

Early Childhood Development Forum International Symposium, Workshop and Awards 2024

A Report



Date: 20th April 2024

Venue: Salwan Public School, Sector 15, Gurugram

No. of Attendees: 102

ECDF -The Sphere of Influence –SEASON 1

ECDF planned the mega global virtual confluence of educators, education leaders, and young voices all together in one platform, in one day, and navigating various time zones on the 12th of Feb 2021. This event was a major success and was joined by 92+ speakers including young voices, and emerging leaders who are conscious and responsible global citizens.

ECDF-THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Apre-conference was held on 6th April 2024.

Takeaways from the session

- Emotional intelligence among teachers profoundly influences learning dynamics. Educators with high emotional intelligence can create supportive and nurturing environments, fostering trust and rapport with students.
- Initiatives that integrate play-based learning, promoting holistic development and deeper engagement were shared.
- Insights into storytelling as a tool that enhances language skills stimulates imagination, and cultivates empathy, laying a strong foundation for literacy were shared.
- Transition is viewed as a process rather than an event, allowing children to adapt

gradually, reducing anxiety, and promoting continuity in learning.

- It is important to nurture children's resilience in socio-emotional settings through supportive relationships, opportunities for self-expression, and the cultivation of coping strategies.
- Utilising creativity in teaching fosters innovation, problem-solving skills, and self-expression, empowering students to explore their unique abilities and interests.
- Game-based learning in early childhood can be a powerful educational tool that promotes active engagement, personalised learning, and overall development in young children.
- Early childhood is a critical period for brain development, the brain naturally learns and develops through activities providing hands-on, experiential learning opportunities, incorporating multi-sensory activities, and promoting active engagement.
- Fostering a growth mindset in early childhood is crucial as it empowers children to embrace challenges, develop resilience, love for learning, and believe in their capacity to learn and grow throughout their lives.
- By integrating various subjects, skills, and activities, children are able to make meaningful connections, deepen their

understanding, and apply their knowledge in real-world contexts.

Holistic Approach to Early Childhood Education & Foundational Learning

The urgent need for a holistic approach to early childhood education and foundational learning, addressing critical questions and the current learning crisis in India was highlighted. Additionally, the changing global landscape and the necessity for adaptable classroom practices and curricula to meet the demands of the 21st century were emphasised. Key points include:

- Why the Holistic Approach? Addressing changing scenarios.
- Understanding Holistic Learning: Exploring its essence.
- Factors Influencing Learning: Identifying key influencers.
- Role of Brain Development: Understanding its significance.
- 21st Century Early Education: Adapting to new shifts.

Furthermore, the learning crisis in India was underscored, bringing attention to the challenges faced across different educational segments and the pressing need for change. Globally, the evolving landscape demands attention to:

- Socially diverse class compositions.
- Technology's transformative role.
- Prioritising the agency of the child.
- Shifting to discovery-based learning.
- Addressing health, nutrition, and care challenges.
- Navigating unpredictable future career paths.
- Recognising the emerging importance of parenting.

Raising Emotionally Intelligent Humans through a Peace Approach

Peace pedagogy highlights that emotionally intelligent humans are inherently peaceful,

emphasising empathy, positivity, curiosity, gratitude, resilience, and assertiveness. Early childhood is crucial for forming habits and emotional ties, making it prime for developing peace-building skills such as emotional regulation and critical thinking. Peace education fosters qualities such as empathy, responsibility, respect, and cooperation. Peace school design includes factors such as school climate, family involvement, and mindfulness practices. Early years educators play a vital role by staying mindful, promoting inclusivity, encouraging collaboration, and declaring classrooms as peace zones. Ultimately, fostering peaceful humans leads to an ecosystem that supports sustainable life and respects all beings.

Revising and Aligning Early Childhood Program Standards: Curriculum, Pedagogy, Innovation, Quality Assurance and Pay Structure

The panel session commenced with an elaborate focus on the standards of the learning journey that begins in early childhood. Innovation is the key to success and children are innovators and creators. Educators need to encourage and support innovative practices specifically in early childhood as children are by nature very curious, exploratory and creative.

