

ENSURING FOUNDATION ENHANCING LEARNING

Organized By

अम्बेडकर विश्वविद्यालय दिल्ली
Ambedkar University Delhi



Funding Partners

unicef | for every child



NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCHOOL READINESS

20th and 21st October 2016, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Conference Director

Venita Kaul

Conference Management & Organizing Committee

Payal Sahu, Sandeep Sharma, Rinku Bora

Conference Team

Anindita Medhi, Anam Siddique, Anil Singh Rawat, Jyoti Rana, Komal Khanna, Manish Sharma, Mohd. Saqib, Monica Jairam, Prachi Gupta, Rajeev Bhardwaj, Richa Gupta, Saanchi Marwaha, Shreya Bhardwaj, Sonia Dahiya, S. P. Mahla

Rapporteurs

Abhishweta Jha, Akshita Bhardwaj, Aparajita Bhargarh, Aneesh Kurien, Devika Sharma, Insha Mohammad, Kriti Sharma, Madhulika Jha, Meenakshi Dogra, Niharika Joshi, Preeti Mahalwal, Preeti Rani, Reshma Vats, Shipra Sharma, Sunita Singh

Editorial team

Sunita Singh, Rinku Bora, Venita Kaul, Sameen Almas (Consultant)

Conference Co-organizers and Sponsors

UNICEF India and CIFF

Ambedkar University Delhi, Finance Division

Event Management Co.

BACE Marketing Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi

S. No	Session / Day	Pages
	About the organizer	6
	Foreword: Prof. Venita Kaul	7
	Concept Note: Dr. Sunita Singh and Prof. Venita Kaul	13
	List of Abbreviations	
I.	Day 1: Inaugural Session: Introduction and Overview	14
1.	Welcome and Presentation of the Concept Note: Dr. Sunita Singh, AUD	
2.	Ensuring a fair start through ECE: Mr. Louis-Georges Arsenault, UNICEF	
3.	Advancing early childhood development- from science to scale: Prof. Jere R. Behrman, University of Pennsylvania	
4.	Inaugural address: Mr. Manish Sisodia, Govt. of NCT, Delhi	
5.	Chairperson's remarks: Prof. Shyam B. Menon, AUD	
	Vote of thanks: Dr. Monimalika Day, AUD	
II.	Session 1: Are children ready for schools?	19
6.	Chair: Dr. Rukmini Bannerjee, Pratham	
7.	Achievements of students in the primary grades/level: Prof. Y . Sreekanth, NCERT	
8.	Are children ready for school? Findings from the IECEI study: Ms. Aparajita Bhargarh Chaudhary, AUD	
9.	Transition from Home to school language: Issues and Challenges: Prof. Ajit Mohanty, Formerly with JNU	
10.	Malnutrition and Learning: Dr. Smriti Pahwa, Pratham	
11.	Discussant: Ms. Euphrates Gobina, UNICEF	
	Concluding Remarks: Dr . Banerjee	
III.	Session 2: Are preschools/schools ready for children?	23
12.	Chair: Prof. A.K. Sharma, Formerly with NCERT	
13.	Are preschools/schools ready for children?: Prof. Venita Kaul, AUD	
14.	What's wrong with this picture? Assumptions and ground realities in early grades: Dr. Suman Bhattacharjea, ASER Centre	
15.	School Readiness: Challenges of Inclusive Education: Dr. Annie Koshi, St. Mary's School	
16.	Challenges in Scaling up Quality ECCE: Mr. Sasha Priyo, UNICEF and Bodh Shiksha Samiti	
17.	Pre-primary sections in government primary schools: Landscape and Opportunities: Mr. Krishnan S., CSF	
	Concluding Remarks: Professor AK Sharma	

IV. Day 2: Session 3: Are families and communities ready for school?

28

18. **Chair:** Prof. T.S. Saraswathi, Formerly with Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda
19. **ECD Interventions in Odisha:** Prof. Costas Meghir, Yale University,
Dr. Monimalika Day, CECED
20. **Engaging mothers in Children's Learning and Development:** Mr.Chittaranjan Kaul, CLR
21. **Programme to Improve Private Preschool Education (PIPE) in urban India:**
Mr. Smitin Brid, Pratham
22. **Exploring modalities for early stimulation:** Mr. Ashish Karamchandani, FSG
Concluding Remarks: Prof. Saraswathi
23. **Discussant:** Dr. Nandita Chaudhary, Lady Irwin College

V. Session 4: Making preschools/schools ready for children

33

Parallel Session 1:

24. **Chair:** Dr. Neerja Sharma, Formerly with Lady Irwin College, DU
25. **Evidence to Practice:** Bengal Evidence: Dr. Shashi Panja, DWCD, West Bengal
26. **Supporting Quality improvement in Anganwadis (Ankur):**
Mr. Nilesh Nimkar, QUEST Alliance
27. **Addressing systemic issues in quality of early education: Experiences from CARE:**
Dr. Suman Sachdeva, CARE
28. **Multilingual environment in ECCE: The DWCD- UNICEF Odisha experience:**
Ms. Lalita Pattnaik, UNICEF

Parallel Session 2:

29. **Chair:** Dr. Reeta Sonavat, SNTD
30. **Preparing teachers for early education: PPP model:**
Ms. Zainab Bhinderwala, Muktaangan
31. **School readiness for children with special needs: Aarambh experience:**
Ms. Jayanthi Narayan, formerly with NIMH
32. **Evidence based planning: Maharashtra experience:**
Mr. Vijay Shivsagar, ICDS, Maharashtra
33. **Status of inclusion in early education- Innovation in school readiness: Bihar experience:**
Dr. S.A. Moin, SCERT, Bihar
34. **The Early Childhood education journey of Rajasthan:**
Mr. Samit Sharma, ICDS, Rajasthan

VI. Session 5: Technical Panel's review of posters

35. Dr. Asha Singh, Lady Irwin College

36. Ms. Mita Gupta, UNICEF

37. Dr. Rekha Sharma Sen, IGNOU

VII. Session 6: Investing and Scaling in Early Education

43

38. **Chair:** Prof. Govinda, Council of Social Development

39. **Himachal Pradesh: Status and Vision for ECCE:** Ms. Anuradha Thakur, DWCD, HP

40. **Early Childhood Education in India: An economic argument:** Ms. Garima Batra, BCG

41. **Scalable and Sustainable Early Years Interventions:**

Mr. Orazio Attanasio, Institute of Fiscal Studies

42. **Public Investment in Young Children in India:**

Ms. Protiva Kundu, CBGA Concluding Remarks: Prof. Govinda

VIII. Session 7: Closing session

47

Chair: Prof. Shyam B. Menon

Highlights of the conference and emerging recommendations, discussion and finalization:

Dr. Sunita Singh, AUD

Closing remarks: Prof. Shyam B. Menon, AUD

Closing address: Prof. Venita Kaul, AUD

Address: Mr. Samit Sharma, ICDS

43. Vote of Thanks: Dr. Payal Sahu, CECED

50

Programme Schedule

55

Speaker Profiles

68

References

69

CECED, AUD

Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED) is a unit within the organisational structure of Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) and works in close collaboration with different multidisciplinary schools in the institution. It has a core team to lead and coordinate its functions. CECED partners with other organisations and the government for more sustainable and systemic impact.

Mission Statement

To contribute towards the national goals of social justice and equity by promoting developmentally and contextually appropriate Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED), as every child's right to a sound foundation, and raising ECED to the forefront of policy formulation, and effective and universal program implementation.

Aims and Objectives

CECED aims to promote systemic understanding of developmentally, contextually appropriate and inclusive ECED with a focus on early learning. More specifically, it aims to:

- Expand the landscape of indigenous knowledge on ECED and narrow the gap between theory, research, policy and practice.
- Strengthen the momentum for high quality, play-based ECED.
- Critique and provide evidence-based, policy-related advice and feedback on existing programmes and provisions for children, across public, private and voluntary sectors.

Main Functions

CECED aims to provide a single window approach to ECED by serving as:

- A hub for documentation, knowledge creation and theory building through longitudinal, multi-disciplinary and multi-centric research and documentation and its dissemination.
- A technical resource for promotion of quality and related capacity building for policy makers, professionals, practitioners, parents and community.
- A clearing house and a repository of information/data on ECED

UNICEF India

UNICEF recognizes that the health, hygiene, nutrition, education, protection and social development of children are all connected. Targeting efforts for them at all stages of their growth – infant and mother, child and adolescent – and on a range of traditional programme fronts will see that inroads are made to ensure children not only survive, but thrive too.

CIFF India

The Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) works for the advancement of children in places where opportunities for them are low and challenging. It “aims to deliver large-scale, long-term transformational advances for children as evidenced by clear indicators for children to survive, thrive and mature successfully into adulthood.” In order to achieve the aim, it ensures that opportunities reach children, design interventions to tackle related issues and undertaking breakthrough performance.

The Center for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi has been organizing annual conferences for the last few years, in partnership with various international and national organisations. These conferences, planned for evidence based advocacy and knowledge sharing, are designed around topical themes in the domain of Early Childhood Education and Development. More specifically, the conference aims to reach out to a diverse audience of policy makers, practitioners, parents, students and academia, with evidence based knowledge regarding some systemic challenges in the domain of ECED and sharing of possible, tried and tested solutions. Three major conferences organized by CECED in the last few years include South Asian Regional Conference (2012), National Conference on Early Learning (2013); and an international conference on Investing in the young child (2014).

I am happy to share this report of the fourth conference organized on October 20-21, 2016 on the theme “Ensuring Foundation Enhancing Learning” a Conference on School Readiness. This conference was organized by CECED in partnership with UNICEF and Children's Investment Fund (CIFF). The theme of School Readiness was specially identified for this conference to mark the closing of the first phase of the longitudinal research (IECEI, 2011-2016) undertaken by CECED and ASER Center in partnership with UNICEF, CIFF and many other agencies within and outside the country. The conference aimed at initiating a discussion based on some compelling research evidence emanating from the study, on the key importance of ensuring school readiness for enhancing school learning in children.

Given the persisting concern regarding low learning levels in the primary grades, the conference also aimed at enabling all stakeholders to (a) understand the close link between school readiness and later school learning along the early learning continuum and identify 'school readiness' as a potent factor influencing school level learning; (b) appreciate the need to start to address the problem of learning deficit in the early childhood years and (c) understand the phenomenon of school readiness and address it within a more comprehensive frame, which would include making schools ready for children, giving children a sound foundation prior to entering school and enabling families to understand the concept of quality in terms of developmentally appropriate practices in ECCE so as to make appropriate school choices.

The conference elicited overwhelming participation from policy makers, practitioners, civil society representatives and NGOs, many of whom presented their work and experiences in the different sessions. Some participants joined in through the web cast mode and had opportunities to interact. While capturing the conference deliberations fully in terms of the texture and depth of the presentations and discussions in a brief report is not feasible, we do hope this report has been successful in presenting the major highlights of each session and the emerging recommendations.

We take this opportunity to thank all who contributed in their respective ways to make this conference a success.

Venita Kaul

ENSURING FOUNDATION, ENHANCING LEARNING

National Conference on School Readiness

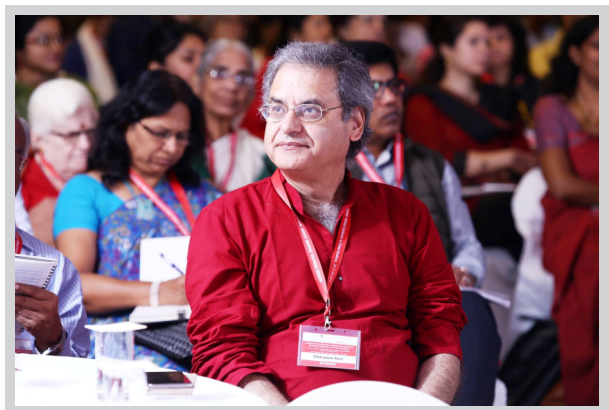
Sunita Singh and Venita Kaul

Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University Delhi

The first eight years of a child, known as the early childhood years, are globally acknowledged to be the most critical period for children's lifelong growth and development. The shift from theoretical understandings of diverse developmental pathways in children to articulation of concrete expectations is a result of research that indicates that children learn a great deal from their environment and their developmental patterns and brain architecture are in turn, influenced by the environmentⁱ. Despite the evidences from neuroscience and economic benefits of investing in young children for their well-being, early childhood continues to be an area of a great concernⁱⁱ. Many children still fail to reach their full potential because of inadequate care and early stimulation, poverty, malnutrition, poor health and poor quality Early Childhood Education (ECE)ⁱⁱⁱ. This is due to diverse contexts—often exacerbated by inequities in service that children can access, variations in developmental patterns and the inability of the school systems to provide educational experiences that are inclusive and supportive of the needs of the diverse learners^{iv}. The inequities also result in disparities in “enrolment, attendance, learning outcomes and achievement based on gender, poverty, geographical location, ethnicity, health status, conflict and natural disasters which all play a role in defining which children attend what kind of school and for how long^v.” These issues further underscore the major role early childhood care and education plays and needs to play in providing services that are equitable. This is critical because the ECCE provisions aimed at “school readiness” also need to connect to children's learning and development in the later years and especially address the oft-cited low learning levels^{vii}.

Early childhood has received a major impetus in India in recent years. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), the nodal department for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), has developed a National ECCE Policy^{viii} for children below 6 years which was approved in 2013 by Government of India. The policy lays down the way forward for a comprehensive approach towards ensuring a sound foundation for every child. It commits to universal access to quality early childhood education by enhancing capacities and monitoring and supportive supervision. In order to strengthen the existing system of ECCE in India, Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education^{ix} and Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework^x, have also been developed along with the Policy endorsed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. States have also initiated the process of developing state level curricula for ECCE. These initiatives provide us with some critical parameters for the much needed reforms in the area of ECCE. While the draft National Education Policy (2016)^{xi} also addresses the need of curricular reforms in ECCE, the connections of the learning and development during the early childhood years with later learning levels is largely absent in this document.

The proposed conference has been conceptualised primarily around the concept of school readiness which has been deemed as an area that needs much attention in researches across the globe, in the Indian national policy and curricular framework and also in researches conducted by CECEd. It especially emerges as a persuasive factor in the Indian Early Childhood Education Impact (IECEI) Study (2011-2016)^{xiii} particularly in the context of addressing the decline in learning levels of children which is becoming a national concern.



School readiness has been conceptualized within a broad framework—one that involves not just children—but also families, the environment, communities and the school context^{xiii}. Within this triadic relationship children are not innately “ready” or “not ready” for school. Their learning and development is influenced by their local environment and the interactions with families and communities before they step into the school system which continues to shape this process^{xiv}. Thus, interactions between the socio-cultural environment and the child can determine the course of school readiness—with the potential to provide the needed developmental support^{xv}. The concept of school readiness cannot be seen as neutral and autonomous—for it would imply that there is uniformity in how families-communities and schools approach school readiness. Hence, it becomes imperative to approach the concept in a holistic manner by building partnership between various stakeholders who are in a relationship with the child. The idea is to “...disrupt limited ideas of readiness in order to rethink readiness that includes the voice of children, teachers and family^{xvii}”. This underscores the fact that while the academic development of children is important, it is only a part of the delineation of the concept of school readiness^{xviii}.

Some children are more prepared for schooling because their early experiences prepare them better for school experiences. Discrepancies in what families deem significant for school readiness vis-à-vis conceptualizations of the same by the schools could result in the exclusion of some children in the classrooms^{xix}. While the diverse early experience provide advantage to some children research indicates that the gap in the learning levels appears much before the beginning of formal schooling for young children and continues to grow wider during the years of schooling^{xx}. School readiness in fact needs to be addressed for children under the age of three as well because learning begins at birth and it is during these years that brain development is shaped by the experiences available to children^{xxi}.

Also significant in this framework to consider the transition from preschool to the early primary for school readiness—and not just the preparation during the preschool years. School readiness is the organic linkages conceived by children, families-communities and schools when children are able to make meaningful transitions from home to preschool/ECCE centre and then to primary school^{xxii}. Thus, in order to promote school readiness—a threefold approach is necessary (1) providing children access and opportunities that could help in their development and learning, (2) recognizing and building upon given their individual differences and abilities with respect to what children can do when they enter school^{xxiii} and (3) creating meaningful connections with children's home, culture and community^{xxiv}.

