

# **Starting Right**

Guidelines for Early Childhood Development  
Centers

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## **1. Introduction**

The first five years of a child's life is critical for brain development. It is critical not only because of the rapidity of brain development during this period but also because it is a period when brain development is most susceptible to external influences that determine the quality of intellectual functioning. The years from 3 to 5 are especially important for the achievement of key milestones in language acquisition, socialization and personality development. At birth the human brain is relatively Immature, The cerebral cortex, the part most involved in memory, learning, voluntary control of muscles and other intelligent behavior, is the most immature. It is experience that activates the child's brain and builds up its pathways (synapses). The right type of stimulation and experience during the years from 3 to 5 will help associated pathways become permanent and the child will become a life-long learner. However, if the pathways are not used they will not develop properly and lead to the so-called signs of deprivation marked by a lack of readiness to learn when the child enters school.

Success in achieving this developmental task depends on the presence of an enabling environment; that is an environment that provides children with safe and healthy surroundings, health care, which includes the provision of nutritious meals, proper sanitation, supportive and affectionate interaction, appropriate modeling, stimulation and protection.

What the pre-schools are expected to provide and need to provide is this enabling environment that includes quality childcare appropriate to a child's state of development and addresses the needs of the child while respecting individual differences.

Sri Lanka has seen a phenomenal growth in pre-schools during the last two decades. Although a national policy framework regarding pre-schools has been approved by the government in 2004, the multiplicity of pre-school providers in the field and the mistaken notion that pre-schools are for preparing the child for primary school by teaching the 3Rs have led to many models and a wide variation in the quality of the environment and experiences they provide. As a first step towards correcting the situation, UNICEF and the Children's Secretariat launched a National Survey of Pre-Schools in Sri Lanka in 2003. The overall objective of the survey was to better understand the status of childcare provision in pre-schools and assess the nature and quality of such care.

The findings of this survey have revealed many shortcomings and areas that need to be regulated and improved.

The following extracts from the survey give the overall picture of the situation of pre-schools in Sri Lanka.

- Pre-schools are organized in many different types of buildings, most of which are unsuitable.
- The lack of appropriate play and educational equipment, both indoors and outdoors and material for group and individual stimulation was very disturbing.
- Categories and quality of growth and development-related services provided were inadequate (these services included attention to malnutrition and appropriate attention and care for children with special needs).

- The degree of awareness among pre-school teachers on how children learn was poor.
- The priority given to story telling, free play and activities for the development of listening skills and pre-writing, pre-reading and pre-number-related skills was inadequate.
- Environment-related activities received very low priority.
- The natural environment was not effectively utilized by the teachers.

The survey also revealed many misconceptions among parents regarding pre-school exposure and its expected outcomes. What many parents expected from pre-schools was a good education/preparation/ training for formal schooling. Although pre-school exposure is advocated from three years onwards many parents appeared to hold the view that a few months pre-school exposure just prior to the child being admitted to the formal school was adequate. This was evident from the small number of 3- to 4-year-old children in the sample surveyed. There were still others who did not recognize the need to send the child to pre-school at all.

The survey findings have strongly indicated the need for planned intervention

- to regulate the haphazard expansion of pre-schools,
- ensure the provision of quality care,
- regulate the quality and standards of teacher training,
- increase parental awareness of the child's developmental needs, and
- obtain parent co-operation and participation in the management of pre-schools.

The survey also revealed that most pre-school teachers have a genuine motivation and commitment to the profession and receive job satisfaction in spite of meager incentives. 63.3% of the teachers surveyed had worked for more than five years, many of them ten years, under these conditions. All had requested further training as well. The majority of parents were also found to be supportive of their children's pre-schools and enthusiastic about assisting the pre-school in whatever capacity required of them.

The guidelines presented in this document are the outcome of a series of meetings and deliberations involving pre-school providers, teachers, administrators, researchers, consultants and representatives from national and provincial level government authorities, universities, NGOs and individuals in the field of pre-school education for the first time in 2006. The Children's Secretariat and UNICEF guided the process of the preparation of the guidelines.

The guidelines are intended to help you transform pre-schools into child-friendly development centers. The guidelines are organized by sections with each one addressing a vital component in the organization and implementation of programmes for three- to five-year-old children.