- **How do we convert this creativity into innovation?**

The importance of the first five years of a child's life was emphasised, as this period is crucial in shaping adulthood and requires a much higher degree of deliberation, improved planning, and mindful execution. There is a need to ensure figuratively or physically that children should not feel caged and the first step towards innovation would be to allow the children, freedom to ask questions because only when children will start asking too many questions that will be the beginning of the innovation. Therefore, encouraging children to ask questions, nurturing curiosity, prodding children to ask questions and this requires provocation in a classroom. Educators need to design thinking

for the children, they need to be given problems to think about and find solutions for those problems. They should learn real-life skills that will lead to innovations, and discovering something new. When children will not be restricted, then innovation will take place. Patience is the key element for every teacher and all children should be dealt with patience.

- **How important and what infrastructure points do we need to look at when we're setting up classrooms?**

The need for attention and guidance for students sitting in the last rows was emphasised. The focus was on the need to prepare students for real-life scenarios, which requires well-equipped infrastructure in schools. The adoption of start-up programs in schools was emphasised to transform children into more practical and career-oriented individuals. The proposal included installing smashboards for students to channel their anger. It was envisioned that these small steps could bring significant changes, suggesting that schools should focus on this aspect. A culture change is needed to foster innovative thought processes.

- **How can we experiment within this established framework of curriculum to bring in innovative pedagogy so that the child can experiment, and explore rather than following the established path?**

Children should be encouraged to think and ask questions without restrictions. The limitless nature of early childhood education was highlighted, supported by several examples to establish this fact. The concept of the classroom has changed thereby letting the child do anything, anytime. There will be two mother teachers and an aaya in each classroom to take care of the children. The child is free to do anything during class hours, even if they want to sleep, they are free to do so. The scenario has changed. Every child is going to do something new and there lies creativity and innovation. Development of motor skills is highly recommended instead of learning only the

alphabet. As teachers, we need to trust the idea of "Learn, Re-learn, and Un-learn" and have a strong belief that learning is endless. We have to be faster, better, more alert and good in front of our children. So, it's the teacher who needs to do the homework every day and children should be without homework.

The parents are sending their children to school with different dreams and different expectations. Inclusiveness, linguistic diversity and accommodative schooling- all create multiple challenges but then there is a parents' vision and then there is a school design. In the early childhood years, the idea of skilled development should be initiated. Role play is a very effective way of teaching children about the character they are playing and also about real-life situations. So, the only way to teach people skills is through experiences. The International Early Years Curriculum (IEYC) emphasises experiential learning, and holistic development, providing a rich foundation for young learners' growth and success.

For better functioning and guiding children to the right path, parents or stakeholders should be attached to the system. Moreover, all play schools should have disciplined curricula, and teaching methods and should focus on proper implementation of NEP 2020 in their respective institutions. Proper training of the mentors is equally important, as understanding today's requirement.

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has started skill subjects now, which were existent in foreign countries long before. CBSE has come up with partnerships with various universities, running partnership programmes where one can collaborate with the dropouts and they can be taught bakery, hospitality, hotel management etc. There is flexibility even in the choice of subjects at Grade IX. Children should be helped with skill-based learning which would be helpful for their future. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is currently emphasising the change in the curriculum framework just like the prevailing

education system in foreign countries. State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) teaches more about the states, and where lies the difference between SCERT and NCERT. Learning history is important but learning through art-integrated projects makes the learning more fruitful and interesting. Books have changed following the new curriculum. It's a great initiative and by next year she hoped that all of us will experience good days, golden times for our upcoming generation.

In-House Questions

- **Our history is rich in lots of tactics and practices followed by many kings and leaders, so what government has thought about the same and how these can be incorporated in our children?**

The government has done a massive job which will eventually come to notice. Through the programme, Vidhyarthi Vighyan Manthan, children are made aware of Indian-origin scientists from their very childhood and also teaches the Indian knowledge system as a subject, which talks about history as well. Holistic progress report talks a lot about ethics, culture and everything. Every teacher should monitor the child daily, without considering marks or other judgment criteria.

The panel discussion ended by sensitising our responsibility towards the children. The moderator concluded that it is not an individual role but a social duty to provide a healthy and suitable environment for the children. It is not the classroom or the teacher but the entire network of how a school is built, what are the determined policies, how are the standards of procedures laid down, what is the curriculum and how is the curriculum used to bring exploratory pedagogy, how are teachers trained, all these go into making a successful environment for the children.

Synergy of Mind and Machine: Exploring AI alongside Heartfulness Practices

The session highlighted the amalgamation of AI and Heartfulness. The main purpose of the

workshop was to point out the techniques for transforming unproductive screen time into something productive and how AI is having a greater impact on early childhood education. The age group we are dealing with cannot directly cope with AI, but it can be Copilot for parents and teachers. Certain AI tools that can prove to be a buddy to a parent and a teacher were shared.

