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Planning Developmentally Appropriate ECCE Curriculum: Meaning and Significance

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- From birth, babies attempt to build a relation with their surroundings using all their senses. Psychologists and educationists agree that early childhood (birth to eight years of age) is a crucial stage of life in terms of physical and motor, cognitive, language and social-emotional development of children.
- At this stage, growth of abilities also takes place at an astounding rate, which leads to a high proportion of early learning. It is a time when children need a stimulating and an enabling environment, and quality learning experiences. In the absence of a responsive environment children may lose chances of development.

Meaning and Significance of Age and Developmentally Appropriate ECCE Curriculum or Programme

- Planning is the backbone for a high quality ECCE programme. Planning for young children means thinking ahead. The curriculum needs to be flexible and at many times, spontaneous. However, to reach ECCE goals and objectives, children need to be amidst enriched age- and developmentally appropriate experiences and activities that flow in a loosely organized manner.
- A high quality ECCE programme or curriculum provides a balanced daily schedule through different activities and experiences based on domains i.e.. physical-motor, cognitive, language, socio-emotional and art and aesthetic appreciation. When we talk about age and developmentally appropriate curriculum, we need to keep in mind the age of the children as well as their developmental level.

Need and Importance of Contextualization of ECCE Curriculum

- While planning a programme for young children, it must be borne in mind that apart from being age and developmentally appropriate, the programme must relate to the context of children's social and cultural lives. If the language or objects or stories or songs are all unfamiliar, it would be difficult to grab the interest children in the classroom dynamics.
- Local language and simple language appeal to children. Concepts need to relate to real-life concrete experiences and then gradually move to abstract.
- For example, if you are in a rural area and you are talking about animals, talk about familiar animals first and then gradually show pictures of unfamiliar animals. This is called contextualized learning. Similarly, if you are talking about plants and trees, talk about common and familiar plants from the children's environment.

- In India, diversity can be of two ways; one, where families live in different social, physical and cultural contexts creating a unique milieu, and second when, in one class, there are children from different contexts. Either way, some children find themselves part of a largely majoritarian culture that is not totally their social identity.
- One uniform curriculum will not work in different spaces. Rural children will respond differently to means of transport or what they see in the environment than urban children will answer.
- An urban child from a poor family may have only received food from places of worship. Their understanding will vary. It is from the variety in children's understanding that we can sow seeds of appreciating differences.

Multicultural Indian Society

- India being a multicultural and multilingual nation, we have to guide our thinking in how we deal with children in group settings, especially when dealing with children in the early childhood stage. Children from varied cultural backgrounds enrolled in one preschool would gain by finding a social identity.
- The context of children's social and cultural contexts can find a place in the curriculum in many ways. Food habits, celebration of festivals, clothes, customs and rituals impact children's approach to the school. With immense diversity and absence of inclusive practices, the child may find it difficult to adjust and learn and may even opt out of school because of diverse backgrounds.



- Contextualization is an effort to relate the content of the curriculum to the local environment. In short, begin children's early learning from their environment, which they are familiar with and which they have already observed.
- Slowly, children will try and question and seek connections of facts to their origin and context. Such kind of contextualized experiences help them feel interested, motivated for school and ultimately, a feeling of success and achievement.