## **2. Child Friendly Development Centers Concepts and Principles**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The conceptual analysis presented here brings out the principles that should guide the transformation of pre-schools to child friendly development centers. These principles, which in turn translate into aims and objectives, provide the guidelines for different components of a development centre programme such as physical facilities, curriculum content, organization of learning experiences, services to be provided, psycho-social environment, management, parent participation and teacher training.

### **2.2 Key characteristics of "Development"**

- Child development is a gradual process of change in which the child learns to handle more complex levels of moving, thinking, feeling and relating to others.
- The development process incorporates growth, maturation and learning
- Child Development:
  - Occurs in interaction
  - Occurs continually
  - Is patterned
  - Is multi-dimensional
- Different aspects of development such as physical, psycho-motor, cognitive, language, emotional and social skills are inter-related, interactive and interdependent
- Therefore, Early Childhood Development Centers must adopt a holistic and integrated approach, giving attention to both care and education (Educare).
- The center should secure a safe environment in which the child can grow up, mature and master increasingly complex skills essential for the acquisition of information and transformation through different forms of expression.
- Growth, which refers primarily to physical changes, takes place in a fixed sequence largely determined by the genetic code.
- Maturation leads to orderly changes of behavior, which are also largely genetically programmed although subject to environmental influences.
- Learning is a modification of behavior that results from experience, practice or environmental influence.
- The levels of growth and maturation largely determine the nature of the learning process at any given time. This means that development cannot be promoted by adopting teaching-learning processes for which the child is not ready.
- Development is holistic and the different aspects of development interact with each other and influence each other. For example, malnutrition will affect not only physical development but also cognitive and psycho-social development.
- Development being holistic attention must be given to the child as a whole in all aspects of development.

Integration must be achieved via two different approaches combined into one:

01. Learning situation must adopt the integrated approach.
02. The Learning environment should involve both care and education.

In terms of care, crucial for optimum growth and development is the manner in which caregivers utilize their time and resources to promote growth and development in an attentive and warm manner.

In simple terms, this would mean that the child gets nutritious meals, receives vaccinations and proper healthcare, has access to safe drinking water and proper sanitary conditions, has a safe environment and provides stimulating interaction with loving and responsive adults.

### **2.3 What is meant by being "Child Friendly"**

- It is providing an environment characterized by a consistency and continuity in care that is warm, affectionate, loving, stimulating, responsive and adaptive to children's abilities and disabilities. It leads to the development of the child's full potential and feeling of total security.
- It is providing guidance and stimulation to engage in activities that are of interest to children both individually and in a co-operative group environment.
- It is utilizing forms of activity characteristic of childhood, e.g., play, observation, exploration, trial and error learning, imitation, etc., as the methodologies used in providing learning experiences while not ignoring the child's nature, physical and mental capabilities, and interests at any given time.
- It is introducing the child to activities that would challenge emerging patterns of thought and physical and psycho-social behaviors.
- It is allowing room for individual talents to surface.
- The centre has to have minimal standards for a safe and clean environment:
  - safe area/room for the children's activities
  - adequate and safe drinking water
  - adequate sanitation facilities
  - well ventilated rooms
  - safe distance from hazardous environments, and
  - provide a safe and clean environment
- The centre should be responsive to the child's holistic needs in terms of:
  - health services
  - hygiene and sanitation
  - socialization
  - nutritional needs
  - spiritual needs, and
  - being responsive to differently able children
- The centre should benefit from the active participation and involvement of the parents of the children. They should be involved in the operation and management of the centers.

These points outline not only the key features of the child-friendly environment but also the methodology to be adopted in providing learning experiences. However, at the heart of the educational process should be the child. No amount of equipment, teaching or anything else will have the desired effect unless they are in harmony with the nature of the child.

What usually happens in our development centers/pre-schools is that children are put through the 3Rs and a lot of mundane activities. This may be what the parents and even teachers are

interested in because these provide tangible proof of the so-called effectiveness of the pre-school. But the needs of the young child and his/her interests are not the same as those of adults. Activities must engage the child's attention and bring into operation the emerging cognitive, social, and emotional processes and skills leading to all-round development.

Most play experiences planned by teachers are close ended. They stop at the introduction of some concept or activity. The child's mind operates only within that frame. It is only open-ended, spontaneous play that provides opportunities for each child to discover, apply, repeat and improve his/her emerging abilities. The child himself/herself discovers these abilities in the process of performing the activity. The opportunity to improve these abilities is what leads to optimum development and allows individual talents to surface.