Nowadays in some schools, robots are used to interact with children. Alexa is one of the most popular AI tools to teach multiple things to children at home. Various apps for the children and their uses include-

- Reflect (Children can share emojis about how they are feeling at home with their teacher)
- Scrobly (Children can doodles with AI animation)
- Breathe, Think and Do and Mindful Powers

The utility of AI in early childhood can be summarised as follows-

- Story Podcast
- AI Co-pilot for creating topics for storytelling for young learners
- Insights on LMS
- AI-Powered Reading Progress Report
- AI Insights in managing 360-degree student evaluation and feedback record

In addition to the positive aspects, the potential downsides of AI were also elaborated. Therefore, it's inevitable to engage in heartfulness practices which will de-clutter negativity, develop resilience and help to build strong, healthy relationships in children.

BRAINWONDERS

The esteemed founder of Brainwonders was present to share his vision and determination to contribute to the Indian education sector and help children in early childhood. Brainwonders specialises in the Dermatoglyphics Multiple Intelligence Test (DMIT), a profiling tool that helps parents understand their child's inborn intelligence, talents, and optimal learning

methods. The mission of Brainwonders is to make DMIT accessible to the remotest parts of the world, enabling children to realise their full potential. He elaborated on the prodigy, genetic intelligence and learning style of the child. If learning style matches with the teaching style then it will make an enormous difference. If it's possible to get the genetic propensity of the child right at the moment, then he/she can be a prodigy at 14 years/16 years. He viewed that the onus lies with the educators and the parents to understand the intelligence of the child. According to Mr. Naidu, this programme is beneficial for both parents and schools with a common motif i.e. to help the students have successful educational and career journeys.

From Fixed to Flourishing: Embracing Growth Mindset

The session began with a quote by the famous author Carol Dweck's vision of success and mindset from her book "Mindset: The New Psychology of Success". Mindset plays a vital role in making us sense the world and how we make sense of ourselves. Attitude and belief are the two pillars that make up our mindset. Both are interconnected. If we want to gain success in our life then we need to change our mindset. The different mindsets were explained along with the theory of mind, wherein the emphasis was laid on the importance of a growth mindset. Growth Minded People foster a positive mindset and view failure as a welcome challenge so to achieve greater success later. Therefore, the listeners were advised to change their mindsets with proper training and development for a better life and successful future.

Assessing Early Childhood Development Using AI

The Founder and CEO of Boostmychild provided an overview of the application designed to assist parents and educators in enhancing the upbringing of children during their foundational years. Boostmychild is India's fastest-growing online parenting & child development App and platform for early

childhood (Ages 0 to 6 years). It is developed by a team of leading child psychologists, paediatricians and early childhood educators with decades of experience.

- Boostmychild has been conceptualised to promote natural abilities with an all-rounded development approach in next-generation children.
- Boostmychild App helps parents raise their children better in the foundation years. It generates a child's development profile in 6 categories and 20-plus development areas.
- Based on this profile, customised recommendations are pushed weekly throughout the year. They consist of parenting guidelines, parent-child activities, worksheets, suitable hobby areas, along an optional activity toolkit. These recommendations help make the child's foundation stronger and development all-rounded. A progress tracker helps in mapping the child's development over the years.
- Boostmychild App guides parents to discover and encourage their child's skills early, monitor and encourage their child's development, and help them become better parents.

Creating a Supporting Eco-system and an Enabling Learning Environment in Early Childhood Development

The panel discussions encompassed a sophisticated discourse on pedagogical approaches that have positively impacted the development of pre-schoolers, emphasising the significance of inclusion given the diversity of learners, and advocating for the integration of design thinking models into educational practices.

Following Panel Session 2, educationists were presented with awards and certificates in recognition of their noteworthy contributions across various domains.

Building Strong Foundations: How Meditation and Heartfulness Empower Young Minds

Mrs. Sunita Madan

The pre-primary years are an exciting time of exploration for young children. They are always encountering new things, figuring out how to interact with others, and in the process, the groundwork for their emotional growth is laid out. As parents, we aim to give them the skills they need to handle these experiences well. That's where meditation and heartfulness techniques come in— these are like helpful friends, supporting emotional balance, self-awareness, and a healthy self-concept, setting the stage for their future achievements.

