reading storybooks, going to sleep and the restroom, etc. By practising these day-to-day activities, children will become habitual to them; these will also keep them occupied.

6. Maintaining a positive environment

As far as possible, teachers should develop a safe, positive, peaceful and comfortable environment that motivates the children to share their ideas, thoughts and opinions with them.

7. Perceiving and disseminating

Children learn a lot through imitation. They communicate what they observe from their surroundings. Teachers should actively observe children's behaviour. If they find any undesirable behaviour or conduct, they should immediately inform their parents.

8. Catering to cultural and special needs

Early childhood teachers should focus on the social, emotional, physical and educational needs of the children. They should respect the culture and

religion of every child. Some children can be allergic to certain food items. So, the teacher should be sensitive and careful towards such special needs.

Thus, certain codes will prepare the teachers for an effective bond between teachers and parents which include getting to know the parents, avoiding an authoritative atmosphere, communicating with parents, learning to listen, following up and recording the students' progress from time to time.

CRITICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN ECCD

1. Lack of a clear concept of ECCD

The period of the concept is unclear. Article 45 of the Constitution states to provide free and compulsory education to children from six to fourteen years of age. The National Focus Group on early childhood education and care states that early childhood is the period from birth to eight years of age. In the present context, most people are not aware of the concept of ECCD. This is because of the lack of awareness programs. The government thinks it is the duty of the teachers and the school to train and shape the children, which is incorrect. Sometimes, the teachers are not aware of when the period of ECCD begins and ends.

2. Inappropriate training

The educators are not effectively trained in the right direction. There is a

lack of professional specialised training and development to ensure a high quality of ECCD. No efforts are taken, especially at this level, to organise seminars or any kind of awareness programs for the stakeholders. There exists a scarcity of trained teachers. Inexperienced teachers are also given the job to train and shape new minds.

3. Parent engagement and indifferent attitude

Parents, by nature, are very much concerned about their children. Teachers have to interact with the parents on a daily basis. Sometimes, there is a lack of trust between parents and teachers. When parents become too demanding, it becomes difficult to manage their requests, questions, and complaints. It has been observed that when there is an excessive involvement of parents, it becomes stressful for both the teachers and the child to cope with and meet the expectations.

4. Low pay and lack of recognition

The salary of private school teachers, as compared to other professionals, is very little. They are the real crafters of the country. More than 80 per cent of teachers say that their job makes the world a better place, but they earn very little per year. It can be seen that due regard or recognition is not given to the teachers no matter how much effort they put in, which is certainly wrong. In reality, teachers play a vital role during the most crucial phase

of a child's life. Thus, they may feel undervalued and disregarded even after making one of the most important contributions to society.

5. Lack of developmental opportunities

Teachers may feel that there are very few resources that are available or accessible for their personal and professional development. It has been seen that no regulation is in place to ensure that regular workshops or seminars are organised for the development of teachers. Their time seems to be so much occupied with school's unnecessary or unrelated work.

6. Gulf between policy-making and implementation

Policymakers draft policies very beautifully. It is the implementation of those policies which is problematic. There is a big difference between policy-making and implementation. What appears on paper is just the opposite of what happens in reality. Now and then, new programs and policies are introduced without providing enough training to the teachers.

7. Ineffective monitoring and evaluation and lack of coordination

The current situation depicts that many children are facing issues like inappropriate attitudes towards others, anti-social behaviour, fighting or quarrelling, emotional instability, etc. Parents and other stakeholders are

not able to guide them properly. They tend to neglect such issues thinking that these are normal behaviour or conduct of the children. There seems to exist a lack of coordination between various stakeholders, i.e., the principal, teachers and parents. Sometimes, there is a complete mismatch in their thoughts, and this creates a problem for the child.

MEASURES FOR PROMOTING ECCD

1. Making the concept of ECCD clear

The teachers must be made aware of the concept of ECCD through rigorous training, workshops, seminars and conferences. Improvements must be made in the training and service conditions of personnel engaged in ECCD.

2. Devising low-cost methods

There is an urgent need for devising a cost-effective model for teaching and learning. It should not be so complicated that it becomes difficult for both teachers and parents to use it. It should include the development of audio and video programs for the mass media for wide implementation and the creation of a mobile supervisory cadre. The devised method should be in the form of a play-way technique and should be child-centred. The methods developed should have a realistic approach. Each of the methods must be supervised, guided and supported by a supervisor who is competent to give guidance.

3. Improving the pay standards and giving due recognition to teachers

The teachers are nation builders. They must be given due regard and recognition. They play a vital role during the most crucial phase of a child's life. Their pay standards should be increased and revised like that of other professions.

4. Apposite developmental opportunities for teachers

For stakeholders' own personal and professional development, there should be regular workshops and seminars. This will enable teachers to learn new methods and techniques and then apply the same to the teaching and learning process.

5. Developing good coordination between teachers, parents and society

There should be good coordination between teachers, parents and society members. For developing this, various meetings and cultural events should be organised, especially in the early childhood stage. Both the parents and the teachers should communicate with each other effectively so that both can get to know about the child. They should work as allies, not as adversaries.

6. Developing a holistic approach

Such a type of environment should be provided to the child that promotes the development of a child's philosophy

and psychology. All stakeholders should organise various programs that enhance the thinking of the child physically, mentally as well as emotionally.

7. Providing counselling services to parents and teachers

Guidance and counselling must be an integrated approach for early childhood care and development. The parents should be made aware of the child's growth and various stages of development. Issues related to many problems like anger, stealing, emotional instability, better communication, etc. can be dealt with ease. Thus, children's needs will be addressed easily.

CONCLUSION

Early childhood is a very crucial and critical stage. Children need to be nurtured with immense care. So, it becomes the duty of various stakeholders like parents, teachers and society to provide education in such a manner that the children become responsible and able citizens of the country in the future. All stakeholders must encourage, acknowledge and reinforce children at regular intervals. It will ultimately recognise children's success. Thus, they will become more confident, and aware, and positively self-evaluate their efforts.

REFERENCES

- AHN, H. J. 2005. 'Child Care Teachers' Strategies in Children's Socialisation of Emotion'. *Early Child Development and Care*. Vol. 175, No. 1. pp. 49–61.
- BALA, N. A. 2012. *Early Childhood Education and Sustainable Functional Education in Nigeria*.
- BONNEY, J. F AND M. L. KELLEY. 1999. 'A Model of Fathers' Behavioral Involvement in Child Care in Dual-earner Families'. *Journal of Family Psychology*. Vol. 13, No. 3. pp. 401–415.
- CIMAGALA, R. 2010. 'Family's Crucial Role in Child's Education'. *The News Today*. Iloilo City, Philippines.
- HARRIS, K AND S. BARNES. 2009. 'Male Teacher, Female Teacher: Exploring Children's Perspectives of Teachers' Roles in Kindergartens'. *Early Child Development and Care*. Vol. 179, No. 2. pp. 167–181.
- NAOMEE, I. 2013. 'Role of Families on Early Childhood Development and Education: Dhaka City Perspective'. *The International Journal of Social Science*. Vol. 11. pp. 158–168.
- SARACHO, O. N. AND B. SPODEK. 2007. 'Early Childhood Teachers' Preparation and the Quality of Program Outcomes'. *Early Child Development and Care*. Vol. 177. No. 1.