### **3. Concept of Minimum Standards**

The concept of minimum standards and requirements reflects a coordinated organizational effort to improve the different aspects of the development centers to levels that will ensure the provision of services adequate to meet the holistic developmental needs of 3 to 5 years old. Adherence to minimum standards will help to regularize the setting up of development centres, transform existing pre-schools to child-friendly development centers, maintain quality and in addition facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

#### **3.1 Minimum Standards and Requirements for Early Childhood Development Centers**

Basic Physical Facilities and Services. Play, observation, exploration and other forms of indoor and outdoor activities are the learning mechanisms characteristic of pre-schoolers. Thus, the development centers should be safe, clean, spacious and stimulating, inviting children to engage in different forms of creative activities, both individually and in small groups, carefully guided by competent child friendly staff.

##### **I The Premises**

- Premises selected for Child Development Centers (pre-schools) should not be located on hill slopes and adjacent to or in close proximity to liquor bars/shops, cinemas, video shops, funeral parlors, weekly fairs, bus stands, fish and meat stalls, factories, garages, and refuse collection points or dangerous sites such as electric transformers.
- Generally, it should not be in an environment that is too noisy, dangerous or subject to air pollution and should be easily accessible.
- The premises should be clean and free from undergrowth that can harbor reptiles and should be clean and flat.
- In all settings, urban, semi-urban or rural, there should be a wall or fence around the premises and the main gate should be well protected.
- The premises should not be close to open wells, ponds, streams, rivers, water tanks or hazardous slopes.
- The main entrance of the building should not face or be too close to a main road.
- The premises should have shady trees, ornamental and flowering plants, vegetable, fruit and herbal plants.
- There should be sand and water play areas and adequate space for outdoor play equipment such as swings, climbing frames, mat slides etc.
- It is appropriate to have play material made of local raw material.

##### **II Building**

The building should be,

- Accessible to children with special needs.
- Firmly constructed with a permanent floor and roof and inspected periodically for any problems. The roof could be made of locally available material such as Cadman, palm leaves or straw.
- Should have enough floor area for children to play and learn (at least 20sq ft per child).

- Should have adequate light, ventilation and provision to protect children during heavy wind or rain.
- The area occupied by the doors and windows should be at least 1/7th of the total wall area.
- If the building has half walls they should be at least 1 meter up from ground level and provision made to protect children (using tats) from sun and rain.
- There should be adequate wall space for displaying the children's work.
- There should be a room to store records, play material, and other equipment that need protection.
- There should be a kitchenette/facilities for the preparation of food.
- There should be a sick room/a place for children to rest.
- Walls must be colourfully painted to make them visually attractive.
- The building should have minimum partitioning to ensure observation by teachers.

### **III Basic Requirements for Furniture and Equipment**

There should be:

- Specially built children's desks and chairs.
  - (Height of desk - 2ft from the ground)
  - (Height of chair - 1ft up to the seat and back rest 1ft from the seat)
  - (Seat size: 1ft x 1ft, edges should be rounded)
- A wall-mounted blackboard accessible to children for free work.
- Tables and chairs for teachers (1 each per teacher).
- Adequate number of mats/rugs.
- A display board for children's work.
- Racks and cupboards storing play material should at the eye level of children.
- A notice board.
- Outdoor/indoor play material, puzzles, children's books, musical instruments, waste/scrap material (collected in a box) etc. Shelves or suitable arrangements to keep cups, plates, water jugs and other equipment used at meal times and/or in food preparation and storage of water.
- Shelves or hangers accessible to children for their bags, water bottles and spare clothes.
- Small brooms, elk brooms, dustbins and doormats that can be used by children.
- Play material that can be used by children with special needs.