The Stress Trap: Breaking Down Negative Patterns

In pre-primary classrooms, which should ideally be comforting environments, stress can sometimes seep in. Certain ideas, such as seeing mistakes as huge problems and believing that academic success determines our worth, might add to this pressure. Parents might feel the need to push their kids to be perfect, and teachers might struggle to meet everyone's expectations. This can make children feel worried about doing things wrong and apprehensive about not being good enough.

Meditation and Heartfulness: Cultivating Composure and Self-Discovery

Fortunately, meditation and heartfulness techniques offer a pathway to dismantling these negative patterns. These practices, adapted for young children, introduce them to basic skills like focusing their attention and identifying their emotions.

- Simple breathing exercises help children calm down when overwhelmed, while guided visualisations foster a sense of peace and well-being.

- Techniques like labelling their emotions ("I feel frustrated") empower them to understand and articulate their inner world effectively.



Breathe In, Learn Out: Cultivating Calm Minds in Our Classroom

Recognising the profound impact of these practices, Salwan Schools have taken a pioneering approach by training their teachers to become heartful educators. These educators empower children to cultivate:

- **Relaxation:** Simple exercises and breathing techniques help to release tension and become calm.
- **Meditation:** Practices like focusing on breathing or a mantra promote inner peace and focus.
- **Mental Cleaning:** This technique encourages letting go of negative thoughts and emotions, and building resilience.
- **Inner Connect:** By connecting with the heart's qualities, children develop empathy and compassion for themselves and others.

The Ripple Effect: Building Self-Efficacy Through Self-Awareness

The Ripple Effect: Building Self-Efficacy

Through Self-Awareness

By learning these techniques, children embark on a journey of self-discovery. They develop an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, fostering a realistic and healthy self-concept.

They begin to see failures not as roadblocks, but as teachable moments on the path to success. This newfound self-efficacy empowers them to:

- **Approach challenges with a growth mindset**, seeking solutions and learning from mistakes.
- **Embrace feedback as an opportunity for improvement** rather than a measure of self-worth.
- **Develop resilience**, bouncing back from setbacks with renewed determination.
- **Navigate social interactions** with empathy and understanding, building strong relationships.

A Foundation for Lifelong Success

The skills developed through meditation and heartfulness practices in pre-primary years extend far beyond the classroom. They become the building blocks of a healthy emotional foundation, allowing children to navigate future challenges with confidence and emotional agility.

Witnessing their child's emotional well-being and burgeoning self-awareness can empower parents to adopt similar techniques in their own lives, creating a harmonious and supportive environment for the whole family.



Simple Heartful Practices: Preparation for Life

A Space for Inner Exploration: Cultivating the Seed of Spirituality

While meditation and heartfulness practices focus on self-awareness and emotional regulation, spirituality goes deeper. It fosters a sense of connection to something larger than oneself, a feeling of belongingness in the universe.

Create a designated quiet space within the school premises – a haven for mindfulness and reflection. The space, adorned with calming visuals and soft lighting, could be used for individual practice or group activities led by heartful educators. Here, students could be engaged in simple yoga postures, chanting calming mantras, or participating in guided meditations focusing on gratitude and compassion.



Yoga and Meditation Sessions

Nurturing Children: Impact of Reflection and Growth

A designated space for reflection can blossom into a haven for children. Here, they can unwind, experience peace, establish an inner connection, and a sense of wonder about the world. This space becomes a springboard for essential development:

- **Purpose & Belongingness:** Exploring their connection to something larger fosters a comforting sense of belongingness,

especially during challenges.

- **Emotional Well-being:** Mindfulness practices equip them with tools to manage stress, anxiety, and depression.
- **Moral Development:** Exposure to core values like compassion builds a strong moral compass.



Mindful Meadows:

a serene and nurturing environment where children can engage in reflection and introspection

Empowering Young Minds

A strong education is about more than just memorising facts and figures. It is important to recognise the vital role that socio-emotional well-being and spiritual connection play in shaping young minds. That's why we've been actively taking steps to create well-rounded

individuals who are prepared to thrive in all aspects of life.

Our goal is to empower our children so that they may navigate the world with confidence, empathy, and a strong sense of purpose. This approach will pave the way for a future generation of emotionally intelligent and resilient individuals, empowered to reach their full potential.

We hope that association with Heartfulness techniques will pave the way for the development of young learners in years to come. Join us as we nurture the whole child, not just the mind.



Heartfulness:

Nurturing Young Minds, Blooming Whole

Mrs. Sunita Madan

Principal

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Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh