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ECCE POLICIES, SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES IN INDIA

Children are the future of our country. They are the responsibility of all the stakeholders viz. family, community, school and the government. It is well recognized that survival and development of children are dependent on what is planned and done for them. Ensuring access by all children to quality care and early childhood development is a priority. The Government of India has initiated and implemented many policies, schemes and programmes to cater to the welfare of all children. These initiatives serve as pathways for creating a conducive environment and facilitating children during their early stages of development and learning.

In this lesson, you will study some of policies, schemes and programmes that have been implemented so far for the holistic development and wellbeing of children.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the need for government initiatives for ECCE;
- discuss major policies related to ECCE; and
- describe various schemes and programmes of ECCE.

4.1 NEED FOR GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR ECCE

All children must have access to opportunities of healthy development and learning in a safe and conducive environment. Not only in India but the world over, people have realized the significance of early years in the rapid development of children in all domains. At the national and international levels, several



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initiatives have been taken to ensure children's right to survival, development, protection and participation. The Government of India is one of the most important stakeholders in ensuring quality ECCE to children. India has been signatory to many conventions to ensure needs and rights of children are respected and provided to them. Over the years, the government has formulated many policies and schemes to raise the quality of services provided to children.

Let us study some of the Government initiatives in this direction.

4.2 POLICIES AND PLANS

In Article 39, the Constitution of India provides that the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring "that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment."

To ensure survival, health, nutrition, care and education of young children in the early years, various interventions are done at the national, state and district levels from time to time.

4.2.1 The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986

The Government of India had formulated the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986 to promote education for the welfare of all its citizens. The policy focuses on the overall development of young children and visualizes ECCE as an important factor strengthening primary education in the country. The policy also considers ECCE as important for human resource development. It stresses on promoting a child-centred and play-based ECCE programme. It discourages the use of formal methods and introduction of the 3Rs at an early stage. It also recommends the involvement of the local community in the ECCE programmes.

4.2.2 National Nutrition Policy, 1993

Adequate and healthy nutrition is vital for holistic development of children. The policy was formulated by the Government of India to tackle the problem of under-nutrition and malnutrition in the country, thereby aiming to improve the nutritional status across society. The policy states the need to expand Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and other similar programmes in order to cover the entire population of children in India. It implies that mothers be given proper support and information on effective nutrition for the growth of their children. The policy also calls on state governments to take concerted efforts and recommends the setting up of State Level Nutrition Council for improving the nutritional standards.



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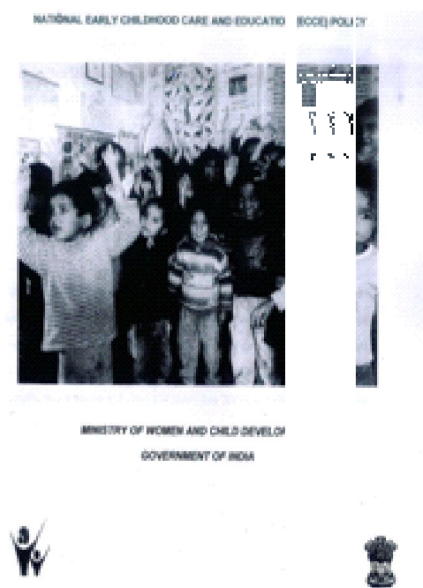
4.2.3 The National Policy for Children (NPC), 2013

The Government of India adopted the first National Policy for Children (NPC) in 1974 as one of the major initiatives for the wellbeing of children. The policy declared children as, “supremely important asset” for the nation. The NPC, 1974 was revised in 2013, reaffirming commitment to healthy development and protection of all children. NPC, 2013 identifies survival, health, nutrition, development, education, protection and participation as the undeniable right of every child and the key priority. The policy also directs states to take all necessary measures to provide universal and equitable access to ECCE for optimal development of all children.

4.2.4 National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, 2013

The Government of India approved the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy in 2013. The Policy framework also includes the National ECCE Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards for ECCE.

The Policy commits to universal access to quality early childhood education to all children under six years of age. The vision of the policy is to, “achieve holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below six years of age by promoting free, universal, inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualised opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential.”



Access with equity and inclusion, improving quality, strengthening capacity, research and documentation and advocacy and awareness generation are the key areas of the policy.

The policy recognizes that young children are best cared for in their family environment and thus strengthening family capabilities to care for and protect the child will receive the highest priority.

