

Quality Early Childhood Care and Education in India

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Abstract

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is globally recognized as a crucial element of education for all. Therefore, countries have intensely pursued it. After many efforts, progress towards ensuring ECCE is apparent in many countries in the world. But most of them could not either completely achieve this goal or compromised its quality due to inadequate resources, improper planning and ineffective implementation strategies; especially a vast and populous country like India. A number of initiatives have been taken by the Government of India for bringing quality in the form of policies, plans, constitutional amendments, acts, development of quality standards and curriculum framework, schemes and flagship programs like Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS); District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). In this endeavour, somewhere India has compromised with the nonnegotiable quality standards for ECCE, leading the emergence of expected and unexpected issues and challenges. As a result, the country has missed the target of ensuring quality in ECCE. However, recent studies give evidence of tremendous progress towards quality reforms. Of course, there are low achievements in some aspects and in some regions, but also improvement in others which shows that ensuring quality is an attainable target. This paper intends to describe initiatives of the Government of India, assess the ground realities, identify major challenges in quality reform in ECCE and suggest possible enablers to reach out the same.

Keywords: Early Childhood Care and Education, Early Childhood Education, quality standards, Integrated Child Development Services