The conference, “Ensuring Foundation, Enhancing Learning: National Conference on School Readiness” aims to bring together policy, research and pedagogical perspectives for reconceptualizing “school readiness” in the Indian context. It situates school readiness with an understanding of the child, family and school as rooted within social cultural and historic influences. Further, it locates this concept in the global discourse of Education for All, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act (2009) and the reforms in policy and curriculum related to ECCE projected by the MWCD (2013). With a key goal of breaking the silos in services provided to children across age groups the term 'transition' needs to be understood with respect to specific contexts and the nature of the psychological, cultural and social accommodations involved, and the role of the key stakeholders in this process^{xxiv}. Entrenched within these complex dimensions and their interplay, the conference sessions have been planned around five interlinked themes of: (1) Are children ready for school, (2) Are schools/preschools ready for children? (3) Are families and communities ready for school? (4) Making preschools/schools ready for children and (5) Investing and scaling up in early education. In each sessions also, ways of scaling up quality parameters will be explored.

Objectives of the Conference

The conference is being planned with a view to advocate for evidence based understanding of the concept of school readiness within the larger frame of early childhood care and education and discuss its critical role in determining the learning levels in school. It is hoped that the conference deliberations would result in ensuring centrality of the location of school readiness within the current and widespread discourse on low learning levels in primary grades. The conference organized to reconceptualize the issue of school readiness in the Indian context will help provide evidence to policy makers that the sites that are inextricably connected to children's learning and development—schools and families—need to be organically connected and not discursively separate. In the light of the National ECCE Policy and Curriculum Framework by MWCD (2013) it will address how preschool education needs to be conceptualized in the country in order to address learning in the elementary levels seamlessly. Specifically, the conference aims to:

- a) Promote understanding of the concept of school readiness from a threefold perspective of: (i) Are children ready for school? (ii) Are schools ready for children? and (iii) Are families and communities ready for preparing children for school?
- b) Highlight the direct association between school readiness levels of children at school entry and subsequent learning.
- c) Share and discuss some innovative initiatives in fostering school readiness within the framework of the threefold conceptual perspectives and
- d) Make recommendations for ensuring systemic provisions for enabling all children to be ready for school.

The conference will bring together policy makers, researchers, practitioners, media persons and civil society representatives to discuss and deliberate on the concept, significance and modes of addressing this key determinant of quality of school learning. The format of the conference has been planned in the form of panel discussions, presentations and poster sessions for learning from grounded evidence and experiences in the context of the theme, spaced with adequate time and opportunity to maximize open discussion and deliberation, leading to concrete and relevant recommendations. A brief on each of the five sessions of the conference, conceptualized in consonance with this format, is presented below.

SESSION 1: Are Children Ready for School?

The opening session on “Improving children's chances: Evidence on early life investment” along with the addresses by the Chief Guest and the Chairperson will set the tone for the first session of the Conference. The panel discussion in this session aims at sharing evidence of children's learning and development and linking learning levels with school readiness within the context of the current discourse on the declining learning levels and learning crisis in primary schools. The state of preparedness of children as assessed in the IECEI study presents evidence that as children transition from preschool to primary school around the age of five years there is sustained effects of the status of readiness on their subsequent performance in school in terms of their cognitive, language and psychosocial competencies. The session weaves in some key issues specific to the Indian context that need to be considered for school readiness—including the multilingual contexts from which children come and the home-school divide, high percentage of malnourishment in children, the needs of marginalized groups which remain unaddressed as they transition from home to preschool and then on to school. The presentations will focus on some findings from the research on children's learning levels conducted by CECED, ASER and NCERT—thus, presenting triangulating evidence for the need for the National Policy (Draft, 2016) to pay attention to preschool education and link it to learning in the early grades through a process of smooth and seamless transition.

SESSION 2: Are Preschools/Schools Ready for Children?

Various sectors that address preschool education are plagued by issues of quality. The session will present the paradox of how the curriculum gets prescribed without fully addressing children's maturational or experiential readiness and the need to match academic and developmental priorities. Enrolments in quality preschool programmes especially help in the cognitive development of a child because the sensitivity of the brain development related to cognitive skills declines after the age of 5-6 years. The need is to provide quality preschools that are available for all children and their families. While it is critical to focus on the school environment, it is also important to focus on the instructional practices that facilitate, foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school for better learning. Additionally, comprehensive services that also include intervention for children who

may need it is essential. It is imperative to understand that it is even more important to pay attention to quality, especially for children from marginalized backgrounds. At the same time, finding ways that renders quality in an affordable manner is crucial.. This session will share evidence on the definition and significance of quality in early schooling including at preschool and primary school levels. This will be across public and private provisions. It will focus on identifying the systemic challenges in making preschools/schools inclusive and in scaling up good pilot initiatives. This session will also address the issue that whether children coming into school at the age of 5 or 6 from diverse socio- linguistic contexts should be “prepared to fit” into the existing school mould or the school structure, curriculum and processes be flexible and adaptable to the needs and contexts of children who are entering their portals? Presentations in this session will provide empirical evidence for the same.

SESSION 3: Are Families and Communities Ready for School?

Families are a critical link in the provisioning landscape because their understandings about early childhood education and good schooling play a major role in the kind of preschools or schools they prefer and choose for their children. However, little is known about how families understand ECE and how they provide for it within the homes and/or connect with the preschools/ schools. When the learning cultures in homes and schools do not connect, it creates exclusionary practices for some children in early childhood settings. Further, research also indicates that children from economically disadvantaged families need more support for school readiness. In order to ensure access, equity and quality of preschool programmes families need to be provided with access to resources that would “allow them to give their children the nurturing relationships and experiences that promote school readiness.” and make informed choices. This session will bring forth evidence based learnings and experiences from various innovative initiatives in this area.

SESSION 4: Making Pre-Schools/Schools Ready for Children

With the objective of ensuring the conference takes full advantage of many known and diverse state and civil society initiatives being implemented across the country, some of which may be considered good practices, this theme will be addressed through parallel sessions. In addition, posters will be invited from some more innovative practices based on which a critical review will be presented alongside by a team of reviewers. The presentations in this session will focus on systemic interventions and challenges in quality of early education. Given the diversity of experiences children and families bring into the classrooms, presentations will focus on how organizations have been working across diverse communities to help connect the learning process for children organically and what learnings these experiences can offer to the larger system.

SESSION 5: Investing and Scaling up in Early Education

Given the persisting challenges and concerns regarding early education and school readiness levels of children, particularly from the marginalized communities, despite some excellent and innovative initiatives, the need for scaling up the learnings from these for systemic reform, while also ensuring equity and quality cannot be overemphasized. Decisions regarding prioritizing investments form a key element in this context. Presentations in this concluding session will thus present Indian evidence of value addition in returns on investment in preschool education and share international and Indian experience on scaling up access with equity and quality. The session will also bring forth evidence of the rising phenomenon of privatization across India in early education through affordable pre/schools and the reflection of this trend on the shift in perceptions of the relative roles of public and private sectors. The session will conclude with a presentation of some key emerging recommendations of the Conference.



AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
AUD	Ambedkar University Delhi
AWC	Anganwadi Centre
AWW	Anganwadi Worker
BCG	Boston Consultancy Group
CABE	Central Advisory Board of Education
CBGA	Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability
CDPO	Child Development Project Officer
CECED	Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development
CLR	Centre for Learning Resources
CSF	Central Square Foundation
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EWS	Economically Weaker Section
GoI	Government of India
HOME	Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IECEI Study	Indian Early Childhood Education Impact Study
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
J-PAL	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
LKG	Lower Kindergarten
MDM	Mid-Day Meal
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training

NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
PPS	Pre-Primary Section
PSE	Pre School Education
RTE	Right to Education
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	School of Educational Studies
SR	School Readiness
TLM	Teaching Learning Materials
UKGs	Upper Kindergarten
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UTs	Union Territories
VHSND	Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day
WCD	Women and Child Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Introduction

The Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi held a national conference on the theme of “School Readiness: Ensuring Foundation, Enhancing Learning” at New Delhi. Spread over two days (20th and 21st October 2016), the event witnessed participation of delegates from different states and varied organizations representing Early Childhood, Care, Development and the Education sector and allied disciplines. The wide list of participants included policy makers, government representatives, state partners, researchers, civil society organisations, practitioners and the media.

I. Inaugural session: Overview

1. Welcome and Presentation of the Concept Note by Dr. Sunita Singh, CECED, AUD

Dr. Sunita Singh from CECED welcomed the participants for the 2-day conference and shared the objectives of holding the conference. Using the findings of the CECED-led longitudinal study- Indian Early Childhood Education Impact (IECEI) to stress on the importance of preschool education, Dr. Singh stated that research points towards quality preschool experiences as the most important factor contributing to higher learning levels in later school years. Similar research was flagged which indicated that the most sensitive time for brain development falls between birth and 5 years of age, i.e., before children start school and continues well into the school years. However, for a lot of children, inadequate care and early stimulation, poverty, malnutrition, poor health and poor quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes during these early years restricts them from reaching their full potential. The concept of school readiness was conceptualized within a broad framework, one which does not look at children alone, but also involves families, communities and the school context. Within this triadic relationship, it was explained that children are not innately “ready” or “not ready” for school. Their learning and development is influenced by their local environment and their interactions with families and communities before they step into the school system. Giving this background, Dr. Singh discussed the objectives and the agenda for the two days' conference.

- Promote understanding of the concept of school readiness
- Highlight the direct association between school readiness levels of children at school entry and subsequent learning
- Share and discuss some innovative initiatives in fostering school readiness
- Make recommendations for ensuring systemic provisions for enabling all children to be ready for school

Programme Schedule: The days were divided into specified sessions wherein the speakers or panelists were invited to discuss and deliberate issues related to the session topic. Each session was followed by an open discussion for interactions with the audience/participants. The themes and sessions were as follows:

Session 1 on **“Are Children Ready for School?”** aimed at sharing evidence of children's learning and development and linking learning levels in later school years with school readiness.

Session 2 **“Are Preschools/Schools Ready for Children?”** focused on comprehensive services that need to be provided to children and families.

Session 3 on **“Are Families and Communities Ready for School?”** highlighted the role of families as the critical link in the provisioning landscape and brought forth evidence based learning and experiences from various innovative initiatives in this area.

Session 4 **“Making Preschools/Schools Ready for Children”** focused on the way organizations had been working across diverse communities to help connect the learning process for children organically and what learning such experiences could offer to the larger system.

Session 5 was a **poster presentation** on researches from various organizations including CECED.

Session 6 on **“Investing and Scaling up in Early Education”** highlighted the need for scaling up the learning from good practices for systemic reform, while also ensuring equity and quality.

The sessions were to conclude with a presentation of some key emerging recommendations of the Conference with a discussion that would provide a way forward for the participants.

2. Ensuring a fair start through ECE by Mr. Louis-Georges Arsenault, Country Representative, UNICEF

Mr. Arsenault initiated his presentation by highlighting that Early Childhood Development is an issue which has gained momentum over the last several years and is a critical area of UNICEF's work in addressing the continuum of care. There exists ample evidence that investment in 3-5/6 year olds has a significant impact on their achievements in the early school years. He stressed upon the fact that the policy environment currently is very conducive in favour of ECE, especially with the rollout of the National ECCE Policy 2013, the Draft National Education Policy 2016, and discussions on the extension of the RTE Act to include ECE.

He further cited research which strongly supports that investing in the foundational years will lead to high economic returns. As the way forward, Mr. Arsenault suggested that there is a need to now look beyond ECCE, in terms of assessing unqualified schools and the government could work on having a robust foundation for public and private institutions.

Investing in the foundational years will lead to high economic returns. Investments in the quality of learning can boost the appetite for staying and learning in school, and higher motivation for teachers.

3. Advancing early childhood development-from science to scale by Prof. Jere R. Behrmann, University of Pennsylvania

Prof. Behrmann began by stating that his presentation summarized and described research from the 3rd series of the leading journal in human health, The Lancet. Referring to one such research which focused on young children (0-3 years), Prof. Behrmann highlighted the need to bring the scientific evidence forward and scale it up in his address on “Science to Scale”.

He initiated his talk by mentioning that there was a growing momentum in the area of Early Childhood Development, which was clearly indicated by an increase in scientific publications, public policy and funding. The most notable among this renewed interest was the global recognition of the importance of ECD inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At Lancet, research on review of effective interventions in improving child development (maternal, newborn health, nutrition, parenting, ECE) and its costs to individuals and societies suggested that multi- sectoral interventions across the first 1000 days of the child's life are the most effective. He stated that sensitive periods in the development of the child and the effect of environments, even prior to pregnancy (implying healthy mothers) can have a critical influence on the development of the child. Besides the genetic basis for development, these factors affect the development and well-being of the individual. The research further indicated that the burden of risk for poor developmental outcomes is higher in developing (Low and Middle Income) countries. Over the years, there has been a slight decrease, but still nearly 250 million children worldwide below 5 years are at risk of being unable to fulfill their development potential. Citing caution, Prof. Behrmann mentioned that the cost of inaction during the ECD years shows itself in grades and earnings lost (for stunted children and those living in poverty). In his presentation, he shared the economic costs of investing in ECD. The numerous countries which disregarded investments in ECD had a larger proportion of growing adults with poorer incomes.

The cost of inaction during the ECD years shows itself in grades and earnings lost

Prof. Behrmann concluded by stating that the Care for Child Development approach adopted by WHO and UNICEF, such as IMNCI were examples of effective interventions. The requirement for ECD programmes is to ensure that these interventions remain cost-effective, feasible and affordable. As the way forward, he recommended the following: need to start early (conception to 3 years), expand political will through the SDGs (since improving ECD is key to achieving SDGs), maintain a conducive policy environment, follow a multi-sectoral framework, support system enablers, support implementation and undertake coordination and evaluation.



4. Inaugural address by Mr. Manish Sisodia, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Government of NCT of Delhi

The Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister began his address by expressing his gratitude to the organizers of the conference and in particular, Prof. Menon and Prof. Venita Kaul. Stressing on the significance of the topic of discussion, Mr. Sisodia mentioned that the issue of ECD needs to be raised and discussed at length. Some key highlights of his address are mentioned below:

Significance of ECCD:

As the Education Minister in Delhi for the last 2 years, he was convinced that the need to work in the area of ECE was urgent, and delaying the process could cause irreparable harm. Praising the research work of CECED, Mr. Sisodia expressed his keenness to read through the school readiness research study (IECEI) report, which was a unique attempt at following up children for 5 years. To sum up, he stated that every research (from the field of neuroscience to ECE) seems to point to one common message: ECCD service provision is necessary.

The context: Referring to the state of education in the country, the Minister despairingly stated, “we have made [our] nursery students *slaves to textbooks and notebooks*”. There is hardly any importance given to play or activities in the curriculum, while formal education takes the centre stage in schools. Further, it was indeed unfortunate to observe that the relationship between the teachers and the students remains largely hierarchical. Often teachers are known to talk down to the students. Highlighting the critical role of the teachers in influencing development, the Minister insisted on running training programmes for our ECCE teachers which inculcated in them a sense of equity, and a non-discriminatory attitude towards children who come from the lower socio- economic status and those who are first generation learners.

“We have made [our] nursery students slaves to textbooks and notebooks”



Prof. Kaul welcomes Mr. Manish Sisodia at the inaugural session

Commitment of the government towards ECCD: The government of Delhi has been very keen on creating an action plan for implementing ECD services to promote school readiness among the children in Delhi, the Minister stated. The question to be dealt with, was the translation of this idea to reality and reaching out to the large number of children living in slums and unauthorized colonies in Delhi. The Minister mentioned that he expected to receive inputs from the conference during the two days and present them in the upcoming CABE meeting in the capital.

Next steps: He urged the audience to look into what needs to be changed with a practical approach. Mr. Sisodia described the learning to be had from international interventions. However, citing caution, he added that we must not resort to copying and pasting from such evidence. The context and environment have to be considered while devising interventions, and that is why a programme which is successful in Delhi may not be as successful in Odisha or Maharashtra, when translated without context.