4.2.5 The National Health Mission (NHM)

The National Health Mission was launched in 2013. The NHM envisages achievement of universal access to equitable, affordable and quality health care services that are accountable and responsive to people’s





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needs. The main programmatic components include Health System Strengthening, Reproductive-Maternal-Neonatal-Child and Adolescent Health, and Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases.

ECCE in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17)

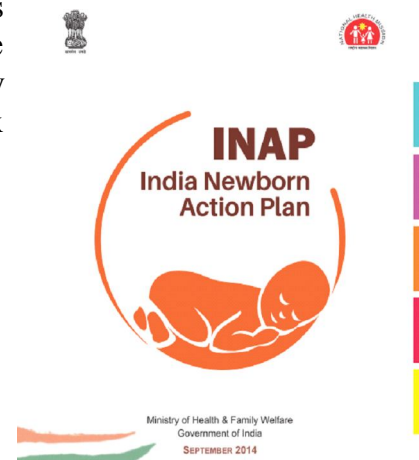
The Five Year Plans have also acknowledged the importance of ECCE for laying the foundation of lifelong development. The 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) emphasizes the need to address areas of systemic reform in ECCE across all channels of services in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It aimed to redefine ICDS non-formal preschool education to ECCD, with additional and trained human resources. It also calls for introduction of a developmentally appropriate curriculum framework with joyful early learning methodologies for children between three and six years of age, including school readiness interventions for children who are five plus years of age.

Source: https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/XIIFYP_SocialSector.pdf

4.2.6 India Newborn Action Plan (INAP), 2014

The India Newborn Action Plan (INAP) was launched in 2014 to reduce preventable newborn deaths and stillbirths in the country with strategic interventions. It defines six pillars of interventions:

- Pre-conception and antenatal care;
- Care during labour and childbirth;
- Immediate newborn care;
- Care of healthy newborn;
- Care of small and sick newborn; and
- Care beyond newborn survival



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2030

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. There are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries —developed and developing —in a global partnership.

Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”



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Goal 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 adopted by Government of India states, “by 2030 to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”.

Source :sustainabledevelopment.un.org

4.2.7 National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC), 2016

The National Plan of Action for Children 2016 succeeds the Plan of Action adopted in 2005. NPAC, 2016 focuses to reach and serve the ‘Last Child First’. It commits to give first rank to children who are most vulnerable due to gender, socio-cultural and economic or geographic exclusion, including other vulnerable children such as street children, children of migrant workers, sex workers and those suffering from HIV/AIDS or other diseases.



The NPAC, 2016 targets to ensure all children their right to survival, dignity, health, nutrition, education, development, protection and participation. It also provides a framework for the states and Union Territories to develop their own state plans to protect children’s rights and promote their development.



The plan also takes into cognizance the importance of strengthening the communities and families to support children and to ensure their overall survival, well-being, protection and development.



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4.2.8 National Health Policy (NHP), 2017

The National Health Policy (NHP) was formulated in 1983 and 2002. The latest NHP was launched in 2017. The main aim of this policy is to shape health systems in this area such as investments in health, organization of healthcare services, prevention of diseases and promotion of good health. It seeks to enable access to technologies, developing human resources, encouraging medical pluralism, building knowledge base, developing better financial protection strategies, strengthening regulation and health assurance.



The policy aims the attainment of the highest possible level of health and wellbeing for all at all ages and universal access to good quality health care services.

4.2.9 National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyan), 2018

POSHAN Abhiyan was launched in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan in March 2018 with a vision to ensure India is free of malnutrition by 2022. It aims:

- to reduce the level of under-nutrition and other related problems by ensuring convergence of various nutrition related schemes.
- prevent stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and low birth rate.



It also aims to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.1

Fill in the blanks:

- (a) The National Plan of Action for Children 2016 focuses to reach and serve to the.....



- (b) POSHAN Abhiyan aims to ensure attainment of malnutrition free India by.....
- (c) The India Newborn Action Plan aims to reduce preventable and..... in the country.
- (d) The National Policy for Children, 2013 declared children as for the nation.
- (e) The National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, 2013 seeks to achieve development and capacity of all children below six years of age.

4.3 PROGRAMMES AND SCHEMES

The concern for the health and general well being of the mother and the child has motivated the government to launch programmes and schemes from time to time to address this need.

Let us study some of the schemes.