### **IV Water and Sanitation**

- There should be a clean source of drinking water (well or tap) and facilities (jugs or earthen pots) to store boiled water for drinking purposes.
- Toilet facilities especially built to suit small children should be made available in adequate numbers (at least one toilet for 15-20 children) with a large container to store water where the tap water is not available and soap to wash hands.
- There should be a place with soap and water for washing hands before and after meals and for washing hands and feet after outdoor play.
- Dusters, waste-paper baskets and means for disposing waste must be provided.
- Water and sanitation facilities suitable for children with special needs

## **V Health and Nutrition**

- Regular health checks and parent education sessions should be organized on a half yearly basis.
- The Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC) should liaise with the Family Health Worker who maintains children's growth charts and keeps health records.
- Signs of below-average growth in children should be brought to the notice of the respective parents and if the matter continues, they need to be referred for medical attention.
- Arrangements must be made for the children to have one nutritious meal, either brought from home or prepared in school or offered by parents in rotation in conditions that are appropriate to develop good food habits, mealtime habits and manners. The responsibility of overseeing such arrangement must be clearly assigned to an individual or a committee.
- ECDC staff and/or teachers should have received training in basic first aid, identification of common ailments and referral abilities where necessary.
- The ECDC should encourage good health habits among all children.
- The ECDC should have a close link with the Divisional Director of Health Services (DDHS)/Medical Officer of Health (MOH) and notify them of all instances of suspected communicable diseases in any child attending the centre.
- A first-aid box should be available and well maintained.

### **3.2 Learning and Psycho-Social Environment**

Learning within the ECDC has to take place with respect to each child's capabilities, careful guidance and promotion of a healthy sense of autonomy, self confidence and initiative because while children at this age make advances in cognitive, psycho-motor and language areas they are also continuing to expand their repertoire of social and moral behavior and personality characteristics.

#### **3.2.1 Learning Environment/Basic Requirements**

- School premises or areas immediately outside should provide space that can be used as nature trails to develop observation skills, environmental awareness and observe the effects of natural events such as wind, sun and rain.
- A safe outdoor area where children can play individually and in groups.
- A play compound with small trees having low branches, a small mound for children to climb, a rope or bar tied between trees for children to swing on and climb, sand and water play areas, spaces for modeling with clay, etc.
- Adequate learning materials and experiences that can bring out the creativity, adaptability, spontaneity and emerging skills of children and provide opportunities to develop the child's interests.
- Containers of different sizes, shapes and volume for sand and water play areas.
- Learning/teaching kits to develop specific concepts and skills, e.g., puzzles, picture cards and flip charts.
- A dressing up corner with old garments of different types, sizes and colours and a mirror, to be used in role plays and dramatization.
- Other learning/play corners such as an art corner, book corner, environment corner, etc.

- All play spaces (indoors and outdoors) should be organized so as to enable the pre-school teacher to safely keep watch over the children.

### **3.2.2 *Psycho-Social Environment***

- The overall environment should make children be able to experience a sense of joy, safety, love and acceptance and freedom that is necessary for them to become active.
- Both at arrival and departure the children and parents are greeted cordially by centre staff and spoken to as considered appropriate.
- The environment is free of threats such as those posed by displaying a cane, giving instructions in a loud and harsh voice or expecting complete silence.
- Individual differences in needs, interests and behaviors exhibited by the children are understood and respected.
- The child is provided freedom and opportunity to engage in activities preferred and chosen by him/her.
- The child is provided with activities that can be mastered with a certain amount of effort and subsequently experience the joy of success.
- Children are helped to move away from depending on others to attend to simple tasks such as washing hands and feet, putting on clothes and shoes, etc., and encouraged to do things by themselves willingly, joyfully and with a sense of dignity.
- Children are encouraged to express and develop their individual talents.
- On appropriate occasions the child's work is appreciated, encouraged and given group recognition so as to build up the child's self-confidence, self-respect and sense of achievement.
- In disciplining children, criticism and punishment are avoided and the child's attention is diverted away from the problem to the acceptable form of behavior.
- Self-discipline that arises as a result of engaging in self-motivated and entertaining activities is encouraged.
- Ample opportunity is provided for children to play together, help each other share resources and respect ideas and needs expressed by other children.
- Children are encouraged to address each other cordially, to express their ideas and engage in child-to-child conversation.
- Children are helped to get accustomed to have their meals in a way that fulfils not only their nutritional requirements but builds up good meal habits and manners.
- Children are encouraged to participate in the day's activities in a way that brings out the need for cleanliness, orderliness and attention to safety.
- Children are encouraged to build up a sense of ownership, belonging and mutual responsibility.
- Teachers are aware of matters concerning children's safety and well-being.
- Teachers do not engage in comparing children in the presence of other children or parents.
- The teachers evaluate, appreciate and encourage the efforts made by each individual child.
- Parents are made to feel free to offer assistance in daily activities such as preparation and serving of meals and interact openly with the children at such times.
- Children have opportunities to meet notable members of society and observe local talents through annually programmed school events.
- Children are taken on outings to familiarize them with the local environment and its resources and workings.