Concluding his address, the Minister elaborated upon the Delhi government's commitment to take the initiative forward. He announced that the plan was to setup 3000 ECD centres in Delhi, covering 3,00,000 children over the State. The centres, with an activity-based curriculum, will prepare the children and ready them to join school at the age of 6 years. He also urged the civil society to collaborate on this project and the community to adopt it with a sense of ownership so as to avoid a fate similar to that of government schools. In the beginning, he suggested that 10 pilot centres be immediately setup with the collaborative effort of CECED and the Delhi government, specifically in unauthorized colonies and slums across the state.

5. Chairperson's remarks by Prof. Shyam B. Menon, Vice Chancellor, AUD

Reiterating the significance of ECD, Prof. Menon stated that the early years of development determine later potential and achievement. As far as the RTE is concerned, the timeline of 6-14 years is inadequate without the foundation of ECCE. By the time the child reaches the age of 6, that window of opportunity is already sealed. It must be understood, Prof. Menon added, that the schooling process is a partnership between family and school. Support from family is essential, and the notions of "good schooling" should be questioned. He also discussed the fact that the pressure of the board examination percolates even to the level of preschool. Since the stress on marks and grades is very high in school, it affects expectations from the middle and elementary school, which in turn affects the preschool in such a way that even children in preschool are burdened with the idea of scholastic achievement.

Notions of "good schooling" should be questioned... the stress on marks and grades is very high during senior school, it affects expectations from the middle and elementary school, and which in turn affects the preschool, in such a way that even children in preschool are burdened with the idea of scholastic achievement.

As far as quality in the school system is concerned, he said that the teacher is the single most determining factor. It needs to be understood that teaching is not an assembly line work—it is a profession which requires many skills at many levels. Prof. Menon suggested that there should be a commitment forthcoming from all the participants at the conference, towards creating a cadre of teachers who are professionally and personally sound. Finally, he thanked the participants for attending the workshop and congratulated CECED for organizing the event.

Vote of thanks by Dr. Monimalika Day, SES, AUD

The inaugural session came to a close with a vote of thanks by Dr. Day to the dignitaries of the session for sharing research and policy perspectives and stressing on the need to focus on ECED. She also welcomed the participants to the two day conference.

II. Session 1: Are Children Ready for School?

A video film “Delhi speaks on School Readiness” shot and edited by the CECED Communications team was shown at the beginning of the first session of the conference.

Panel discussion- Linking learning levels with school readiness

6. Chair: Dr. Rukmini Banerjee, Pratham

Introducing the topic of the panel discussion, the chairperson, Dr. Banerjee stated that the idea of preparedness should be applicable for everyone; and not just limited to the child. It must extend to include schools as well as families. Citing ASER data in many states, she added that children are now known to be going to school at an early age and the age of entry in private schools is becoming lower.

The idea of preparedness should be applicable for everyone; and not just limited to the child. It must extend to include schools as well as families.

The ASER 2014 report points to surprising findings: a high proportion of 3-year-old children are enrolled in schools. In the case of private schools currently, children do not get admission in Grade 1 without having attended multiple stages of schooling such as LKGs and UKGs. Sharing this

background, the first panelist was invited to speak.

7. Achievements of students in the primary grades/level by Prof. Y. Sreekanth, NCERT

Introducing the research of NCERT, Prof. Sreekanth mentioned that NCERT has been engaged in conducting National Achievement Surveys (NAS) of children for the past many years. The survey covers government and government-aided schools and students of Grades 3 and 5 in language and mathematics. The research collected information on gender, caste, and rural-urban locations. According to the data collected, it was observed that in Grade 3, the performance of students in language and Mathematics is very good, but as they progress, it goes down. In language specifically, it

was found that the average score of states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh was significantly lower than the national average, even in standard 3; although Kerala continues to show high achievement across ages and is consistently doing well. At grade 3 level, no significant difference was observed between the performance of urban and rural students, with the exception of comprehension which was slightly lower among rural children. Also, it was evident that General category students performed somewhat better than SC and ST candidates. In terms of gender, reading comprehension was found to be better in girls than boys. In **Maths**, states of Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu were found to be better than the national average. Not much difference in rural-urban locations was observed in grade 3. In Grade 5, girls continued to outperform boys in reading comprehension and language skills. However, the survey also brings to light a significant concern, that of decline in performance from Grade 3 to Grade 5. The national performance in language and mathematics was good in Grade 3, but by the time these children reach Grade 5, there is a substantial decline observed. This figure slightly improves in Grade 8, but again falls in Grade 10.

Teaching in mother-tongue should be encouraged in the initial years to help students follow instructions and lessons.

As a strategy, Prof. Sreekanth suggested the following:

- Involvement of teachers is indispensable especially in Grades 1 and 2
- Qualitative feedback is necessary for understanding learning gaps and designing interventions
- Teaching in mother-tongue should be encouraged in the initial years to help students follow instructions and lessons. It was observed that students understand the instructions better when told in their mother tongue, he concluded.

8. Are children ready for school? Findings from the IECEI study by Ms. Aparajita Bhargarh Chaudhary, CECED, AUD

The longitudinal IECEI research study conducted by CECED, ASER and UNICEF covered the 3 states of Assam, Telangana and Rajasthan and over 12,000 children. Ms. Chaudhary explained the mixed method approach and the scope of the study which undertook a baseline assessment of children at age 4, school readiness levels at age 5 and followed up with achievement tests at ages 6, 7 and 8. The tools which were used for assessment were: Activity based tests and School Readiness (SR) Instrument (with 10 activities) developed by World Bank and adapted for the study, both of which assessed language competencies, cognitive and number concepts. Further, the concepts of sequential thinking and classification were assessed using flash cards.

From the findings of the study, it was found that school readiness improves learning levels in elementary years, and children with higher school readiness fared better on learning achievement tests at ages 6, 7 & 8. In the study areas, the levels of school readiness were found to be very low among the children (especially domains). Among the factors which contribute to school readiness, added Ms. Chaudhary, the following are relevant: age of the child, participation in ECE programmes at age 4, the quality of ECE programme, and household characteristics (mother's education, socio-economic status and print-rich environment at home). In conclusion, she shared the key recommendations emanating from the study—a need for age and developmentally appropriate curriculum at each level and the preschool curriculum to also focus on cognitive and language components.

Children with higher school readiness fared better on learning achievement tests at ages 6, 7 & 8

9. Transition from Home to school language: Issues and Challenges by Prof. Ajit Mohanty

Learning a language should not be seen as a question of a child's school readiness, it instead is a question of the school's child readiness... Children's home language must be viewed as a resource, and not as a burden

Prof. Mohanty's address detailed out the significance of multilingualism during the early years. He began by stating the fact that a huge percentage of children suffer everyday because of the mismatch between the language spoken at home and the one

used in school. Therefore, learning a language should not be seen as a question of a child's school readiness, it instead is a question of the school's child readiness. Citing an example, Prof. Mohanty posed a question to the delegates: why is the term 'dropout' used for the child, when in fact, he or she is pushed out of the system especially when the language of the teacher or the school is given precedence. To illustrate, he quipped that if he were to give his address in Odia language, the audience would either be lulled to sleep or will be pushed out from the discourse. The situation in many schools remains such that the dominant language medium teacher talks down to the children, whether or not the children understand or follow classroom instruction. When children are faced with the language barrier, they fail to participate.

Contrary to popular belief, Prof. Mohanty clarified that multiple languages do not compete for space in our brains, i.e., learning one language does not decrease the space for the other. Through the principles of language proficiency, he explained that humans have a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) for different languages. It refers to a cross-lingual reservoir of abilities, which implies that the central processing system for all languages is fundamentally the same. At the same time, it is important to understand that the learning of a second language is facilitated well, if the mother tongue or first language of the child is sufficiently developed. If the child shows poor competence of the first language, introducing the second language at that time can have a subtractive effect. Further, while Early Childhood Care and Education programmes may introduce the basic social skills of language; for higher thinking skills such as thinking about language, higher mental ability, cognitive academic ability, the

child needs to learn the language formally.

In conclusion, he said that the best form of a multilingual education model is one where Language 1 (L1) is developed to a high level, and other languages (L2, L3) are learnt, which have an additive impact. Children's home language must be viewed as a resource, and not as a burden, Prof. Mohanty cautioned. Children are known to learn and perform better in their mother tongue. He also added that there is wisdom in moving from known to unknown, i.e., the transition from mother tongue to learning new languages for the child.

10. Malnutrition and Learning by Dr. Smriti Pahwa, Pratham

Dr. Pahwa initiated her presentation by joining the links between the prevalent malnutrition crisis and the learning crisis. Malnutrition which covers both under-nutrition and over-nutrition affects learning levels of children. The presence of essential nutrients in the diet such as Protein, Iron, Iodine, and even trace elements such as Zinc affect learning. Research shows that cognitive abilities and achievement of developmental milestones for a child depend on a combination of factors, including appropriate nutrition, good health, caregiver's attention and the context of the child. Besides affecting the physical growth, brain development of the child is dependent on his/her nutritional status, as multiple research studies across the world show the correlation between child's health status and the achievement levels/scores in school.

Cognitive abilities and achievement of developmental milestones for a child depend on a combination of factors, including appropriate nutrition, good health, caregiver's attention and the context of the child

Dr. Pahwa explained that among the ECD interventions, more efforts are now being systematically made to include the component of Nutrition Education within the community and to generate awareness on topics as diet, immunization, growth monitoring, sanitation and hygiene in group discussions and during home visits. For this purpose, a handbook titled KIRAN (Knowledge and

Involvement to Transform Research into Action for Nutrition) was prepared, containing counseling cards, activity cards, story cards as well as recipe cards to be used with caregivers of children between 3 and 6 years. She concluded by stating that this module had been successfully used in many balwadi programmes and was being scaled up.

11. Discussant: Ms. Euphrates Gobina, UNICEF

As the discussant of the session, Ms. Gobina stated that the first session of the conference was a fruitful one, as it gave the framework for an approach to be followed to ensure a solid foundation for children. The session highlighted global and national evidence on holistic development and an inter-sectoral approach to child development. She particularly noted the longitudinal IECEI study as one of its kind in the country, in following children's progress through early childhood education and providing critical insights on patterns of attendance, programme quality and learning.

Investing in early years is crucial in maintaining children's innate curiosity, participation and learning.

Investing in the early years is crucial to maintaining children's innate curiosity, participation and learning. Psycholinguistics has to be given due importance as children learn better in their mother tongue. In a country like India with several languages, the possibility of replicating a multilingual model must be explored, as was done in the case of Odisha. Urging the audience to look ahead, Ms. Gobina mentioned that the idea should now be to move from evidence to practice. She concluded by noting that the question to address is how to go to scale, in a manner in which quality is maintained and equity and inclusion are promoted.



Concluding Remarks by Dr. Banerjee

The chair of the session, Dr. Banerjee concluded with sharing her thoughts about the presentations. Apart from discussing the key areas where research was done, the availability of data over a long period of time was also highlighted in the session. She recommended that various agencies from all over the country should come together and create a national level data set. Calling this conference as a platform for learning, Dr. Banerjee requested CECED to make the information thus collected available to the larger audience. Similarly, research work done so far should be made available, preferably in different languages, because accessing information in a variety of languages will help to reach out to the larger public, as well as policymakers, practitioners and researchers.

III. Session 2: Are Preschools Ready for Children?

Chair: Prof. AK Sharma, Former Director, NCERT

Prof. Sharma introduced the topic of the panel discussion and shared with the audience the bio-notes of the speakers of the session. He then invited the panelists to share their views on the idea of readiness of preschools and quality concerns.

12. Are preschools/schools ready for children? by Prof. Venita Kaul, CECED, AUD

In her presentation, Prof. Kaul elaborated upon the findings of the longitudinal research study by CECED, UNICEF, ASER centre along with Andhra Mahila Sabha, Telangana and NIPCCD Assam.

Under the study (IECEI), she explained that an observation rating scale was used to collect data on quality of programmes attended by children. The aim was to study whether or not the curriculum followed in most preschools was child-friendly and age appropriate. To achieve this, the researchers followed up children at 3-4 years to their respective preschools, which included private schools, government-run anganwadis and a few innovative (NGO-run) programmes. The study covered only functional AWCs, facilities which had a minimum of 5 children.

From the data collected, it was found that there exists a huge gap between policy and practice. There was a widespread preference for private preschools. Among the community, the poorest population was found to be sending their 3-year-olds to anganwadis or private playschools, if they could afford it. At age 4, there were fewer children in the AWCs and even lesser at 5. The government schools after 5 years were very popular, followed by the private primary schools. Bringing the focus on the ambiguity of the age of entry for school, she mentioned that while the age of admission for Grade 1 is 5 years in most schools, the legislation on education (RTE) covers children older than 6 years. Further, in some countries, grade 1 begins at 7 years of age. In these parallel existing systems, there is a need to pause and question if we are not rushing our children.

A quality programme ready to transact preschool education, she recommended, should include the following components: physical infrastructure (which is non-hazardous, safe), classroom planning (developmentally appropriate and weekly/daily schedule), preschool teacher (who is democratic,



Prof. Kaul shares the findings of the IECEI study during her address

interactive, and encouraging), and the transaction of curriculum in a manner which encourages creative and divergent thinking, opportunities for free play and individual and group activities.

Prof. Kaul suggested that the following factors determine quality of preschool programmes: quality of the teacher, quality of the curriculum, and the links between the preschool and the community.

However, for the preschool teachers, it was found that most anganwadi workers go through the initial job training, but there were no refresher trainings conducted later. Stressing on the need and essentiality of such recurrent training, she added that it should be achieved with the support of teacher educators as effective mentors and with ample opportunities for reflection. Besides these factors, Prof. Kaul explained the significance of a well-designed pedagogy and curriculum, based on children's age, developmentally appropriate activities, use of multilingual education and participation of children in activities and

play- in developing school readiness. The data from the study shows that at ages 4, 5, 6 and 7, formal teaching is stressed upon more in comparison with to play-based school readiness activities and outdoor play. In comparison to other preschools, the Bodh Shala programmes had many more play-based activities and their children showed better learning levels in schools, according to the study.

Preschools and schools are not ready for children... there exists a huge gap between policy and practice.

Among the study findings, it was also found that the quality of ECE in private preschools was very poor. Preschools and schools were not ready for children. The dominant practices remain of formal teaching of 3Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) or routine activities with a downward extension of formal education.

Towards the end, Prof. Kaul shared the recommendations emanating from the study, some of which are:

- Need to address and regulate quality in preschool levels across AWCs and private schools.
- Revision in curriculum to address age appropriateness and developmental level of children.
- Curriculum framework using non-formal pedagogical practices with upward continuity from preschools to primary grades.
- Preparing competent and professional teachers.

13. What's wrong with this picture? Assumptions and ground realities in early grades by Dr. Suman Bhattacharjea, ASER centre

Using data from ASER 2014, Dr. Bhattacharjea aimed to dispel some of the assumptions about early school years. The ASER annual survey reaches out to nearly 16,000 government primary schools all over the country. In her presentation, she shared commonly held assumptions and the realities related to schooling based on the data collected.

- First, contrary to popular belief, children enter school much earlier than 6 years of age.
- Secondly, class composition is complex with children of different ages commonly sitting in one class. Multi-grade teaching is frequently practiced
- The support received in school work from mothers is negligible as their educational level was found to be very low.
- There exist huge learning gaps between what the curriculum expects the children to learn and what children can really do.
- The school textbooks were found to be far too difficult for most children. This is due to the fact that the textbooks instead of being based on the child's capability to learn are based on the assumption that children can manage the complex level.
- It is a commonly held perception that anyone can teach in primary schools, which is entirely untrue. As evidence, she presented that when government teachers were given two simple problems to solve in the ASER survey, a significant number of them were found to give incorrect answers.
- Similarly, according to the data, not all teachers were found to have the knowledge required to teach in primary grades (such as spotting mistakes, calculating basic mathematics and explaining concepts in simple language). This was even true of high performing states such as Himachal Pradesh, Assam.
- Classrooms are not child-friendly at all, even though teachers know the importance of child friendly practices. These practices include encouraging children to ask questions, displaying children's work in classrooms, (teachers) using any TLM except textbook, using local information to make content relevant, and creating an easy environment by smiling and laughing with the children.

Policies should be designed based on where children are and not where we expect them to be

In conclusion, Dr. Bhattacharjea recommended that policies should be designed based on where children are and not where we expect them to be; and based on where teachers are and not where we expect them to be. Similarly, communication

strategies must be designed to facilitate parents' participation in child's learning. She finally added that evidence, instead of assumptions, should inform policy.