4.3.1 Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme, 1975



The Government of India launched the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme in 1975. It is a unique programme and one of the world's largest for early childhood care and development. It encompasses all children in the age group of 0-6 years. It also caters to the needs of pregnant women and lactating mothers. The scheme covers six services, namely:

- (i) Supplementary nutrition;
- (ii) Pre-school non-formal education;
- (iii) Nutrition and health education;
- (iv) Immunization;
- (v) Health check-up; and
- (vi) Referral services.



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The objectives of the Scheme are to:

- improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age group of 0-6 years;
- lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child;
- reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout;
- achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development; and
- enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

4.3.2 Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), 1995

Mid Day Meal Scheme was launched in 1995 to improve the nutritional status of children studying in primary classes in Government, Government aided, local body schools, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) centres all over the country. It aims at enhancing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children. In October 2007, the Scheme was extended to cover children of upper primary classes i.e. class VI to VIII as well.



4.3.3 Janani SurakshaYojana (JSY)

Janani SurakshaYojana (JSY) was launched on 12 April 2005. It is a safe motherhood intervention under the National Health Mission. It aims to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among poor pregnant women.

4.3.4 Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)

The Government of India launched Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram in 2011 to provide completely free and cashless services to pregnant women and sick newborns in government health institutions in both rural and urban areas.





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4.3.5 Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)

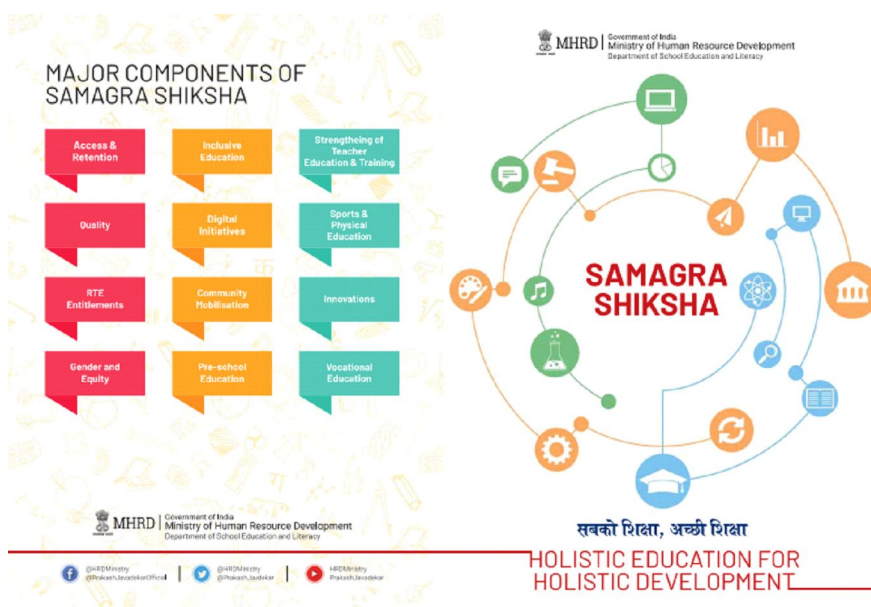
The Government of India launched the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), an innovative initiative under the National Health Mission. It envisages Child Health Screening and Early Intervention Services, which is a systemic approach of early identification and link to care, support and treatment. It includes early detection and management of a set of 30 health conditions prevalent in children less than 18 years of age. These conditions are broadly: Defects at birth, Diseases in children, Deficiency conditions and Developmental delays including Disabilities or the 4Ds. Child Health Screening and Early Intervention Services also aims at reducing the extent of disability, at improving the quality of life and enabling all persons to achieve their full potential.

4.3.6 Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), 2009

The Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) targeted at building a protective environment for children in difficult circumstances, as well as other vulnerable children.