### **3.3 Administrative Standards**

Administrative standards indicate how systematically and efficiently a pre-school is being managed. Effective delivery of services require the maintenance of certain categories of records and provision of facilities for religious and cultural activities.

**Documents** (The following documents should be available to hand and safely stored):

- Admission register
- Attendance registers for children, teachers and parent meetings
- Health records
- Register of addresses of guardians/others to be contacted in an emergency
- Progress records of children, including children's skills development records
- Record of school activities, log book, details of parent education programmes, records of parent teacher meetings, etc.
- Financial records
- Personal files of teachers
- A notice board
- A Display board for sharing child development information with parents
- A suggestions box for ideas related to school matters or types of assistance parents can offer
- A document containing particulars of officers providing services to early childhood children should be displayed.
- In addition to the above, there should be a Board of Management and regular meetings of the Board of Management and monthly meetings of parents and teachers.

### **3.4 Religious Background**

- In a multi-religious setting, participation in religious worship should be with the parent's consent or replaced by a short period of silence
- There should be a place designated for daily worship and facilities for children to adopt the appropriate positions taken during worship
- All adults present at the time of daily worship should join the children in the act of worship.
- There should be special celebrations to mark religious festivals.<sup>14</sup> Starting Right

### **3.5 Health Inspections and Identification of children with special needs**

- An annual or where necessary bi-annual health inspection should be conducted with the focus on identifying any form of disabilities, malnutrition or other deficiencies.

### **3.6 Staff**

- There should be a qualified teacher for every 20 children. Teachers should receive refresher training regularly (at least once a year).
- There should be support staff to attend to the preparation of meals and cleanliness of premises and toilets. (Support staff should number at least one. The number will depend on the size of the establishment.)
- Teachers and other staff should be provided with welfare facilities.

## **4. Parent participation in Early Childhood Development Centers**

### **4.1 Aims and Objectives**

- To create a better understanding of the importance of early childhood care and development among parents.
- To create respect for the role of parenting, improve parenting skills and make parents contribute actively to children's developmental processes.
- To make parents understand the importance of child development centers and encourage them to share the responsibility of planning and maintaining them.

### **4.2 What parents should know in order to participate actively in early Childhood Development Centers.**

#### **4.2.1 *Understanding the process of Child Growth and Development***

- Children's needs regarding survival, growth and development
- Importance of the period from conception up to 5 years
- Holistic nature of the developmental process
- Importance of nutrition, health and sanitation
- Early stimulation and its effect on brain development
- The child learns through activity and play.
- The child needs plenty of love and acceptance, care and freedom within a secure environment to become mentally and physically active.
- The child needs to develop a trusting relationship with loving, caring and responsive adults (parents) in order to thrive physically, emotionally and socially.
- The child needs opportunities to socialize through group play and group participation with peers.
- The child needs to develop self-esteem, self-confidence and a sense of competence.
- Conditioning children to think in a particular way will make their thinking biased.

#### **4.2.2 *Misconceptions among parents regarding children and child development***

- The perception that the social and physical environment of the child is not so important for child development
- The belief that adequate attention to physical development is all that is required during the early years.
- The belief that the way children develop depends on the genes they are born with and not on the environment they grow up in.
- Believing in strict discipline and punishment to regulate behavior.
- Non-recognition of the fact that ridiculing the child is harmful to the child's psychological development and using it as a way to discipline children.
- The belief that all parents know how to bring up children and follow practices their parents adopted.
- Non-recognition of the importance of development centre exposure and not sending children to pre-school.
- The belief that the external manifestation of love and recognition is bad and therefore purposely denying it.
- A negative attitude towards children with different forms of handicap denying them opportunities for optimum development.

- The belief that it is sufficient to send the child to a pre-school for only a short period prior to school admission.
- Maintaining that pre-schools should develop reading, writing and number skills only

#### **4.2.3 *Importance of the family environment in child growth and development***

- Growth and development will proceed smoothly only in an environment that is conducive to it.
- A harmonious family atmosphere is essential to generate a feeling of security and protection in the child.
- Domestic violence, alcoholism and absence of a parent or both parents will seriously affect on the feeling of security and protection of children.
- Attention to the physical needs of the child alone is inadequate. The child needs plants of love warmth, and recognition and experiences within the home and the local environment that provide adequate stimulation to promote holistic development.
- Parents and other adults in the family can find time to devote to the child and interact with the child on a one-to-one basis in a loving and affectionate manner.
- Patents have ample opportunities to offer recognition and acceptance and enjoy the child's achievements, promoting psycho-social development.
- The family should take the lead in avoiding physical punishment and all forms of child abuse, such as neglect, and protect the child from external sources of danger and abuse.

#### **4.2.4 *Areas of Parental participation in development centre activities***

- Providing/maintaining facilities.
- Helping to setup/maintain outdoor play areas/equipment and provide low cost traditional play material.
- Conducting "Shramadana" campaigns to maintain premises and clean/paint children's desks, chairs and walls.
- Participate in providing a nutritious meal to the children.
- Setting up a parent-teacher association that meets regularly in order to discuss school activities, progress made by children and conduct parent education programmes to empower them to deal with decision making, planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Set up a development committee for each centre with village leaders and parents as members.
- Co-operate with the early childhood Development Centre teacher and the family health worker in carrying out nutrition programmes, using referral services and attending to the needs of children identified as requiring special attention.
- Assisting the administration of the early childhood Development Centre.
- Work towards developing a social net of inter-family co-operation and unity woven around the development centre activities that can help to improve the conditions in which their children grow up.

#### **4.2.5 *Mechanism for enlisting parental participation***

- Meeting parents in small groups as well as large groups at times convenient for parents (make attendance of regular whole group meetings compulsory).
- Arrange for formal as well as informal discussions at meetings so that parents feel free to interact, with teachers as well as other parents

- Arrange parent awareness programmes so as to win their confidence in the ability of teachers to provide the best for their children.
- Convince every parent that each one has something to contribute and that every contribution, no matter how big or small, is equally important and valued.
- See that language and other media used in parent education is simple and clearly understood by all and conveys clear messages.
- Keep parents regularly informed of the progress of their children
- Make parents aware of ways and means of organizing their activities at home so as to provide maximum stimulation for the holistic development of the child, ensure an atmosphere of love, freedom and acceptance and provide time to spend with the child.
- Organize social and religious activities in the early childhood development center and educational outings along with the participation of family members of the children.
- Adopt measures to enable parents to express their opinions (suggestion box) and keep parents informed of coming events and ideas that would be useful for them. (notice board)
- Demonstrate to parents that a personal interest is taken for each and every child the best possible care and attention according to his/her needs



## **5. Training norms and requirements for ECDC teachers**

The pre-school teacher is the most important element in quality child care. He/she must be warm and caring, attentive and respectful of children's individual needs, motivating and appreciating individual effort, informative and resourceful, and capable of planning activities that are developmentally appropriate to enhancing children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. In addition, he/she should be able to plan and organize a wealth of services that includes health, nutrition, preventive care, monitoring of child development, services to children with disabilities, and parent involvement programmes.

### **5.1 Admission requirements for training of ECDC teachers**

#### **5.1.1 Age Limits**

- Age limit of recruitment should be 18-30 years
- Maximum age limit of a teacher should be 60 years

#### **5.1.2 Academic requirements**

Minimum Academic requirements for recruitment for receiving training as Early Childhood Development Centre staff should be as follows:

##### **5.1.2.1 Passed at least 6 subjects at G.C.E (O/L) with a Pass for Mother Tongue and in Mathematics, Three credits pass for any subjects.**

Minimum period of professional training using standard curricula approved by the National Committee on ECCD should be:

- 1 year of training (300 hours)
- There should be in-service training at weekends at least once a year (50 hours)

##### **5.1.2.2 With**

###### **▪ The certificate course**

National Vocational qualification level 4 for “pre school teacher”, conducted by registered institute under tertiary vocational and Education commission, should be completed successfully.