14. School Readiness: Challenges of Inclusive Education by Dr. Annie Koshi, Principal, St. Mary's School

Dr. Koshi brought to light the issues and challenges of inclusive education and its link with school readiness. She began her presentation by explaining how disability is a matter of perception, a point she stressed by quoting Scott Hamilton: “The only disability is a bad attitude”.

She urged the audience to focus on the child in front of them, and not the disability. In an inclusive setup, therefore, the role of the teacher becomes very pertinent. She must responsibly send across the message of care in the classroom, one in which she indirectly states, “I am looking, I am listening and I am here to offer support”. An inclusive classroom should mean that the child with disability is in the common classroom with other children, and goes to a separate setting for support service temporarily. However, it should not limit the interaction of this child with other children.

With the use of videos, Dr. Koshi explained how inclusion activities in preschools and schools can address domains of development for children. Especially in the domain of socio-emotional development, the school or teacher must respond appropriately if she / he finds out that there is a conflict between parents in a house where there is a child with disability. Efforts must be made to change and create a positive nurturing environment for the child to grow.

**Disability is a matter of perception...
The only disability is a bad attitude**

Cautioning the delegates, she concluded that it needs to be understood that accessibility alone does not mean inclusion. Even after introduction of laws and provisions such as RTE which affirms 25% admission in schools for children from EWS section, accessibility still remains a concern.

15. Challenges in Scaling up Quality ECCE by Mr. Sasha Priyo, Consultant, UNICEF and Bodh Shiksha Samiti

All systems in the context of the young child (including health, nutrition, education, play and care) have to be aligned with each other, and a piecemeal approach should be avoided

Mr. Priyo commenced his address by stating that it is common for communities to demand education in schools, but the demand for quality of education in anganwadi centres is hardly ever raised. To ensure quality of ECCE programmes, attention must be paid to understanding the context of every child. Citing the example of Munna, he elaborated how the child withdrew from loud noises and did not participate after hearing someone talk very loudly. After assessment of the factors which could have triggered such a response, it was revealed that the boy's father had a loud voice and a short temper. Only later was the real issue addressed: the father had a hearing problem and thus spoke loudly. Consequently, intervention with the family had to be done to address the issue. ECE programmes should be structured in a way that they address concerns which could affect the child in a positive way.

Similarly, all systems in the context of the young child (including health, nutrition, education, play and care) have to be aligned with each other, and a piece-meal approach should be avoided, he added. Mr. Priyo further went on to discuss the challenges of scaling up models which affect the outcomes of interventions. When a change is brought about in some schools, the teachers are reluctant to work on it as they think of it as a burden. However, when that change is spread over or is implemented at a larger level, the schools are more willing and the problem of non-acceptability reduces. In addition, accountability without support and capacity building should be avoided at all costs.

Concluding his discussion, he summarized the structure and functioning of Bodh's preschool programme, where schools are considered an extension of homes. The presence of a mother teacher (who is selected from a group of mothers from the community and undergoes training), and junior fellow (a teenage girl, who is trained and later given skills for a preschool teacher) aids children in the ECCE programme. Lastly, academic support for the staff through workshops and continuous on-site support is offered, along with keeping community engaged around preschool education.

16. Pre-primary sections in government primary schools: Landscape and Opportunities **by Mr. Krishnan S., Central Square Foundation**

In his address, Mr. Krishnan shared the alternative models of ECCE besides the anganwadi centres and private preschool model which could hold more promise in addressing ECCE. He began by stating that although there are numerous anganwadi centres all over the country, these are not the preferred institution for ECE by the community, at large. The preference on the other hand, is for private schools.

Although there are numerous anganwadi centres all over the country, these are not the preferred institution for ECE by the community, at large. The preference on the other hand, is for private schools.

To address this, additional models of preschool or ECE were explored, one of which was PPS-- the attachment of a preschool to the private/government primary school. This model was then studied using DISE data covering national trends and other studies on the government Pre-Primary Sections (PPS). The findings suggested that private PPS had higher accessibility, and higher enrolment in comparison to AWCs. The data also showed that in the government setup, there were no teachers in 65% of PPS government schools. This meant that preschool children in those schools were in all likelihood sitting with Grade 1 children, thus rendering the ECE model useless.

Nevertheless, CSF undertook this model after studying successful government PPS models across the country. The dimensions under study were programme history, governance, curriculum, learning environment, teachers and funding. Successful examples included the Montessori model in Chennai which was effectively adopted in all government schools, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi schools partnered with Pratham to create and develop TLM and conduct teacher training, while Pratham invested in leadership development and training of preschool teachers. Winding up his discussion, Mr. Krishnan explained that this was a time of opportunities for stakeholders. The Central government must

mandate preschool education, make funding available for PPS, act as a regulator of quality and strengthen academic support. Similarly, State governments, civil society and NGOs could advocate for ECE, setup PPS, develop age appropriate content, and get involved in capacity building and awareness generation among the community. He concluded that CSF was open to suggestions and criticism of exploring this PPS model and offered it as an additional model, and not as a replacement of the existing ones.

Concluding Remarks by Prof. A K Sharma

At the end of the second session, the chair, Prof. A K Sharma thanked the panelists and acknowledged the work of CECED and other organizations working in the sector of ECCE. He lamented that although a statutory body was formed for developing norms for school teachers, nothing in this regard was done for teachers involved in preschool education. Further, institutions which commonly offer primary and secondary teacher training courses have nothing for preschool teachers, which must be an integral component of teacher training.

IV. Session 3: Are Families and Communities Ready for School?

On the second day of the conference (21st October 2016), panel discussions and presentations continued on topics related to school readiness and innovative interventions in the field.

Panel Discussion- Empowering Family and Enabling Child

17. Chair: (Rtd.) Prof. T. S. Saraswathi

The chair, Prof. Saraswathi laid the context of the discussion and mentioned that it was a privilege to attend the national conference of CECED. As an advisor to the centre, she had been with CECED from its stage of infancy, and had “seen it grow into a robust healthy child”. Since a majority of the panelists for this session were from varied and inter-disciplinary fields, she suggested that it would be useful to listen to their wisdom and experience.



The panelists of the 3rd session

18. ECD Interventions in Odisha by Prof. Costas Meghir, Yale University

At the outset, Prof. Meghir remarked that in addition to ECE experts, everyone now agrees that ECD is a key element for equal opportunity. The team led by Prof. Meghir had been running several experimental studies on ECD. Based on the curriculum of Sally Grantham McGregor (which included home visits and group based stimulation techniques), their programme targeted 1-3 years old children in Colombia (South Africa) and Odisha (India).

The pilot programme in Cuttack (Odisha) adapted the ECD curriculum to its context and implemented it for a period of 18 months. In terms of scope, the Cuttack programme was larger than the Colombia impact. The large effect, he added, was driven by involving the local women from the community. The programme managers located and identified women who were willing to work with them and who were then provided training to work for their communities. These were essentially parenting programmes, where parents' support was utilized to reinforce the intervention. After the pilot, the next intervention was carried out which in addition to the ECD curriculum, included nutritional education, stimulation via group and home visits. This intervention, besides being larger than the Cuttack programme, received support from Pratham which provided cards for storytelling and home-made toys. Focus was on constructing toys from the available waste material to ensure effectiveness and sustainability.

ECD concerns pose important economic challenges as they directly affect poverty, human development and standard of living.

During the course of the programme, use of nutritional indicators indicated under-height and underweight children. It also indicated that children who were exclusively breastfed had better health outcomes, but as they grew and moved on to complementary foods, their health status dropped, which was a clear indication of low nutrition and hygiene commonly affecting older children. The challenge in the intervention was in designing an appropriate curriculum for the context, and sustaining the enthusiasm of the people involved. As an economist, he mentioned that ECD concerns pose important economic challenges as they directly affect poverty, human development and standard of living.

19. Exploring modalities for early stimulation by Dr. Monimalika Day, SES, AUD

Continuing Prof. Meghir's presentation, Dr. Day stated that the ECD intervention was first contextualized in the Indian context, specifically for rural Odisha. In the project, stress was given to designing individual curriculum as well as group curriculum for young infants and older infants. They focused on 4 major aspects: activities, physical settings, social settings and materials. The activities designed were developmentally appropriate.

In the course of the intervention, most home visits were conducted in a constrained place, and often included other children besides the infant. The activities were adapted after a detailed mapping of the old curriculum. Thus, the new curriculum was adapted to the context of the villages, with attention to local stories, songs, and dance. In this regard, a lot of support was drawn from the Pratham Odisha office. Activities for development were based on the local context to enable children to better read their own environment (visiting a potter, nature walk and so on). Citing challenges, she said that they had to deal with variations within the group (in terms of different cultures and languages) and across different locations within the state.

20. Sajag: Caregiver Education for Early Stimulation by Mr. Chittaranjan Kaul, Director, Centre for Learning Resources (CLR)

Mr. Kaul placed on record his gratitude for the steadfast support of UNICEF in Chhattisgarh, UP and Bihar. UNICEF, with the technical assistance of CLR, began a programme for building caregiver capacity

...persuade parents to provide more inputs than just nutrition- such as stimulation activities for socio-emotional and cognitive development.

with children up to 3 years of age. This programme on parenting was called 'Sajag', targeting 12,000 families across 20 villages. The objective of this programme was to persuade parents to provide more inputs than just

nutrition- such as stimulation activities for socio-emotional and cognitive development. With support from the 3 departments of Education (adult literacy volunteers), WCD (anganwadi workers) and Health (mitanins- health workers), these messages were communicated to the parents in Rajnandgaon block of Chhattisgarh. After the launch of the programme, there was a perceptible improvement in the nutritional status of the malnourished children, surprisingly without any change in nutritional or dietary inputs. This change caught the attention of the health department, Mr. Kaul added. The primary aim of the programme was to include and improve the relationship between parents and children through "Touch, Talk, and Play".

He shared that the project spanned nearly 2 years. As a follow up in the selected 20 villages of the intervention after 18 months, CLR studied the psychosocial stimulation in home environment using the HOME inventory and milestones' tool (covering the domains of development). This was in comparison with a control group drawn from the adjoining villages with no intervention. The results of the HOME inventory indicated that in the intervention group, younger children (less than 2 years) performed

significantly better on the sub-scales of responsivity, acceptance, involvement, learning materials and organisation.

This was in direct proportion to the work done and time spent in the intervention on the younger age group. Similarly, in the milestones too, children in the age bracket of 18-24 months showed significantly better results in all the 4 domains of development (gross motor, fine motor, vision and hearing, language and cognition, and socio-emotional and self-help). As the way forward, Mr. Kaul clarified that the next step was to scale up the intervention with the Health Department, to integrate messages on early stimulation along with nutrition and health messages; as well as working with day-care centres (called phulwaris) to focus on stimulation activities.

In conclusion, as part of the ECCE policy implications, he suggested that community level workers could be trained to help parents create supportive and developmentally appropriate stimulating environments at home. Similarly, synergy and convergence between various departments is a critical factor for determining the success of such programmes.

21. Engaging mothers in Children's Learning and Development by Mr. Smitin Brid, Programme Head in ECCE, Pratham

Giving an outline of Pratham's work, Mr. Brid mentioned that the organization had been working with caregivers, especially mothers in all its intervention programmes. Pratham engages with the community through its balwadi (preschool component) programme, runs its balvachan programme (vocabulary, numeracy and writing) for grades 1&2 and partners with the government-run early childhood (anganwadi) programme for training of anganwadi workers. At Pratham, it was felt that the mothers and families are the most important factor who decides the pace of development of their children.

As a strategy, Pratham organized meetings with mothers to create awareness on aspects of development and health, and on conducting simple and doable home stimulation activities for children to enhance their learning. Initially, in the first meetings, baseline assessment report of children and activity cards were given to the mothers. Report card of children on their ability to accomplish simple tasks (child can jump, hold a pencil) was shared with the mothers in subsequent meetings. The reports did not allocate marks or grades, but only gave an overview of the child's developmental milestones for his or her age. Besides this, take-home activity cards (with cooking recipes) were handed over to the mothers explaining the concept of nutrition in a simple manner-for instance, the red card was for enhancing growth of child (recipe for protein-rich food), blue for energy (carbohydrate-rich food) and so on. In due course of the programme, a recipe competition was held for all the participating mothers. As a result of such interactive methods, Mr. Brid concluded that the attendance of mothers over the course of meetings increased significantly, and the intervention led to better understanding of child development among mothers.

22. Programme to Improve Private Preschool Education (PIPE) in urban India by

Mr. Ashish Karamchandani, Director, FSG

Setting the context of his presentation, Mr. Karamchandani began by stating that besides ICDS, there is a need to talk about the large number of private schools and preschools in India, as they depict the proverbial elephant in the room. He gave a broad outline of FSG as a mission driven nonprofit organisation working towards large scale social impact.

A majority of children even from the lower socio-economic status were being sent to private preschools

The organisation's PIPE programme (for Preschool Education) aimed to improve ECE programmes for low income families, or where parents of very young children worked as domestic workers, construction labourers, etc. To begin with, a research was conducted to understand parental expectations about ECE programmes and their awareness about ECCD. It was found that most parents focused only on broad physical-motor skills, but did not have a clear understanding of gross and fine motor skills specifically. They considered their role important in ensuring growth and provision of nutrition only. Similarly, their understanding of socio-emotional development was limited to expectations such as, 'the child must be polite with guests'.

Besides this, the clear indication of the findings was that a majority of children even from the lower socio-economic status were being sent to private preschools. Their parents want a head-start, and more of them, now want their children to learn ABC, nursery rhymes, do homework and so on. In the private sector, there are as many as 200,000 affordable private schools, mentioned Mr. Karamchandani. With the high competition, and the focus on Grade 10 Board exams, many private schools put unnecessary pressure on the students, even in primary classes.

However, there exist certain innovative interventions such as Jodo gyan, Karadi path, Hippocampus, which create developmentally appropriate products that could be used in the affordable private schools. FSG works with such companies that provide ECE products and links them to the affordable private schools. Besides partnering, the focus is also on teacher training and following best practices to ensure success of ECE programmes, he concluded.

Concluding Remarks by Prof. Saraswathi

At the end of the panel discussion, Prof. Saraswathi thanked the speakers and highlighted the fact that involvement of the father is critical. Citing the example of the AWW who is easily caught hold of, and burdened with additional responsibilities (creative and other routine work), she mentioned that it was a similar case with the mother, who is held responsible, even though the term used is parenting.



Prof. Saraswathi wraps up the 3rd session

She added that many interventions had shown that when fathers' interaction was initiated, they were said to have rediscovered their identity, which consequently led to dramatic changes in family interactions.

23. Discussant: Dr. Nandita Chaudhary, Lady Irwin College, DU

It is important to have a combination of programmes which instead of distancing the child from his/her local situation and context, adapts itself and brings in contextual wealth to the classroom. Praising the presentations of the session as being very articulate, Dr. Chaudhary singled out the common theme among them, i.e., the relationship between the two actors- school and society. In that context, there were three to fulfill, in her opinion. Those 3 functions were:

It is important to have a combination of programmes which instead of distancing the child from his/her local situation and context, adapts itself and brings in contextual wealth to the classroom.

1. Objective- The school is supposed to make the child adaptive to the larger environment or the society.
2. Corrective- The school is seen as an agency which could correct what is inadequate and incorrect, for e.g., stunting.



3. Interpretive- The school can be an innovative model which creates a meaningful curriculum based on the knowledge and context of people.

She further added that it was heartening to observe inclusion of group activities in most interventions, which is in line with our identity of a collectivistic or group-oriented society. This also opens avenues for studying ethno-theories of parents and children. Similarly, use of multiple languages and diversity can become a source of strength for programmes. In conclusion, Dr. Chaudhary stated that it is important to have a combination of programmes which instead of distancing the child from his/her local situation and context, adapts itself and brings in such contextual wealth to the classroom.

V. Session 4: Making Preschools/Schools Ready for Children

Parallel Session 1: Learning from Innovations

24. Chairperson of Session 4 (Parallel Session 1): (Rtd.) Dr. Neerja Sharma, Lady Irwin College, DU

Welcoming the delegates to the 4th session (parallel 1), Dr. Sharma shared an anecdote about her grandchild, a one year old, who, like others of his age, showed curiosity for exploration of objects, especially in the kitchen and crockery shelf. In such a situation, adults have a choice: they can either reprimand the child and tell him not to do it, or engage him/her in an activity that ensures that (s)he doesn't lose his/her curiosity. Exploration and curiosity at this age is a developmental task; and blocking it means blocking development. Dr. Sharma opened the panel discussion with these words, and by suggesting to the audience to reflect on if schools and preschools are encouraging children's curiosity and epigenesis enough.



Dr. Neerja Sharma chairs the 4th session

25. Evidence to Practice: Bengal Evidence by Dr. Shashi Panja, Minister of Women Development and Social Welfare, Child Development, MoS Health and Family Welfare, West Bengal

Dr. Panja expressed enthusiasm while sharing the successful experience of Bengal in practicing ECE. Bengal has been the frontrunner vis-à-vis the ECCE programme, where the draft curriculum of ICDS projects was field tested. The government of West Bengal recently launched the brand “Shishu alay” for its model ECCE centres. Under this, 1000 AWCs (50 AWCs in 20 districts) were upgraded to model ECCD centres all over the state.

The components of the Shishu alay centres include infrastructure development (after convergence with the panchayat and rural development department), developmentally appropriate curriculum

ECCE Council set up for improved inter-departmental convergence, between the Departments of Education, Health and WCD

which is age based (3-6 years), an ECE kit which contains TLM and toys, good teaching practices and involvement of the community. A school readiness package was developed for a smooth transition to school. On a regular day at the model ECCE centre, at the end of 3 hours, there is a half hour time given to SR activities. Besides this, there are dedicated spaces in the centre: books' corner, play corner, and so on.

She further stated how parents and the community were deeply involved in helping overcome the language barrier. The community assisted in interpreting the messages of the workers in Santhali and Nepali languages, and extended help in running the centres. Similarly, young adolescent girls from the SABLA programme have supported in managing the programme. It was mentioned that an ECCE Council had been set up for improved inter-departmental convergence, between the Departments of Education, Health and WCD. Support and consultation of agencies like UNICEF, Vikramshila, CECED, NIPCCD, and NCERT was critical in the rollout of the programme, added Dr. Panja. Some other factors which were: consultation at various levels, field visits by senior officials and technical officers, and standardized package to ensure quality of ECE centres. Under the capacity building exercises of the programme, nearly 400 master trainers were drawn from a pool of local DPOs, CDPOs and Supervisors. These master trainers further conduct trainings for the AWWs.

As an innovative practice, Dr. Panja stated that the state of West Bengal has dedicated 27th November as the Annual ECCE Day in West Bengal (i.e., on the day of the launch of the ECE centres). Such dedicated days help in spreading awareness and maintaining a momentum for the area of ECE.

In conclusion, Dr. Panja explained that the way forward for West Bengal will have to take into account the following considerations:

- Scaling up will be a challenge as majority of AWCs are operating out of rented premises.
- The State level ECCE policy is under formulation and not ready yet.
- Continued mentoring of master trainers (through refresher courses) is required to sustain the programme.
- Handing over an AWC-leaving certificate to children for a smooth transition to school, as an option could be explored.
- 6000 model centres will be used to diffuse the intervention in 26,000 AWCs in 2016–2017 and will eventually reach out to cover 1,16,000 AWCs in the State.

26. Supporting Quality improvement in Anganwadis (Ankur) by Mr. Nilesh Nimkar, QUEST Alliance

Through the use of a video film, Mr. Nimkar explained the plight of the AWW, who is burdened with many responsibilities, as a result of which the ECE component of her duties is largely ignored. The QUEST Alliance launched the Ankur programme in the AWCs of Maharashtra. It is an intervention that organizes a 6-step training programme by providing practical training and workshops, and on-site support to the AWWs-the last being a very crucial component of the programme. The programme demonstrates ECCE activities and gives immediate feedback, resolves issues, and uses an efficient monitoring system for the worker. He satisfactorily added that QUEST's intervention in making the AWCs vibrant preschool centres has received appreciation by the government of Maharashtra.

Contrary to popular understanding, conducting a lesson for preschool children is a very challenging task

Mr. Nimkar mentioned that the Ankur project addressed the following stakeholders: AWW workers, supervisors, and ICDS Child Development Project Officers. In its intervention, a step-by-step approach was adopted in training the AWW. Keeping in mind the challenges of the AWW in perspective, the programme

initially expected the worker to rollout preschool activity for 45 minutes in the AWC. Later, with the passage of time, it was extended to 2.5 hours of preschool activity. It was realized that contrary to popular understanding, conducting a lesson for preschool children is a very challenging task. To address this, complicated topics were slowly added in the training programme, thus skills requiring complicated instructions were introduced later. Under the innovative curriculum, children are taken outdoors for nature visits, where the AWW asks them simple questions on weather, surroundings, to engage them as well as create awareness about the environment. Children also undergo an elaborate literacy programme which helps them in expressing themselves with clarity. The results of the programme have shown positive behavioural change in most children, like maintaining hygiene, use of comb, mirror, and confidently engaging in conversations.

Among the challenges faced, Mr. Nimkar stated that exposure to the printed world in tribal areas was very rare. The programme was, therefore, expected to take into account the paucity of books, newspapers and written material in the context of the child; and it was the responsibility of the AWC to fill this gap and increase exposure of children to print media, he concluded.

27. Addressing systemic issues in quality of early education:

Experiences from CARE by Dr. Suman Sachdeva, Technical Director, CARE India

Dr. Sachdeva spoke about the learning from the 2 days of the conference, where work being done on ECE by different organizations was highlighted and shared. With so much evidence, the need of the hour was to ensure sustainability of such programmes. Giving a background of CARE's interventions over the years, she said that school quality improvement, language, and essential ECD package have been the key areas that have formed the crux of the programmes.

While designing interventions, there was a need to observe and take into account the social contexts of children. For instance, children belonging to marginalized communities as STs and SCs face exclusion on many levels based on their ethnic and caste status.

While designing interventions, there was a need to observe and take into account the social contexts of children. For instance, children belonging to marginalized communities as STs and SCs face exclusion on many levels based on their ethnic and caste status. They constitute the marginalized categories even among the marginalized groups. Figures reflect that a large percentage of school going students in UP are from SC, OBCs and minority community, while their teachers are from the general category, most of whom are males, which creates an additional dichotomy. Further, the school infrastructure commonly lacks functional toilets, TLMs are frequently missing, there are no libraries, and the enrolment in government schools has been falling. In addition to this, there is a dearth of reading materials at home and poor classroom practices in school where children are not encouraged to read independently. All of these factors alienate a child who comes from a marginalized community, and he or she finds themselves being pushed to the margins.

Citing the reasons for this inadequacy, Dr. Sachdeva said there are policy concerns: a broken transition in the mindset of system between primary and pre-primary, early exit of the use of mother tongue, poor implementation of policy and gaps in curriculum. Besides these, there exist misconceptions and beliefs such as, all learners are alike, knowledge must be passed down, the teachers' task is to only complete the syllabus, and stereotypes about expectations of girls' achievements, and those of marginalized communities.

Lastly, she spoke of addressing quality issues as critical to solutions. Some of the changes suggested were as follows:

1. Policy level:

- Continuity between pre-primary and primary grades
- Remuneration and facilities to be sufficient
- Student-teacher ratio to be adequate
- Regular supervision and monitoring

2. Curriculum must address diversity and contexts of children.
3. Concerted support to functionaries, teachers, and teacher development through trainings and capacity building exercises.



Panelists of the 4th Parallel Session

28. Multilingual environment in ECCE: The DWCD- UNICEF Odisha experience by Ms. Lalita Patnaik, Education Specialist, UNICEF

Ms. Patnaik began her presentation by sharing that Odisha is the third largest state with a high concentration of tribal population in the country. There are 62 tribes with multiple spoken languages and dialects, all of which present systemic challenges for interventions to work. Also, the rate of dropout of tribal children in primary schools is very high.

Odisha now has a School Readiness Enabling Policy Environment

In spite of such odds, Odisha now has a School Readiness Enabling Policy Environment, which is depicted below:

- ⇒ RTE State rules have been notified.
- ⇒ Mother tongue based MLE education programme is being implemented. The state has a language policy, where English is introduced a later stage (Grade 3/4), which promotes MLE.
- ⇒ Less number of Private preschools, due to which most of the community accesses the government run ICDS centres.
- ⇒ Innovative training strategies.
- ⇒ Setting up of the ECCE Council in the State.
- ⇒ Parent and community participation on the dedicated ECCE day, and other days, such as grand parents' day and so on.

Explaining further, she talked about how the government of Odisha and UNICEF together with experts launched the ECCE curriculum (Nua-arunima) in Odisha. Under this, the standardized theme-based curriculum framework was developed along with preparation and dissemination of training materials (AWW training handbooks which give clear instructions and month-wise activity schedule). Similarly, age-specific workbooks were designed for children, which are now being used in the AWCs. Theme based training videos (one for each month) and compilation of songs in an audio CD format was handed over to each AWC, which became popular.

The transformation of the AWC from the khichdi centre to learning centre was a long process, which involved deliberations and discussions on content and curriculum, after which a consensus was built to launch a mother-tongue based curriculum. That was how the State ECCE curriculum (Nua-arunima) was developed.

The key partners in the rollout of the intervention were as follows: Department of WCD, Department of SCs and STs, Department of School and Mass education, Department of Health, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, and academic institutions. Winding up her discussion, Ms. Pattnaik requested CECED to collect from its participants such knowledge and maintain a repository of information of all the unique interventions in ECCE.

As the 4th session (parallel session 1) drew to a close, Dr. Neerja Sharma thanked the panelists and the participants for their discussions and insights.

Parallel Session 2: Learning from Innovations

29. Preparing teachers for early education: PPP model by Ms. Zainab Bhinderwala, Muktaangan

Ms. Zainab discussed the 'Muktaangan' ECE programme which is offered as an integrated approach. It is low on cost, inclusive, offers child friendly spaces, is supported by trained teachers and follows a well-defined school curriculum. Giving a broad outline of the history of Muktaangan, she said it began in 2003 to provide ECE provisions for low income communities. It partnered with government institutions (Public Private Partnership), and currently, there are 7 primary municipal schools in Mumbai where the organisation is lending its support. It was ensured that the teachers' education programme was convergent with the pedagogical methodology that the teachers use later when dealing with children.

Muktaangan stresses on active learning for teachers, for which there are additional activities on role playing, demonstrations, personal sharing, presentations, interactive classrooms, and project work for the preschool teachers

Some of the unique features of the programme have been listed below:

- Community members were engaged as teachers
- Caters to the low-income community
- 2 days per week internship programme in pre-service
- 2 days per week in-service professional development
- Low trainee faculty ratio with small group tutorials
- Counseling sessions with the trainees
- Interactive classrooms and processes (case study, discussions, etc.)
- Programme works closely with parents of children

Sharing further, she added that Muktaangan stresses on active learning for teachers, for which there are additional activities on role playing, demonstrations, personal sharing, presentations, interactive classrooms, and project work for the preschool teachers.

30. School readiness for children with special needs: Aarambh experience by

Ms. Jayanthi Narayan, formerly with NIMH

Ms. Narayan began by stating that the transition of children from preschool to formal school requires a lot of preparation on the part of the institution as well as staff. For children with disabilities, an early childhood inclusive (special) education package was developed by NIMH and UNICEF, keeping inclusion as the core objective of the curriculum. The package (Aarambh)

Inclusive programmes must be built in a manner that could cater to varied disabilities, ranging from blindness to locomotor impairment, and hearing to mental impairment, in an inclusive early childhood care and education setup

included games, stories, songs/rhymes, and creative activities; catering to children with differing disabilities. This programme was later revised and updated to account for a smoother transition for the children to school by incorporating the element of school readiness. Altogether, the school readiness package contained workbooks in English, Mathematics and Environmental Studies, as well as Teachers' Manuals. Ms. Narayan also recommended that inclusive programmes must be built in a manner that could cater to varied disabilities, ranging from blindness to locomotor impairment, and hearing to mental impairment, in an inclusive early childhood care and education setup.



31. Evidence based planning: Maharashtra experience by Mr. Vijay Shivsagar,

ICDS Maharashtra

In his presentation, Mr. Shivsagar began by stating how the additional benefit of nutrition (MDM) ensures high participation of children in schools, but the same is not true for preschools. He further explained the large and varied context of Maharashtra and the challenges of reaching out to all 3-6 year old children with an effective school readiness programme. To address this gap, an ECE curriculum was designed with the support from the Education department (SCERT). This curriculum was piloted after subsequent meetings with UNICEF in the State. The formal ECE curriculum and the strategy for its roll out were finalized after the pilot phase. Broadly, the strategy focused on capacity building and training on ECE component for the ICDS hierarchy, and not just for the AWW.

Nutrition ensures high participation of children in schools

An increased awareness and significance towards ECE curriculum had to be built for the ICDS supervisors, it was proposed. If the supervisor himself/herself was unaware of the ECE component of ICDS, it was impossible to expect him/her to support the AWW in such activities. This was the reason why the programme focused on supervisors, and built their capacities as master trainers for the ECE component, so that preschool education could be taken up on priority basis, Mr. Shivsagar concluded.

32. Status of inclusion in early education- Innovation in school readiness: Bihar experience by Dr. S.A. Moin, SCERT, Bihar

In context of the School Readiness programme in their State, Dr. Moin described the “Chehak” school readiness model which was developed by SCERT with UNICEF's support. The programme began in 2 wards of Patna and for children in Grade 1. In order to link school readiness abilities with academic activities, Pratham also lent its support to cover one block. Some of the important components of the model, as explained by Dr. Moin, were:

- Activities focused on different developmental domains
- Teachers received training on the module for 5 days
- Parents were involved to ensure their participation and ownership
- Study material titled 'Falak' was developed and used.

33. The Early Childhood education journey of Rajasthan by Mr. Samit Sharma, ICDS Rajasthan

In his address, Mr. Sharma stressed on the need to focus on the 6 services of ICDS equally. Often, the nutrition component and immunization are highlighted, which leads to neglect of the ECCE component. The aim of the ECE programme being run in Rajasthan was to convert the AWC from a feeding

Often, the nutrition component and immunization are highlighted, which leads to neglect of the ECCE component

centre to a learning centre, he added. It also aimed to make available TLM for 3-6 year olds, and create an environment which focuses on school readiness. The programme reached out to more than 61,000 AWCs in the State. Under its awareness programme titled the 'Anganwadi chalo abhiyaan', nearly 3 lakh children were enrolled in anganwadi centres. Further, toy banks were set up, and ECE material for children was collected and organized. Similarly, uniforms for anganwadi going children were arranged through community support, and AWCs were prepared to become preschool education centres. Activity books, workbooks for children to provision ECE were developed, and the curriculum was revised based on the ECE national curriculum. Modules for AWWs, timetable for ECE, activities for linguistic and creative skills were included in revamping the programme, Mr. Sharma concluded.

34. Chairperson of the Session 4 (Parallel Session 2): Dr. Reeta Sonavat, SNTD, Mumbai

Winding up the panel discussion, Dr. Sonavat praised the efforts of the different states in addressing preschool education component and school readiness with innovative strategies. While discussing the recommendations emanating from the interactions, she added that it was necessary to disseminate the large wealth of knowledge thus developed with the larger public.

VI. Session 5: Technical Panel's Review of Posters

Review of Poster presentation: Emerging Issues and possibilities

Various organizations presented and displayed posters on the broad theme of the conference and their related work. The list of the posters is given below:

- ⇒ Akshara Foundation: The Preschool Education Model of Akshara
- ⇒ READ Alliance
- ⇒ FSG: Poster 1: Are Families Ready? Parent perceptions of school readiness; Poster 2: Are Schools Ready? Theory of Change
- ⇒ Azim Premji Foundation: Enabling appropriate learning opportunities for children's development in Medak ICDS Anganwadi Centers
- ⇒ The Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative, Aga Khan Foundation
- ⇒ Sightsavers: Preparing Children with Visual Impairments (CVI) to Learn in an Inclusive Environment

- ⇒ UNICEF/Centre for Learning Resources (CLR): ICDS Leadership development programme and capacity building
- ⇒ SRF Foundation: Are schools ready for children? (Government Primary and Middle Schools, Nuh Block, Mewat, Haryana)
- ⇒ CECED, Ambedkar University Delhi: Activities at Glance (Poster), UNICEF/CECED: Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) for India: The Validation Process (Poster), Does Quality of ECE Matter? Readiness for School – Impact of ECE Quality (Poster), and Assessment Unit: Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (Poster).

35. Dr. Asha Singh, Lady Irwin College

Beginning her discussion on the review of the posters, Dr. Singh mentioned that there were different perspectives derived by the three panelists, with some overlaps. On the whole, the approach of the posters indicated holistic interventions, collaboration with existing programmes (ICDS), and detailed out the processes of interventions (such as training of personnel). The posters elaborated upon inter-organizational collaboration with Government of India programmes, and shared the scope of individual organizational work undertaken so far, as was the case with Akshara Foundation, Azim Premji Foundation, CLR and so on. Organizations such as SRF and AKF and their work with minority groups and Read Alliance and their reading programmes were clearly defined, and AUD presented the research orientation, along with information on tools and standards for evaluating ECE programmes.

Overall, the posters indicated that there was positive development towards the idea of working together. She also suggested that there should be a strong plea for focusing on the child at the level of administrators (to be included in the IAS training sessions), as well as sensitizing the community to children's concerns. In terms of communication, she suggested that the flow and font while designing posters should be maintained, and care must be taken to avoid packing too much information in a limited space. In conclusion, Dr. Singh stated that upscaling one particular intervention model need not be a matter of concern. If there is a possibility of co-existing multiple islands of excellence, then they should be encouraged.

36. Ms. Mita Gupta, UNICEF

Ms. Gupta from UNICEF stated that in the process of capacity building of AWWs, it is important to look at the support required from the supervisor and CDPO. One of the models (FSG) showed that demand influenced not just provision of services, but quality of provision too. Further, the role of mothers in child rearing and ECD is overemphasized generally, and it is high time that fathers were involved in child development.

All children should have quality education in terms of equity

She also recommended that all children should receive a quality early childhood education. There is a need for ensuring inclusive education beginning from PSE. Ensuring school readiness and learning not only requires quality ECE at school, but parental support at home. It would be important to look at models for raising parents' awareness and building their capacity to provide a supportive learning environment at home in low resource, low literacy contexts. Lastly, Ms. Gupta noted that there are a number of different assessment tools and resources that are being and have been developed, and recommended that there be a mapping of such resources and tools existing in the country to avoid reinventing the wheel.

37. Dr. Rekha Sharma Sen, IGNOU

As a member of the Alliance for the Rights of the Child, Dr. Sen pointed to the following recommendations:

- Need to work on a comprehensive legislation to make provisioning of ECCE binding on the state.
- The urgency must be to ensure that the child should remain the focus, wherever he/she is. Location of the child should not be important.
- Constant mentoring and handholding support needed for all the functionaries.
- The training should be conceptualized at many levels; and WCD must consider the length, duration and depth of the training.
- Intervention is required at the level of teacher education to use sound pedagogical practices (such as introducing L1 and L2).
- Convergence between pre-primary and primary grades.
- Open and distance learning/education should be explored for transaction of ECE, from a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Anganwadi-cum-crèches had been started in various parts of the country. The need now is to focus on the continuum from birth to 3 years and on the ECCD component, and not just education.

VII. Session 6: Investing and Scaling Up Early Education

Panel Discussion: Need for scaling up with equity and quality

38. Chairperson of Session 6: Prof. Govinda, Council of Social Development

Prof. Govinda said that at the near end of the intense discussions during the 2 days, it was obvious that this was the right time to scale up. Worldwide, people are surprised to know that India is running the largest ECD government programme in the world. The interest in ECE in the wider community, however, has been stroked only recently.

The missing link of ECE in DPEP and RTE brought to centre-stage the need to focus at children under 6 years.

The missing link of ECE in DPEP and RTE brought to centre-stage the need to focus on children under 6 years. The situation presently is that the states have been actively working towards ECE, since there is a lot of convergence at State level on the issue of education. However, with the expansion of the private sector, and some philanthropists and voluntary institutions, there is a need to consider their programmes' outreach and impact as well.

39. Himachal Pradesh: Status and Vision for ECCE by Ms. Anuradha Thakur, DWCD, Himachal Pradesh

In her address, Ms. Thakur discussed how Himachal Pradesh (HP) was one of the pioneering states to have worked on ECCE, nearly 10 years ago. Overall, there are 18,925 anganwadi centres in HP, which are roughly equal to 85% of the total ECE centres of the state. This is a significantly large number of government-run centres for a state as small as HP, but this was provisioned keeping in mind the geographical context and dispersed habitations in the state. The surprising statistics in relation to this figure is that the AWCs, despite being so high in number as compared to private and NGO sector, are not as popular. Data reveals that only 45% children in their preschool years go to the AWCs. The remaining 40% go to the private preschools, which form only 12% of all ECE centres!

As with the rest of the country, she said that there has been a noticeable spurt in schools and preschools in the private sector. However, due to poor quality standards, there is an urgent need to regulate them. The most significant step in this direction, she pointed out, has been the drafting of the ECCE Bill in the any state in the country. The Bill, in its draft form currently, has been shared for review with stakeholders. Explaining the objectives of the bill and sections, Ms. Thakur stated that the idea was to promote inclusive education, prepare children for elementary education, lay out basic minimum standards (such as duration of 3 or 4 hours), regulate institutions, qualification of teachers (graduate and a course in teacher training), procedures of adherence to the RTE Act, system of audits and accounts, and so on. Ms. Thakur concluded that the Bill was expected to bridge the gap between what is offered by the government sector and by the private sector. The changes in curriculum are also under way.

Promote inclusive education, prepare children for elementary education, lay out basic minimum standards, regulate institutions, qualification of teachers, procedures of adherence to the RTE Act, system of audits and accounts, and so on



40. Early Childhood Education in India: An economic argument by Ms. Garima Batra, Boston Consultancy Group (BCG)

Ms. Batra initiated her discussion by suggesting that ECE must be studied from the perspective of the value for money invested and the returns from there. India has the largest population of 75 million children, between the ages of 3 and 6 years, which makes a case for large ECE investments. Researches such as CECED's longitudinal study (IECEI) show that the ECE system is not delivering results as the school readiness (pre-literacy and pre-numeracy) among 5-year-olds is very low.

The global evidence for pre-primary investment shows that for every dollar invested, returns are in the range of 7-16 dollars. Besides the obvious returns, there are spillover benefits, such as health benefits, crime reduction, substance abuse reduction, and reduced mortality

To understand the economics of ECE, it was first important to assess the rates of return for different models. The global evidence for pre-primary investment shows that for every dollar invested, returns are in the range of 7-16 dollars. Besides the obvious returns, there are spillover benefits, such as health benefits, crime reduction, substance abuse reduction, and reduced mortality.

The state of ECCE in India is very vibrant with innovative delivery models being implemented in some States, such as mentoring of anganwadi workers by primary school teachers/head masters, creation of pre-primary sections in primary schools, and so on. However, there remain many challenges to be addressed, such as access, quality of ECE delivery and overall programme management. In keeping with these, BCG and the World Bank suggested 3 models for ECE delivery in the future:

- ➔ Model 1. Build-in school models: Add 2 years to preprimary education
- ➔ Model 2. Convergence model (strengthen preprimary education within ICDS)
- ➔ Model 3. School readiness package (60-90 days pre-primary education)

Short-term and long term benefits, and cost elements (infrastructure, teachers, etc.) were factored across the 3 models. It was found that for every rupee invested, the returns were Rs. 25 for the first model, Rs. 10 for the second model, and low benefit for the third model. The estimates indicate that the incremental income would result in an additional GDP of nearly 4.3% by 2050 and of nearly 7% by 2075, Ms. Batra concluded, thus making a strong case of investing in ECE.

41. Scalable and Sustainable Early Years Interventions by Mr. Orazio Attanasio, Institute of Fiscal Studies, UK and University College London

Mr. Attanasio described research which shows that well-designed and well-targeted early interventions can lead to spectacular impacts. However, obtaining long-term and large scale impacts from these interventions may be difficult.

The need is to focus on affordable yet effective interventions

Some of the challenges of scaling up ECD interventions are as follows:

1. Fidelity and dilution of interventions: It is hard to maintain fidelity while scaling up, and he therefore suggested adapting a curriculum that is scalable.
2. Affordability- Interventions might look expensive, and therefore, the need is to focus on affordable yet effective interventions. Mr. Attanasio explained the idea of 'political rentability' in the context of ECE. A politician has to budget for the present time or next year (to get the maximum from immediate returns), but the returns on investing in ECE, though large, are only visible after many years (15-20 years). It is therefore challenging to present ECE as an issue which has political leverage, he quoted.
3. Availability of trained personnel/human resources- It was suggested that community participation is key to success and sustainability of interventions. Local agents make interventions more effective, and reach out to parents directly to bring about positive behavioural changes.

Sharing international evidence, Mr. Attanasio described the Colombia experiment where scalable interventions using local women had been carried

Community participation is key to success and sustainability of interventions

out. Home visits inspired by the Jamaican intervention were used to stimulate young children. Similarly, the Peruvian government included aspects of these in their ECE programme. In India (rural Odisha), with the support of CECED, Pratham and J-PAL, he quoted a successful ECE intervention which carried out free play, age appropriate stimulation for children, and nutrition education activities for caregivers in the form of weekly individual and group activities. In conclusion, he said that while scaling up, there must be in-built scope for evaluation.

42. Public Investment in Young Children in India by Ms. Protiva Kundu, CBGA

In the beginning of her presentation, Ms. Kundu elaborated about the existing policy initiatives on preschool education, such as RTE, National Policy on Education, Education for All, and the National ECCE policy. Despite these efforts, there has been no serious discussion on financing of ECCE programmes. Most of the financing source for ECCE is through the government (ICDS, SSA or States' own schemes), private sources, and in some cases by NGOs.

The limited fiscal policy space and inadequate priority given to social sectors in the larger country's budget, resulted in lower spending on this sector, she added. Due to the inadequate budget resources, there are related challenges of shortage of infrastructure, lack of skilled human resources and quality issues. With the recent changes in fiscal structure, States now have more fiscal autonomy, with more untied funds available to them. Through her presentation, Ms. Kundu shared the outlay for major social sector schemes by the Union government. Most of them had not increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16. Similarly, the state-wise budget allocation for ICDS showed a decline in 2015-16 in many States as compared to the previous year.

Findings by CBGA suggest that states are financing ECCE largely through ICDS. Beyond that, it was a challenge to capture the money being spent

There must be a dedicated fund for ECCE under ICDS

specifically for ECE out of the ICDS budget.

While summing up her address, Ms. Kundu therefore recommended that there must be a dedicated fund for ECCE under ICDS. Also, States should step up financing of the social sector schemes. Beyond that, it was a challenge to capture the money being spent specifically for ECE out of the ICDS budget. While summing up her address, Ms. Kundu therefore recommended that there must be a dedicated fund for ECCE under ICDS. Also, States should step up financing of the social sector schemes.

Concluding Remarks by Prof. Govinda

Prof. Govinda winded up the 6th session by stating, “We are all convinced that the need for investing in ECE is obvious”. Under the ICDS scheme, ECE is not viewed as an important component, due to which the education kits lie unused. Similarly, even after States claim they have

The constituents of ECD (nutrition, care, preschool education) need to be looked at as a whole, with no compromise on quality to any component

universal access to gaps. Therefore, it is a matter of no surprise that among the vital indicators of child development, India ranks very low. Instead of thinking about morbidity, we are still dealing with mortality. Unfortunately, childhood in India can be said to be in a state of crisis, he added. The per child investment being made on education and health is so minimal, that it does not show adequate results. Even with programmes like MDM running, the required nourishment for children is still not achieved.

With this context, Prof. Govinda suggested that the constituents of ECD (nutrition, care, preschool education) need to be looked at as a whole, with no compromise on quality to any component. With respect to scaling up, he cautioned that standardization of a scheme can also dilute its purpose. ICDS began as an innovative idea, but micro-analyzing and standardizing it has debilitated the scheme. It will be therefore helpful to learn from experience of other countries and programmes, he concluded.



The team from CECED, Ambedkar University Delhi pose for a group picture

VIII. Session 7: Closing Session

Highlights of the conference and Emerging recommendations, discussion and finalization

by Dr. Sunita Singh, CECED, AUD

In summarizing the proceedings of the conference, Dr. Singh began by stating that the learning from the conference was very humbling, especially due to the inter-disciplinary nature of the panelists. The varied discussions gave an opportunity for everyone to review where they stand, as well as assess their progress, from a larger perspective.

Some broad **recommendations** emanating from the discussions were:

1. Philosophy for ECE interventions:

- Life course approach in ECE should be adopted
- Use of multi- sectoral approach is critical for interventions to be effective
- Quality of ECE needs to be ensured for all children
- Organic linkages between schools and communities should be explored and facilitated

2. Language, curriculum and programme development:

- We need to avoid “textbook” culture and “downward extension of academics” in ECCE
- For programme success it is necessary to adapt models to suit the local context (the linguistic and cultural contexts)
- Using Mother tongue in preschool/school for instruction as well as transacting the curriculum helps children connect with the classroom
- ‘Funds of knowledge’ approach towards local contexts and cultures maintains organic linkages with the community

3. Scaling up:

- A scalable model must be sustainable and effective, and at the same time provide quality and equity
- Diverse dimensions like early stimulation, nutrition, mother tongue-based early childhood education may require different age levels for scaling up
- Focus on quality in existing systemic structures
- Using contextually appropriate tool for assessments helps to understand what children, parents and schools should know and be able to do
- We need to consider alternative models that are successful in specific contexts instead of a single model to scale up

4. Policy level changes:

- There is a need for longitudinal studies/interventions that should inform policy decisions
- Policy recommendations should be built upon “where children are” rather than “where we imagine they should be”
- ECE must be brought in within the ambit of RTE
- Policy implications and implementation at the grassroots levels needs to be examined

- Attachment of pre-primary sections with the primary school to aid smoother transition with the required infrastructure and a trained teacher

Closing address by Prof. Venita Kaul, AUD

Prof. Kaul remarked that the conference spanning two days was very fulfilling, and it was impressive to observe the size and quality of participation. The key takeaways from the conference were that there were lessons to be learnt, especially from the private sector. Efforts must be made to identify and begin from where the parents or stakeholders are; instead of communicating messages on what we perceive as critical, but which is not eventually owned by the stakeholders. If people do not see value addition, they do not feel accountable nor own programmes. To sum up, people are ready to invest when the value of a service is clearly up of visible to them. Lastly, in the context of scaling one successful model versus having multiple models, Prof. Kaul poetically remarked, “In a country as diverse as ours, we should let a hundred flowers bloom, but at the same time, we must have some non-negotiables for ECCE programmes for the entire country”.

Efforts must be made to identify and begin from where the parents or stakeholders are; instead of communicating messages on what we perceive as critical, but which is not eventually owned by the stakeholders



Prof. Kaul and Prof. Menon share their closing remarks in the last session

43. Vote of Thanks by Dr. Payal Sahu, CECED



Dr. Payal Sahu giving her vote of thanks in the concluding session

As the two-day conference drew to a close, Dr. Sahu expressed her gratitude to all the chairpersons, panelists of the sessions, the dignitaries, and participants of the conference for their views and words of wisdom. She also thanked and congratulated the CECED team for planning, organizing and volunteering at the conference. The conference turned out to be a successful platform for sharing learning and experiences on early childhood programmes and especially on school readiness.