4.3.7 Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), 2018



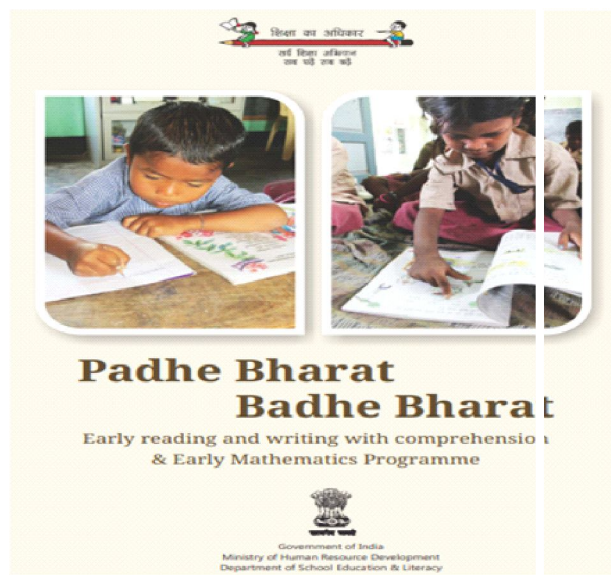


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The Government of India launched Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan in 2018 for school education extending from pre-school to class 12. It envisages the school as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels. It aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from preschool to senior secondary stage. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan recognizes the need and importance of pre-school education and is recognized as a critical component of the existing Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat programme. The scheme emphasises safe and secure infrastructure including sanitation facilities in preschools. It also stresses on developmentally appropriate curriculum, learning activities, pedagogical practices and assessment and professional development of teachers and community participation and engagement.

Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat

Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat Scheme was launched by Government of India in 2014 to improve and promote the foundational learning of early language and literacy and early numeracy in early grades of primary school particularly classes I and II.



4.3.8 Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers

Rajeev Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers was launched by the Government of India to help establish crèches and provide quality daycare facilities for children of working mothers among all socio-economic groups in both in the organized and unorganised sectors. It offers care and education services for children below six years of age.

4.3.9 National Minimum Guidelines for Setting up and Running Crèches under Maternity Benefit Act 2017

The Government of India prepared National Minimum Guidelines for Setting

up and Running Crèches under Maternity Benefit Act 2017. Under the Act, the crèche facility is mandatory for every establishment employing 50 or more employees.

It provides guidelines for setting up and running crèches for children between six months to six years and to standardize the quality of these crèches. It has spelt out key parameters of locations, timings, infrastructure, equipment, health and nutrition practices, safety and protection, trained human resource, parent's engagement and others to ensure holistic development and care of every child at the crèche. These guidelines are based on the scientific principles of early childhood development and attempt to meet the best interests of young children and their parents. Some of the norms are categorized as non-negotiable while others are preferable norms which can be reviewed and adapted as per the need and situation.

4.4 CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

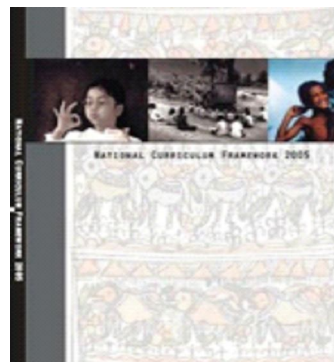
Certain government bodies have been assigned the responsibility of designing and formulating curriculum frameworks to guide educational institutions with regard to content, pedagogy and outcomes of the curriculum for a particular grade and area of study.

Curriculum framework can be described as comprehensive and organised guidelines or a set of standards guiding all the learning experiences to be given to children at a particular stage to attain the desired learning outcomes. It provides guidelines about what and how to be taught to children including assessment procedures.

Let us study about the curriculum frameworks related to ECCE.

4.4.1 National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) prepares the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) which provides the framework for curriculum development and teaching practices for school education programmes in India. In the context of ECCE, the framework advocates that young children be provided care, opportunities and experiences for their holistic development including physical, cognitive, social and emotional. It considers ECCE as preparation for formal schooling and advocates play based developmentally appropriate curriculum in ECCE.



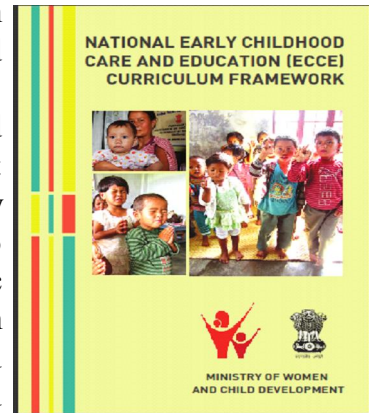
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4.4.2 National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum Framework, 2013

National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework 2013 is a significant and comprehensive guiding document. It aims to promote quality and excellence in early childhood care and education throughout the country. It intends to provide rich early stimulation and quality learning experiences to all children from birth to pre-primary years. It emphasizes children's holistic development and learning. It aims at creating an enabling environment and providing need based inputs as per children's developmental and contextual needs. The Framework also acknowledges the importance of involvement of parents, family and community in ensuring quality ECCE.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.2

State whether the following statements are true or false.

1. Rajeev Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers aims to establish crèches and provide quality daycare facilities for children of working mothers.
2. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan encompasses education extending from preschool to degree level.
3. National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework aims to promote quality and excellence in ECCE.
4. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme was launched by the Government of India in 1979.
5. National Minimum Guidelines for Setting up and Running Crèches were formulated to set up and run crèches for children between six months to six years.

