



सत्यमेव जयते
Ministry of Education
Government of India

A Concept Note on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: A Pre-requisite to Learning and ECCE

SHIKSHAK PARV, 2021



THEME: Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: A Pre-requisite to Learning and ECCE

Date: 9th September 2021

NEP provisions relating to Early Childhood Care and Education: The Foundation of Learning

NEP Para 1.1: Presently, quality ECCE is not available to crores of young children, particularly children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Strong investment in ECCE has the potential to give all young children such access, enabling them to participate and flourish in the educational system throughout their lives. Universal provisioning of quality early childhood development, care, and education must thus be achieved as soon as possible, and no later than 2030, to ensure that all students entering Grade 1 are school ready.

NEP Para 1.2: The overall aim of ECCE will be to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of: physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy.

NEP Para 1.3: A National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE) for children up to the age of 8 will be developed by NCERT in two parts, namely, a sub-framework for 0-3 year-olds, and a sub-framework for 3-8 year-olds, aligned with the above guidelines, the latest research on ECCE, and national and international best practices. In particular, the numerous rich local traditions of India developed over millennia in ECCE involving art, stories, poetry, games, songs, and more, will also be suitably incorporated. The framework will serve as a guide both for parents and for early childhood care and education institutions.

NEP Para 1.4: The overarching goal will be to ensure universal access to high-quality ECCE across the country in a phased manner with special attention and priority to locations that are particularly socio-economically disadvantaged. ECCE shall be delivered through a significantly expanded and strengthened system of early-childhood education institutions consisting of (a) stand-alone Anganwadis; (b) Anganwadis co-located with primary schools; (c) pre-primary schools/sections covering at least age 5 to 6 years co-located with existing primary schools; and (d) stand-alone pre-schools - all of which would recruit workers/teachers specially trained in the curriculum and pedagogy of ECCE.

NEP Para 1.5: For universal access to ECCE, Anganwadi Centres will be strengthened with high-quality infrastructure, play equipment, and well-trained Anganwadi workers/teachers. Every Anganwadi will have a well-ventilated, well-designed, child-friendly and well-constructed building with an enriched learning environment. Anganwadis shall be fully integrated into school complexes/clusters, and Anganwadi children, parents, and teachers will be invited to attend and participate in school/school complex programmes and vice versa.

NEP Para 1.6: It is envisaged that prior to the age of 5 every child will move to a "Preparatory Class" or "Balavatika" (that is, before Class 1), which has an ECCE-qualified teacher. The learning in the Preparatory Class shall be based primarily on play-based learning with a focus on developing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities and early literacy and numeracy. The mid-day meal programme shall also be extended to the Preparatory Classes in primary schools. Health check-ups and growth

monitoring that are available in the Anganwadi system shall also be made available to Preparatory Class students of Anganwadi as well as of primary schools.

NEP Para 1.7: To prepare an initial cadre of high-quality ECCE teachers in Anganwadis, current Anganwadi workers/teachers will be trained through a systematic effort in accordance with the curricular/pedagogical framework developed by NCERT. Anganwadi workers/teachers with qualifications of 10+2 and above shall be given a 6-month certificate programme in ECCE; and those with lower educational qualifications shall be given a one-year diploma programme covering early literacy, numeracy, and other relevant aspects of ECCE.

NEP Para 1.8: ECCE will also be introduced in Ashramshalas in tribal-dominated areas and in all formats of alternative schooling in a phased manner. The process for integration and implementation of ECCE in Ashramshalas and alternative schooling will be similar to that detailed above.

NEP Para 1.9: The responsibility for ECCE curriculum and pedagogy will lie with MHRD. The planning and implementation of early childhood care and education curriculum will be carried out jointly by the Ministries of HRD, Women and Child Development (WCD), Health and Family Welfare (HFW), and Tribal Affairs. A special joint task force will be constituted for continuous guidance of the smooth integration of early childhood care and education into school education.

NEP provisions relating to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: An Urgent & Necessary Prerequisite to Learning

NEP Para 2.1: The ability to read and write, and perform basic operations with numbers, is a necessary foundation and an indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning. However, various governmental, as well as non-governmental surveys, indicate that we are currently in a learning crisis: a large proportion of students currently in elementary school - estimated to be over 5 crore in number - have not attained foundational literacy and numeracy, i.e., the ability to read and comprehend basic text and the ability to carry out basic addition and subtraction with Indian numerals.

NEP Para 2.2: Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children will thus become an urgent national mission, with immediate measures to be taken on many fronts and with clear goals that will be attained in the short term (including that every student will attain foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3). The highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025. The rest of this Policy will become relevant for our students only if this most basic learning requirement (i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic at the foundational level) is first achieved. To this end, a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be set up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) on priority. Accordingly, all State/UT governments will immediately prepare an implementation plan for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary schools.

NEP Para 2.3: First, teacher vacancies will be filled at the earliest, in a time-bound manner - especially in disadvantaged areas and areas with large pupil-to-teacher ratios or high rates of illiteracy. Special attention will be given to employing local teachers or those with familiarity with local languages. A pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1 will be ensured at the level of each school; areas having large numbers of socio-economically disadvantaged students will aim for a PTR of under 25:1.

NEP Para 2.4: On the curricular side, there will be an increased focus on foundational literacy and numeracy - and generally, on reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, and mathematical thinking - throughout the preparatory and middle school curriculum, with a robust system of continuous formative/adaptive assessment to track and thereby individualize and ensure each student's learning.

NEP Para 2.5: Currently, with the lack of universal access to ECCE, a large proportion of children already fall behind within the first few weeks of Grade 1. Thus, to ensure that all students are school ready, an interim 3-month play-based 'school preparation module' for all Grade 1 students, consisting of activities and workbooks around the learning of alphabets, sounds, words, colours, shapes, and numbers, and involving collaborations with peers and parents, will be developed by NCERT and SCERTs.

NEP Para 2.6: A national repository of high-quality resources on foundational literacy and numeracy will be made available on the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA).

NEP Para 2.7: States may consider establishing innovative models to foster peer-tutoring and volunteer activities, as well as launch other programmes to support learners, in this nationwide mission to promote foundational literacy and numeracy.

NEP Para 2.8: Enjoyable and inspirational books for students at all levels will be developed, including through high-quality translation (technology assisted as needed) in all local and Indian languages, and will be made available extensively in both school and local public libraries. Public and school libraries will be significantly expanded to build a culture of reading across the country. Digital libraries will also be established. School libraries will be set up - particularly in villages - to serve the community during non-school hours, and book clubs may meet in public/school libraries to further facilitate and promote widespread reading. A National Book Promotion Policy will be formulated.

NEP Para: 3.3: The second is to achieve universal participation in school by carefully tracking students, as well as their learning levels, in order to ensure that they (a) are enrolled in and attending school, and (b) have suitable opportunities to catch up and re-enter school in case they have fallen behind or dropped out. For providing equitable and quality education from the Foundational Stage through Grade 12 to all children up to the age of 18, suitable facilitating systems shall be put in place.