TIME	PROGRAMME	CHAIR & DISCUSSANT		
DAY 1 – 20th OCTOBER, 2016				
9:00 am – 9:30 am	REGISTRATION AND TEA			
9:30 am – 11:20 am	INAUGURAL SESSION			
9:30 am – 9:50 am	Welcome and presentation of concept note	Dr. Sunita Singh, CECED, AUD	Chair: Prof. Shyam B. Menon, Vice Chancellor, AUD	
9:50 am – 10:05 am	Ensuring a fair start through early childhood education	Prof. Louis-Georges Arsenault, UNICEF		
10:05 am – 10:30 am	Advancing early childhood development: from science to scale	Prof. Jere. R Behrman, University of Pennsylvania		
10:30 am – 11:00 am	Inaugural Address	Mr. Manish Sisodia, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Government of NCT of Delhi		
11:00 am – 11:15 am	Chairperson's Remarks	Prof. Shyam B. Menon, Vice Chancellor, AUD		
11:15 am – 11:20 am	Vote of Thanks	Dr. Monimalika Day, AUD		
11:20 am – 11:50 am	TEA			
11:50 am – 1:30 pm	SESSION 1: ARE CHILDREN READY FOR SCHOOL?			
	Linking learning levels with School Readiness: Panel Discussion			
11:50 am – 12:00 pm	Delhi speaks on school readiness: A short video	Chair: Dr. Rukmini Banerji, Pratham		

12: 00 pm – 1.00 pm	Panel Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning levels in the primary grades: National perspective – Mr. Y. Sreekanth, NCERT ■ Do school readiness levels matter? (IECEI Study) – Ms. Aparajita Bhargarh Chaudhary, CECED, AUD. ■ Transition from home to school language: Issues and Challenges – Prof. Ajit Mohanty ■ Status and impact of malnutrition on learning – Ms. Smriti Pahwa, Pratham 	Discussant: Dr. Euphrates Gobina, UNICEF
1:00 pm – 1:20 pm	Open discussion	
1:20 pm – 1:30 pm	Chairperson's remarks	
1: 30 pm – 2: 30 pm	LUNCH	
2: 30 pm – 4: 50 pm	SESSION 2: ARE PRESCHOOLS/ SCHOOLS READY FOR CHILDREN?	
	Quality Issues across Sectors: Panel Discussion	
2: 30 pm – 4: 25pm	Panel Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality and diversity in early childhood education (IECEI Study) – Prof.Venita Kaul, CECED, AUD ■ Inside primary schools – Dr.Suman Bhattacharjea, ASER Centre ■ Challenges of inclusion – Dr.Annie Koshi, St. Mary's School ■ Scaling up quality in early childhood education: Issues and challenges – Ms.Divya Singh and Mr. Sasha Priyo, Bodh Shiksha Samiti ■ Pre-primary sections (PPS) in government primary schools: Landscape and Opportunities – Mr.Krishnan S, Central Square Foundation ■ Enhancing ECE component in Rajasthan- Dr.Samit Sharma, ICDS, Rajasthan 	Chair and Discussant: Prof. A.K. Sharma, Former Director, NCERT
4:25 pm – 4:50 pm	Open discussion	
4:50 pm – 5:00 pm	Chairperson's remarks	

5:00 pm – 5:20 pm	TEA
5:20 pm – 6:00 pm	Guided Poster Session
	Review panel Ms. Mita Gupta, UNICEF; Dr.Asha Singh, Lady Irwin College&Dr.Rekha Sharma Sen, IGNOU

DAY 2 – 21st OCTOBER, 2016

9:00 am – 9:30 am	TEA	
9: 30 am –11.30 am	SESSION 3: ARE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES READY FOR SCHOOL?	
	Empowering Family and Enabling Child	
9.30 am – 10.30 am	<p>Presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Exploring modalities for early stimulation – Prof. Costas Meghir, Yale University &Dr. Monimalika Day, SES, AUD ■ Impact of parenting education on children – Mr.Chittaranjan Kaul, CLR &Mr. Sheshagiri K.M. Rao, UNICEF ■ Engaging mothers in early childhood programmes: Evidence and experiences - Mr. Smitin Brid, Pratham ■ Parental choice and affordable private schools: Urban phenomenon – Dr.Ashish Karamchandani, FSG 	
10.30 am – 11.00 am	Open discussion	
11.00 am – 11.20 am	Emerging issues and reflections – Discussant	
11.20 am – 11. 30 am	Chairperson's remarks	
11: 30 am – 11: 45pm	TEA	
11: 45 am – 1: 30 pm	SESSION 4: MAKING PRE-SCHOOLS/SCHOOLS READY FOR CHILDREN?	
	Parallel Session I - Learning from innovations	
11:45 am – 12:45 pm	<p>Presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supporting quality improvement in Anganwadi: QUEST experience – Mr. Nilesh Nimkar, QUEST ■ Addressing teacher development issues in quality of early education-Experiences from CARE– Dr. Suman Sachdeva, 	Chair: Dr.Neerja Sharma, Retd.Associate Professor

	<p>CARE India</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evidence to practice: Bengal experience – Dr. Shashi Panja, Hon'ble Minister-of-State, (Independent Charge) Child Development and Women Development and Social Welfare and MoS Health and Family Welfare, Government of West Bengal & Ms. Amrita Sengupta, UNICEF, West Bengal ■ Multi-lingual environment in early childhood education: Odisha experience – Lalita Patnaik, UNICEF 	
12:45 pm – 1: 20 pm	Open discussion	
1:20 pm – 1:30 pm	Chairperson's remarks	
11:45 am – 1:30 pm	SESSION 4: MAKING PRE-SCHOOLS/SCHOOLS READY FOR CHILDREN	
	Parallel Session II - Learning from innovations	
11:45 am – 12:45 pm	<p>Presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preparing teachers for early education: PPP model – Ms.Zainab Bhinderwala, Muktangan ■ School readiness for children with special needs: Aarambh experience – Dr.Jayanthi Narayan, formerly with NIMH ■ Evidence based planning: Maharashtra Experience – Mr. Vijay Shivsagar, ICDS Maharashtra & Reshma Agarwal, UNICEF ■ Status of inclusion in early education –Innovation in school readiness: Bihar experience –Dr. S.A. Moin, SCERT, Bihar 	Chair: Dr.Reeta Sonawat, SNDT, Mumbai
12: 45 pm – 1: 20 pm	Open discussion	
1: 20 pm – 1: 30 pm	Chairperson's remarks	
1.30 pm – 2: 30pm	LUNCH	
2: 30 pm – 3: 00 pm	SESSION 5: TECHNICAL PANEL'S REVIEW OF POSTERS	
2: 30 pm – 3: 00 pm	Emerging issues and possibilities - Ms. Mita Gupta, UNICEF; Dr. Asha Singh, Lady Irwin College & Dr. Rekha Sharma Sen, IGNOU	

3: 00 pm – 4: 45 pm	SESSION 6: INVESTING AND SCALING UP IN EARLY EDUCATION	
	Need for scaling up with equity and quality	
3: 00 pm – 4: 00 pm	Panel Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Returns on investment in preschool education: Evidence from India –Dr.Shabnam Sinha, The World Bank ■ Regulating Private Pre-Schools: Himachal Pradesh Experience –Smt.Anuradha Thakur, DWCD, Himachal Pradesh. ■ Scaling Up Innovations: International experience – Prof.Orazio Attanasio, Institute of Fiscal Studies, UK and University College London ■ Financing for the young child– Ms.Protiva Kundu, CBGA 	Chair and Discussant: Prof. R. Govinda, CSD
4: 00 pm – 4: 30 pm	Open discussion	
4.30 pm – 4.45 pm	Chairperson's remarks	
4: 45 pm – 5: 30 pm	SESSION 7: CLOSING SESSION	
4: 45 pm – 5: 00 pm	Brief report of the conference and emerging recommendations – Dr. Sunita Singh, CECED, AUD	Chair: Prof. Shyam B. Menon, Vice Chancellor, AUD
5: 00 pm – 5: 10 pm	Closing remarks – Prof. Venita Kaul, AUD	
5: 10 pm – 5: 25 pm	Closing remarks by the Chairperson	
5: 10 pm – 5: 25 pm	Vote of thanks – Dr.Payal Sahu, CECED, AUD	
5: 30 pm onwards	TEA	



Prof. Ajit Mohanty

On retirement as Professor, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, JNU, Ajit Mohanty (b. 1946, Ph.D. Alberta), became an ICSSR National Fellow. He was a Professor in different Universities for 28 years from 1983 till 2011. He has over 178 publications, including 7 books, on educational psycholinguistics and multilingual education focusing on language, education, poverty and disadvantage among linguistic minorities.



Prof. A.K. Sharma

Prof. A.K. Sharma was associated with the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for about 25 years in various capacities, and retired as its Director in 1999. He has been involved in various policy making and implementation initiatives of the Government of India in the various facets of School Education and Teacher Education. Prior to joining the NCERT, Prof. Sharma served the Punjab University, Chandigarh (Department of Chemistry) for nearly 15 years.



Dr. Annie Koshi

Dr. Annie Koshi, Principal of St. Mary's School, did her graduation and post-graduation in English (Hons) from Lady Sri Ram College, Delhi. She completed her B.Ed. at CIE (Delhi) and M.A. in Educational Management from Oxford Brookes, U.K. She completed her Ph.D from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), New Delhi. Dr. Koshi actively advocates the cause of the disability and has worked hard to create an inclusive school. She is a member of the State Advisory Council constituted by the NCT of Delhi to advise the government on implementation of provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act.



Smt. Anuradha Thakur

Smt. Anuradha Thakur is currently serving as the Secretary (Social Justice & Empowerment), Directorate of SC'S OBC`S & Minority Affairs, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh.



Ms. Aparajita
Bhargarh
Chaudhary

Ms. Aparajita Bhargarh Chaudhary has Master's in Child Development with specialization in Early Childhood Care and Education from Delhi University (2007). She is currently working as an Assistant Professor with the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi. She is at present coordinating on a longitudinal study on impact of early childhood education titled "India Early Childhood Education Impact Study". This longitudinal study is based on the premise that learning and development are continuous and cumulative processes and any approach to address quality and equity at the primary stage needs to begin first by helping children develop a sound foundation, prepare for school and then make a smooth transition to school.



Dr. Asha Singh

Dr. Asha Singh is an Associate Professor in Human Development and Childhood Studies. Trained in the classical dance forms she has combined academic training with the arts. She uses the arts in training teachers to transact curricular content specially in the early years of learning. Asha has been engaged in giving direction to developing of content for Audio Visual content with a pan Indian focus. Currently she teaches at the Lady Irwin College and is a visiting faculty for the National School Drama at Tripura to teach Childhood through the Arts. She works both with children and teachers.



Prof. A. K. Sharma

Ashish is a Managing Director at FSG, a mission-driven non-profit focused on creating large-scale, lasting social change. He focuses on using market based solutions to improve the lives of the poor. He is currently co-leading a six year Program to Improve Private Preschool Education in urban India. Ashish also started Monitor Inclusive Markets where he helped facilitate a new urban ownership housing market for informal low-income urban households - over 100,000 houses have been sold, 10 housing finance companies are serving the market and conducive policies are being put in place. He has a PhD from Stanford, a Masters from Berkley and a Bachelors from IIT Bombay.



Mr. Chittaranjan Kaul

Mr. Chittaranjan Kaul serves as the Director of Centre for Learning Resources (CLR), an organisation dedicated to leadership capacity-building in public education systems, providing academic resources for such systems and assisting them in developing programme strategy. Mr. Kaul is deeply interested in learning processes, those of adults and children, individuals and communities, groups and organisations. He coaches people in understanding and responding to change more effectively, using inner dialogue to sharpen their perception, and external dialogue to help build common ground among stakeholders. Mr. Kaul earned a degree in electrical engineering from NIT, Srinagar and a PGDM from IIM, Ahmedabad.



Prof. Costas Meghir

Prof. Costas Meghir is the “Douglas A. Warner III” Professor of Economics. He is an International Research Associate at the IFS as well as a J-Pal affiliate. Having graduated from Manchester University with a Ph.D., he worked at University College London becoming a Full Professor and the Head of Department. He is Fellow of the Econometric Society, Fellow of the British Academy, and Fellow of the Society for Labor Economics. He was awarded the Ragnar Frisch medal by the Econometric Society in 2000 and the Bodosakis foundation prize in 1997. He has been co-editor of *Econometrica* and joint managing editor of the *Economic Journal*. Prof. Costas Meghir teaches Labor Economics and Econometrics to graduates and undergraduates at Yale.

Ms. Divya Singh

Ms. Divya Singh though has studied chemical engineering but decided to work on education, following her passion and love for the children. She has been working in BODH (a non-governmental organization) for the last 7 years and has been a part of many key initiatives and programmes of the organization like development of assessment framework and tools, special training material package, language curriculum and materials and development of ECCE curriculum, syllabus and materials for the state of Rajasthan.



Prof. Jere R.
Behrman

Prof. Jere R. Behrman is the WR Kenan, Jr. Professor of Economics and Sociology and Population Studies Center Research Associate at the University of Pennsylvania. His research is in empirical micro economics, economic development, early childhood development, labor economics, human resources (education, training, health, nutrition), economic demography, household behaviors, life-cycle and intergenerational relations and policy evaluation. He has published over 400 professional articles (primarily in leading general and field economic journals, also in leading demographic, sociology, public health, nutritional and biomedical journals) and 35 books. He is one of the leading economic development economists.



Dr. Jayanthi
Narayan

Dr. Jayanthi Narayan, did her Ph.D. from Regional College of Education, India and earned a Post Doc Fulbright fellowship in Boston College, Massachusetts. Currently, she is a Consultant in Special Education (learning and intellectual disabilities) within India and neighboring countries including Indonesia, Cambodia, Maldives, Bhutan and China & Visiting Professor, University of Northampton, UK. Previously, she has worked as Head of the Department of Special Education at NIMH for 19 years and Deputy Director of the Institute for 4 years.



Mr. Krishnan S.

Krishnan is a Senior Programme Manager at Central Square Foundation (CSF), working on the area of Early Childhood Education. CSF is a grant-making organisation and a policy think tank focused on improving quality of school education for children from low income communities. CSF supports exceptional social entrepreneurs with powerful ideas, provides a platform for the sharing of innovation, and highlights learning and knowledge that can influence public policy. In the field of Early Childhood Education, CSF has supported two initiatives apart from the study on Pre-Primary Sections being presented here.



**Mr. Manish
Sisodia**

Mr. Manish Sisodia has been the Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi since February 2015. He also holds the Finance and Planning, Revenue, Services, Power, Education, Higher Education, Information Technology, Technical Education, Administrative Reforms portfolios in the Government of NCT of Delhi. Previously, he was a Cabinet Minister in the Government of Delhi between late December 2013 and February 2014. Prior to being elected to the Legislative Assembly of Delhi in December 2013, he was a social activist and journalist as well as a member of the National Executive Committee of the Aam Aadmi Party. Since 1997 to 2005, Mr. Sisodia worked as a documentary film maker and a television newsreader.



Ms. Mita Gupta

Ms. Mita Gupta has worked in the field of education and gender and development for over 22 years. She has been with UNICEF for 14 years in Indonesia, in the areas of education and early childhood development; the Innocenti Research Centre in Italy working on child rights issues; the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand promoting the UN Girls' Education Initiative and, most recently, just prior to coming to India, at the headquarters in New York in the Gender Section. She has also worked at the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education on gender equality in education. She holds a Master's degree in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



**Dr. Monimalika
Day**

Dr. Monimalika Day is currently an Associate Professor at the School of Education, Ambedkar University Delhi. Along with colleagues, she developed the Masters in Education with a focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), one of the three graduate programs in early childhood in India. Prior to this she was an Assistant Professor at George Mason University (GMU) in USA in the College of Education and Human Development. She has a doctoral degree in Special Education with a focus on Early Childhood from the University of Maryland at College Park. She worked at Zero To Three, a national non-profit organization for infants, toddlers and families in USA for five years.



Dr. Neerja Sharma

Dr. Neerja Sharma, Ph.D., was formerly Associate Professor at the Department of Human Development and Childhood Studies, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi. Her areas of teaching, research, extension, and publication are- early childhood care & education, adolescence, psycho-social well-being, children with disability and inclusive education. Dr. Sharma has guided doctoral theses in the areas of emotional competence in adolescence, child language, child adoption, childhood and adolescent disability, inclusive education, children's television, and childhood creativity. She is the Managing Trustee of Pratham Delhi Education Initiative.



Mr. Nilesh
Nimkar

Mr. Nilesh Nimkar is a founder trustee and director of QUALITY EDUCATION SUPPORT TRUST or QUEST (www.quest.org.in) and has over 20 years' experience in the field of early childhood education, elementary education, teacher education and curriculum development. He began his career as a teacher at a residential school run by the NGO Gram Mangal, and later worked as a director of Gram Mangal for 8 years, during which he initiated several innovative education programs for tribal children. He has authored several children's books and photo-stories which have been published by private publishers and the state has taken them up for a mass scale production for children from tribal communities.