### **5.2 Outline of the Professional Training Component**

- **Philosophical, historical and psychological basis of ECCD**
  - **Child rights (With special emphasis on rights related to survival, optimum growth and development and protection.)**
  - **Growth and development from conception to age 5.**
    - Concept of growth and development
    - Concept of holistic development
    - Factors influencing growth and development.
1. Health, nutrition and sanitation
  2. Importance of environment, learning and experience.
  3. Importance of early stimulation and brain development
  4. Developmental handicaps

## **6. The concept of child-friendly ECDCs**

### **6.1 Milestones of growth and development up to five years**

- How children learn and importance of play
  - Psycho-motor development
  - Psycho-social development
  - Language development
  - Cognitive development and concept formation
  - Aesthetic development and environmental awareness
  - Laying the foundation for all-round development of personality and life-long learning
1. ECDC exposure and the formation of habits, values and attitudes and introduction to socio-cultural and religious environments
  2. Skills the child is expected to acquire by the time of entry to primary school

### **6.2 Early identification of children at risk**

### **6.3 Importance of monitoring growth and nutritional status of children at ECDCs**

- Promotion of health and nutrition of children under five. Role of daycare and Child Development Centers. Health inspections, co-ordination with primary health care team and maintenance of records.
- The importance of maintaining high standards of cleanliness and provision of adequate sanitary facilities at ECDCs.

### **6.4 Enlighten parents on child care practices**

### **6.5 Organization of age-appropriate learning experiences to promote optimum all round development: physical, psycho-motor, cognitive, psycho-social, language, aesthetic.**

1. Development of creativity
2. Learning through play
  - Different types of play, their use and significance
  - Play/learning corners
3. Integrated teaching, themes and planning
4. Observation, exploration and utilization of the natural environment
5. Pre-reading, pre-writing, pre-number-related and listening skills.
6. Learning experiences for promoting mathematical concepts
7. Story, drama, rhyme, rhythm and song
8. Production and selection of play/educational material and teaching aids.
9. Development of sense of accomplishment, self-reliance, etc., through feedback and appropriate interaction.

### **6.6 Minimum standards for ECDC s**

- Building
- Water and sanitary facilities

- Facilities for Provision of meals
- Play space - indoors, outdoors and play material
- Furniture
- Sick room/rest room
- Educational material

## **6.7 Management of ECDCs**

- Child observation, monitoring and keeping records
- Maintaining relations with other service providers
- Providing parent awareness and mobilizing parental and community support
- Setting up management committee and mechanism for monitoring and
- Evaluation of ECDCs.
- Personality development of ECDC staff
- Basic English knowledge
- Visits to ECDC resource centers
- Group/workshop experiences in producing ECDC learning material using locally available resources
- Practical experience at a recognized and relevant ECDC for not less than one month

## **7. Check list for Registration of Child Development Centers.**

*Please mark with a tick (✓) all factors applicable to your centre*

### **7.1 Physical Environment and Facilities**

#### **7.1.1 Location**

- Easily accessible
- Located away from places/establishments unsuitable for children (e.g., liquor bars, fish and meal stalls).
- A safe distance away from sites that could be dangerous for children (e.g., open wells, ponds and hazardous slopes)
- Conducive to children's health.

#### **7.1.2 Premises**

- There is a protective fence/wall around the premises
- Main entrance is well protected
- Premises are clean and free of undergrowth.
- The outdoor play area is shady and flat
- There is adequate space and equipment for activities such as climbing, jumping, balancing, swinging, crawling, etc.

#### **7.1.3 Building Premises are clean and free of undergrowth**

- It is a permanent building
- Minimum space available per child is around 20 sq.ft.
- There is adequate light and ventilation (area occupied by doors and windows are at least 1/7<sup>th</sup> of total wall area)
- Half walls are at least one meter high
- Walls are colorfully painted
- The building is well maintained.
- The building is used only for conducting Development Centre activities.
- If the building is used for other activities, children's play material and the work they produce do not get affected

#### **7.1.4 Available facilities**

- Adequate wall space, boards or shelves to exhibit children's work.
- Office room
- Store room/room to store equipment
- Kitchen or suitable place to prepare meals
- Sick room/safe space set apart for a sick child
- Water seal latrines suitable for children and water for use (one latrine for 25 children)

#### **7.1.5 Furniture, equipment and facilities**

- Tables and chairs made out of light wood suitable for children
- Tables and chairs for teachers
- A cupboard/Amirah for documents.
- A wall-mounted blackboard for children.