4.5 VARIOUS SERVICE PROVIDERS OF ECCE

In India, ECCE programmes are being delivered by various organizations across government, private and non-governmental sectors. Let us study about them.



4.5.1 Government Sector

As you have read in the previous section, the Government of India has taken several initiatives to provide care, health, nutrition and learning experiences and education to all young children. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme introduced in 1975 is one of the world's largest programmes mandated to provide ECCE. In the previous sections of this lesson, you have studied about the services and objectives of the ICDS. These services are provided through centres called Anganwadi. These centres aim to provide a stimulating and enriched environment to children for their holistic development.

4.5.2 Private Sector

The private sector is also one of the service providers of ECCE. It includes stand-alone pre-schools, self-owned preschools and franchises. The outreach of these schools is steadily spreading even into the rural areas across the country. The quality of services provided by them varies which needs to be regulated.

4.5.3 Non-Government Sector

The ECCE services are also being provided by voluntary or Non-Governmental Organisations. These are largely run by trusts, societies, religious groups and funded by government and international funding agencies. Their outreach and the types of services provided by them also vary.

There is a need to harmonise the activities of all these service providers. The concerned authorities must ensure that they work in accordance with the service delivery norms, standards and regulations of the state.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

In this lesson, you have learnt:

- Various policies and plans formulated by the Government of India for ensuring quality early childhood care and education to all children of the country. These interventions aim to improve the quality of health, nutrition, care and education provided to young children in the early years.
- The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 focuses on the overall development of young children and visualizes ECCE as an important factor strengthening primary education in the country.
- National Nutrition Policy, 1993 was formulated by the Government of India to address to the problem of under-nutrition and malnutrition in the country.
- The National Policy for Children (NPC), 2013 reaffirms commitment to healthy development and protection of all children. It identifies survival,



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health, nutrition, development, education, protection and participation as the undeniable right of every child.

- National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, 2013 commits to universal access to quality early childhood education to all children under 6 years of age. The vision of the policy is to ‘achieve holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below 6 years of age by promoting free, universal, inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualised opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential’.
- National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC), 2016 targets to ensure all children their right to survival, dignity, health, nutrition, education, development, protection and participation.
- National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyan) was launched in in 2018 with a vision to ensure attainment of malnutrition free India by 2022.
- The National Health Mission (NHM) envisages achievement of universal access to equitable, affordable and quality health care services that are accountable and responsive to people’s needs.
- National Health Policy (NHP), 2017 aims to shape health systems in the areas such as investments in health, organization of healthcare services, prevention of diseases and promotion of good health.
- India Newborn Action Plan (INAP), 2014 was launched in 2014 to reduce preventable newborn deaths and stillbirths in the country with strategic interventions.
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Schemewas launched in 1975 is a unique programme for early childhood care and development for all children in the age group of 0-6 years. The scheme covers supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education, nutrition and health education, immunisation, health check-up and referral services as its services.
- Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), 2009 targeted at building a protective environment for children in difficult circumstances, as well as other vulnerable children.
- Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) targeted to improve the nutritional status of children studying in primary and upper primary classes in Government, Government aided, local body schools, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) centres all over the country.
- Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in 2018 for the school education extending from preschool to class 12. It aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from preschool to senior secondary stage.
- Rajeev Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers helps to establish crèches and provide quality daycare facilities for children of working mothers.



- National Minimum Guidelines for Setting up and Running Crèches under Maternity Benefit Act 2017 were prepared to set up and run crèches for children between six months to six years.
- National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 emphasises that young children be provided care, opportunities and experiences for their holistic development.
- National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework 2013 provide guidelines to promote quality and excellence in ECCE. It intends to provide rich early stimulation and quality learning experiences to all children from birth to pre-primary years for their holistic development and learning.
- There are various service providers in ECCE-government, private and the non-governmental sector. There is a need to harmonise the activities of all these ECCE service providers, in accordance with norms, standards and regulations.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. List various policies and programmes related to ECCE in the country.
2. What do you understand by curriculum framework? Comment on National Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework, 2013.
3. Briefly explain the various service providers of ECCE.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

4.1

- (a) Last Child First
- (b) 2022
- (c) newborn deaths, stillbirths
- (d) supremely important asset
- (e) holistic development, active learning

4.2

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True



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