Prof. Orazio
Attanasio

Prof. Orazio Attanasio is Professor and Head of the Department of Economics at University College London, a Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), a Senior Fellow at the Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development and a Research Fellow at the Centre for Economic and Policy Research. He is Research Director at the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and co-directs the Centre for the Evaluation of Development Policies (EDePo@IFS). He is a Fellow of the Econometric Society and of the British Academy. In 2014, he served as President of the European Economic Association.



**Dr. Rekha
Sharma Sen**

Dr. Rekha Sharma Sen is an Associate Professor, Faculty of Child Development, School Of Continuing Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi. Her responsibilities include design, development and implementation of programmes of study in the sector of Early Childhood Care and Education, Disability and Child Development.



Ms. Protiva Kundu

Ms. Protiva Kundu works as Senior Research Officer in Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA). Prior to joining CBGA, she has worked as an Economist at the Policy Group of Infrastructure Development Finance Company Ltd. (IDFC). She has also worked as a Consultant at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP). She has a Ph.D. and an M.Phil. Degree in Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her areas of interest are public finance, public policy on education, health and gender. At CBGA, she leads research on government financing of education



Prof. R. Govinda

Prof. R. Govinda, currently associated with Council of Social Development, was the Vice Chancellor of National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi. Previously he has worked in the Institute of Education, University of London, M.S. University of Baroda and International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP), UNESCO. He has been on the editorial board of "Global Monitoring Report" for "Education for All". He is also a Consultant Fellow to International Bureau of Education, Member of Governing Board of UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Montreal; Member of the Central Advisory Board of Education; and member of the National Advisory Committee on Right to Education of Government of India.



Dr. Reeta
Sonawat

Dr. Sonawat is an educationist who is eager to bring changes and make significant contribution in the field of education. She has been consistently associated with various national and international education forums over the years. She was selected as the global leader in the field of Early Childhood Education, Montreal, Canada, 2005. For post-doctoral research, she worked on project titled “Integrated Education in Kinder Gardens and Primary Schools” in Bremen University, Germany, 1988-89. As an International leader in Early Childhood Education she was invited by U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and cultural affair, Washington D.C., where she discussed the overview U.S. education system.



Dr. Rukmini
Banerji

Dr. Rukmini Banerji is the CEO of Pratham Education Foundation. She has extensive experience in program implementation and research rural and urban areas. Originally from Bihar, she now based out of Delhi. She loves telling stories and writing stories for young children.



Dr. S.A. Moin

Dr. S.A. Moin is the Head, Department of Teacher Education as well as Director, Distance Education at State Council of Educational Research & Training (SCERT), Bihar. Prior to this, he was the Secretary of State Coordination Committee for developing Bihar Curriculum Framework and Syllabus for School Education in Bihar. Under his guidance Textbook from Classes I-XII, learning Facilitating Material for Teachers and other resource material were developed. Member of many state and national academic bodies, Dr. Moin is currently coordinating the mass level D.El.Ed. professionalization programme for untrained teachers of Bihar.



Dr. Shashi Panja

Dr. Shashi Panja, Hon'ble Minister-of-State, (Independent Charge) Child Development and Women Development; is a medical practitioner, All India Trinamool Congress politician and a minister of state in the Council of Ministers of West Bengal. Dr. Shashi Panja is currently holding the portfolio of Minister-of-State, (Independent Charge) Child Development and Women Development and Social Welfare and MoS Health and Family Welfare, Government of West Bengal. Dr. Panja did her MBBS from R. G. Kar Medical College and Hospital at Kolkata, with specialisation in ultrasound and infertility practice.



Prof. Shyam
B. Menon

Prof. Shyam Menon is currently the Vice Chancellor of Ambedkar University Delhi. Previously, he has been a Professor at the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi since 1994. He had been Dean, Faculty of Education and the Proctor of the University of Delhi. He had earlier been Director, School of Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University and a Professor at the Central Institute of Educational Technology, NCERT. He had also taught at the M.S. University of Baroda for several years. Professor Menon is also on the international advisory board of Comparative Education, Teaching Education and Asia Pacific Journal of Education.



Mr. Smitin Brid

Mr. Smitin Brid is the Program Head, ECE in Pratham Education Foundation. He heads ECE Resource Center of Pratham Education Foundation in India. He has extensive experience of content development, training, community mobilization for early-years programs and primary education since 1996. He has taught as guest faculty at Department of Sociology, Lucknow University for the Masters Programme of Social Engineering on "Education & Development". He has written various articles and working papers based on his experiences.



Dr. Smriti Pahwa

Dr. Smriti Pahwa holds a doctorate in Public Nutrition and a degree in Education. She has a keen interest in Research, Capacity Building and Communication in the Maternal and Children Health Nutrition and Education domains. In her professional career spanning more than 15 years, she has worked at different positions with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Ogilvy and Mather, Directorate of Education (Govt Delhi NCT), IGNOU and ASER (Assessment Survey Evaluation Research) Centre. Smriti, currently consults with Pratham Education Foundation leading Research, Capacity Building and Programmatic efforts to extrapolate ASER-Pratham's learnings, expertise and community participatory approach for education to other social sectors.



Dr. Suman
Bhattacharjea

Dr Suman Bhattacharjea has been Director, Research at ASER Centre, New Delhi since 2008. Previously, Suman has worked as a software developer, a high school teacher, an education specialist, and a researcher. She has extensive experience in the fields of education, gender, and women's rights, and has worked with government, private, non-government and international organizations in several countries, including India, the United States, Pakistan and Mexico. She has taught courses on research design, gender and education. Suman earned an undergraduate degree in Economics with Honours from Delhi University, and Masters and Doctoral degrees in Education from Harvard University.



Dr. Suman
Sachdeva

Dr Sachdeva has over two decades of experience in prestigious organizations and institutions like UNICEF, Butterflies and DPEP mission, as a practitioner in elementary education in the areas of gender and child development. Her focus lies in out-of-school girls, leadership, and early grade reading in children. She holds a Ph.D. in Education, a dual Master's (M.Ed. and M.Phil.) in education gender studies/child development. Suman has been working with CARE for over five years as Technical Director – Education. In 2015, she was selected as a Research Fellow at The Brookings Institution, Center for Universal Education, Washington DC. This was a part of the esteemed Echidna Global Scholars Program which builds the research and analytical abilities of NGO leaders and academicians from developing countries.



Dr. Sunita Singh

Dr. Sunita Singh is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi. Dr. Singh completed her Ph.D. from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (Language and Literacy), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and her MA and MPhil from Jawaharlal Nehru University in linguistics. Prior to joining CECED, she worked as an Associate Professor at Le Moyne College, Syracuse. She has worked extensively in schools, with teachers, families and in communities. Dr. Singh has published chapters in books and articles in several international peer reviewed journals. At CECED, Dr. Singh is a faculty mentor for various projects related to language and literacy and early childhood education and development. She also teaches in the School of Education Studies, AUD.



Prof. T. S. Sarawathi

Prof. T. S. Sarawathi retired as Senior Professor in Human Development and Family Studies at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India. She obtained her doctoral degree in Psychology and Child Development as a Ford Fellow at Iowa State University, U.S.A. in 1972, and was a visiting Fulbright Scholar at Cornell University in 1983-84. She has co-edited Volume 2 of the Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology (1997, with Berry and Dasen), The International Encyclopedia of Adolescence (2007, with Arnett et al.), World Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the World (2003, with Larson and Brown).



Prof. Venita Kaul

Prof. Venita Kaul is the Professor and Director of School of Education Studies and Founder Director of Center for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi. Prior to this assignment, Prof. Kaul's past assignments include positions of Senior Education Specialist in The World Bank and Professor and Head of Department of Preschool and Elementary Education at NCERT. She has led several Education projects within and outside India and been on several National and International Committees. Prof. Kaul has a PhD from I.I.T. Delhi in Psychology and has several national and international publications in Education to her credit.



Mr. Vijay Shivsagar

Mr. Vijay Kshirsagar is the Assistant Commissioner, ICDS Maharashtra. He has a Masters in Social Work in Community Development from CSRD, Ahmednagar, Pune University. He has extensive experience in Disaster Relief and Management and has been working with the WCD since 1996 – ten years of which have been with the ICDS in various capacities. Mr. Kshirsagar is passionate about the holistic development of the child and his efforts have accelerated the development and implementation of the ECE Programme in Maharashtra.



Prof. Y. Sreekanth

Prof. Yagnamurthy Sreekanth, Head, Educational Survey Division is a Post-graduate in Geography and education, graduate in Law, and Ph.D., in Geography. He is a Professor in Education (Assessment Studies) at NCERT. Prior to this, he was a faculty in Department of Educational Measurement and Evaluation, Curriculum Group and Department of Secondary Education, NCERT. He served as an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Management Information System, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) and as Professor and In-Charge, National Talent Search Scheme at NCERT. His recent publications include, “Education in a Low Fee Private Unaided Recognized School



Ms. Zainab
Bhinderwala

Ms. Zainab Bhinderwala is a senior faculty member at the Teacher Education Centre of Mukhtangan, an innovative model of education providing quality, child-centered, inclusive English-medium schooling to thousands of underprivileged children in Mumbai. As the leader of Pre Service Teacher Education - facilitating members of the community to become teachers through imparting training, focusing on pedagogical understanding of modules related to Early Child Development and Care. Over the past 8 years impacted over 800 adults, 450 of whom are employed currently at Mukhtangan teaching approximately 3,500 children.



Mr. Louis-Georges Arsenault

Mr. Louis-Georges Arsenault, UNICEF Representative to India, is responsible for the overall coordination, the development, formulation and management of the UNICEF Country Programme of Co-operation. Previously, Mr. Arsenault served as UNICEF's Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes. Mr. Arsenault was the UNICEF representative in Bangladesh from October 2005 to February 2008. Prior to that he served as the Deputy Director, Programme Division in UNICEF New York. From 2001 to 2003, Mr. Arsenault served as the UNICEF Representative in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. As UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan from 1998 to 2001, Mr. Arsenault managed one of UNICEF's largest humanitarian operations. Arsenault managed one of UNICEF's largest humanitarian operations. Collaborations in the area of culture, children's development and family studies, and continues to supervise research endeavors from India, Denmark, Germany and the U.S. She has written several chapters and articles on childhood, family life and education in India; and is currently working on a publication emerging from two years of ethnographic research with young children in Northern India.



Dr. Nandita Chaudhary

Dr. Nandita Chaudhary teaches at the Department of Human Development and Childhood Studies, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi. She has been a Fulbright scholar at the Psychology Department, Clark University, USA, during 1993–94, and a Senior Fellow of the ICSSR from 2012-2014. Dr. Chaudhary has participated in international collaborations in the area of culture, children's development and family studies, and continues to supervise research endeavors from India, Denmark, Germany and the U.S. She has written several chapters and articles on childhood, family life and education in India; and is currently working on a publication emerging from two years of ethnographic research with young children in Northern India.

ⁱScott-Little, C., Kagan, S. L., & Frelow, V. S. (2003). Creating the conditions for success with Early Learning Standards: Results from a National Study of State-Level Standards for Children's Learning Prior to Kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 5(2), Retrieved from <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v9n1/little.html>

ⁱⁱCenter on the Developing Child, Harvard University. (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do*. Retrieved from http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports_and_working_papers/science_of_early_childhood_development/

ⁱⁱⁱKaul, V. and Sankara, D. (2009) *Education for All, Mid Decade Assessment, Early Childhood Care and Education in India*. National University of Educational Planning and Administration. Retrieved from: <http://www.educationforallinindia.com/early-childhood-care-and-education-in-india-1.pdf>

UNICEF. (2012). *School readiness: A conceptual framework*. Retrieved from: [http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL(1).pdf) (p. 4)

^{vi}Annual Status of Education Report.(n.d.).*Exploring post primary learning*.Retrieved from <http://www.asercentre.org/p/119.html>

^{vii}Government of India. (2016). *Some inputs for draft National Policy on Education 2016*. Retrieved from: http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/Inputs_Draft_NEP_2016.pdf

^{viii}Ministry of Women and Child Development.(2013, September).*National Early Childhood Education and Care Policy*.Retrieved from http://wcd.nic.in/schemes/ECCE/ecce_01102013_eng.pdf

^{ix}Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2013).*Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education*. Retrieved from http://wcd.nic.in/schemes/ECCE/quality_standards_for_ecce_final_03022014.pdf

^xMinistry of Women and Child Development. (2013). *Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework*.

^{xi}Government of India. (2016). *Some inputs for draft National Policy on Education 2016*.

Retrieved from: http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/Inputs_Draft_NEP_2016.pdf

^{xii}Kaul, V., Chaudhary, A. B. & Sharma, S. (2014). *Quality and diversity in early childhood education: A view from Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Rajasthan*. Unpublished report. Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University Delhi, Delhi.

^{xiii}Maxwell, K. L., & Clifford, R. M. (2004). Research in review: School readiness assessment. *Young Children*, 59(1), 42–46, p.42.

^{xv}UNICEF. (2012). *School readiness: A conceptual framework*. Retrieved from: [http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL(1).pdf) (p. 4)

^{xvi}Lewit, E. M. & Baker, L. S. (1995). School readiness. *Future of children*, 5, 128–139.

^{xvii}Swadener, B. B. & Bloch, M.N. (2015). *Series editor's preface*. In Iorio, J. M., & Parnell, W. (Eds.). (2015). *Rethinking Readiness in Early Childhood Education: Implications for Policy and Practice*. pp. xvii-xviii. Springer: New York.

^{xviii}Biggar, H., & Pizzolongo, P. J. (2004). School readiness: More than abcs. *Young Children*, 59, 64-66.

^{xix}Brooker L (2002) *Starting school—Young children learning cultures*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

^{xx}Schaub, M. (2015). Is there a home advantage in school readiness for young children? Trends in parent engagement in cognitive activities with young children, 1991–2001. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 13(1), 47-63.

^{xxi}Lally, J. R. (2010). School readiness begins in infancy: Social interactions during the first two years of life provide the foundation for learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(3), 17.

^{xxii}Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2013). *Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework*.

C

^{xxiii}National Association of Education of Young Children.(2009). *Where we stand on school readiness*. Retrieved from: <https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/Readiness.pdf>.p. 1.

^{xxiv} Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2013). *Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework*.

^{xxv} Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford University Press.

^{xxvi} Fabian, H.& Dunlop, A. (2006). 'Outcomes of Good Practice in Transition Processes for Children Entering Primary School', Paper prepared for the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris.

UNICEF.(2012). School readiness: A conceptual framework. Retrieved from:
[http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL(1).pdf)

ASER. (2015). *Trends over time 2006-2014: A supplement to ASER 2014*. Retrieved from <http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%20TOT/fullasertrendsovertime.pdf>

^{xxix} Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. National Academies Press.

^{xxx} UNICEF.(2012). School readiness: A conceptual framework. Retrieved from:
[http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL(1).pdf)

^{xxxi} National Association of Education of Young Children.(2009). *Where we stand on school readiness*. Retrieved from: <https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/Readiness.pdf>. p. 1

^{xxxii} UNICEF.(2012). School readiness: A conceptual framework. Retrieved from:
[http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/education/files/Chil2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL(1).pdf)

^{xxxiii} Brooker, L. (2002). *Starting school—Young children learning cultures*. Buckingham: Open University Press

^{xxxiv} Stipek D.& Ryan, R. (1997). Economically disadvantaged preschoolers: ready to learn but further to go. *Developmental Psychology*, 33(4): 711–723.

^{xxxv} Singh, S., Sylvia, M. R., & Ridzi, F. (2015). Exploring the literacy practices of refugee families enrolled in a book distribution program and an intergenerational family literacy program. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 43(1), 37-45. doi: 10.1007/s10643-013-0627-0

^{xxxvi} National Association of Education of Young Children.(2009). *Where we stand on school readiness*. Retrieved from: <https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/Readiness.pdf>. p. 1

For more details ,please contact:

Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development(CECED)

Room No.307, 2nd Floor , Admin Block

Ambedkar University Delhi

Lothian Road , Kashmere gate , Delhi-110006

Tel: +91- 23863740 , 23863743

Email: ceced.aud@gmail.com

Web: <http://ceced.net>