- Racks to place learning/play material at eye level of children.
- Pictures and books and places to display them.
- Mats and rugs.
- Facilities to display children's work.
- Equipment used for preparing and serving meals, food covers and containers for storing water.
- Facilities for boiling and storing drinking water.
- A rack/hanger for children's water bottles and bags

#### **7.1.6 Sanitary Facilities**

- Water is available on tap/from a well.
- The latrines have an adequate water supply.
- Boiled water is available for drinking.
- A place with adequate water and soap is available for washing hands before and after meals and after outdoor play and toilet use.
- Means for regular disposal of refuse are available.

### **7.2 Health care and Nutrition**

- Health-related habits are inculcated in all children.
- Daily attention is paid to children's cleanliness and health.
- A nutritious meal is served every day.
- A first aid box with adequate medicine is available.
- Children's health records are well kept

### **7.3 Learning and psycho-social Environment**

#### **7.3.1 Learning Environment**

- The premises or area in the vicinity can be used as nature trails to develop observational and exploratory skills.
- The outdoor area is safe for children to play individually and in groups
- There is adequate outdoor play equipment (e.g., swings, climbing frames, walls, etc.)
- There is provision for sand and water play areas.
- Containers of different sizes, shapes and volume are available for sand and water play areas.
- There is adequate indoor learning material and experiences that can bring out the creativity, adaptability, spontaneity and emerging skills of children.

#### **There is a:**

- dressing up corner with old garments and a mirror
- play house
- environment corner
- art corner and book corner
- other learning corners
- appropriate stimulation and learning experiences for children with special needs

#### **7.3.2 Psycho-social Environment.**

- Parents and children are cordially greeted both at arrival and departure.
- The overall environment makes children experience a sense of joy and acceptance.
- The environment is totally free of threats such as those posed by displaying a cane.

- Provides the child the freedom and opportunity to engage in activities preferred and chosen by him/her.
- Encourages self discipline that arises as a result of engaging in self-motivated, joyful activities.
- Helps children to move away from depending on others to undertake simple tasks such as putting on clothes and shoes and learn to do things by themselves willingly and joyfully and resulting in a sense of achievement.
- Encourages child-to-child, caregiver-to-child and parent-to-child conversation
- Provides ample opportunities for children to play together, help each other, share resources and respect ideas and needs expressed by other children.<sup>24</sup> *Starting Right*
- Encourages children to address each other cordially and follow social etiquette.
- Uses daily events such as meal times to develop good interpersonal relationships and develop good habits, values and attitudes related to cleanliness, orderliness, safety, etc.
- Builds up a sense of ownership, belonging and mutual responsibility.

#### **7.4 Administrative Standards**

The following documents are available

- Admission register
- Attendance register for children
- Attendance register for teachers
- Attendance register for parents' meetings
- Register of addresses of guardians/others to be contacted in an emergency
- Personal files of teachers/caregivers
- Children progress records
- Inventory
- Log book
- Financial records
- Term/annual work plan
- Records of parent-teacher meetings
- Record of Board of Management meeting

#### **7.5 Religious Environment**

- Participation in religious worship is undertaken with parents' consent
- There is a suitable place designated for religious worship
- Special celebrations are held to mark religious festivals

#### **7.6 Staff Requirements**

##### **7.6.1 Caregivers/Teachers**

- There is a caregiver/teacher for every 20 children
- Caregivers/teachers have received professional training from a recognized institution.
- Caregivers/teachers have received in-service training

### **7.6.2 Staff Assistants**

There is assistance for:

- Maintaining the cleanliness of the building and premises
- Attending to the cleanliness of the children
- Preparation of meals and cleaning up after meals

### **7.7 Parent and Administrative support**

- There is a Board of Management
- There is a parent-teacher association

### **7.8 The work plan**

The Early Childhood Development Centre activities include the following:

- Commencement procedure
  - Religious observances
  - Outdoor play
  - Short interval
  - Structured learning activities and creative expression related to themes (These include observation exploration listening and communication: creative expression through speech, art, modeling and role play, pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-number activities).
  - Meal time
  - Free play time associated with learning corners
  - Group play/individual play
  - Development of aesthetic sensitivity through music song and drama
  - Story telling
  - Activities related to environmental awareness, observation and exploration
  - Basic health habits and self -help activities
  - Cleanliness
  - Greetings at close of day
- (Please note that the list does not relate to a single day's activities or a particular order in which activities are conducted.)*

