

CUET · HOME SCIENCE · CLASS XII · CODE 315

# Early Childhood Care and Education

CUET unit: Human Development and Family Studies — Career options after +2 (Early Childhood Care and Education)

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## Snapshot

- This is the first career-chapter in Unit III (Human Development and Family Studies); it introduces Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as one of four HDFFS career streams listed in the Unit III opener (the others being Guidance & Counselling, Special Education, and Management of Support Services).
- Defines key terms (early childhood, infancy, toddler, preschooler, crèche, day care, ECCE) and the developmental rationale for institutional substitute care.
- Anchors ECCE in two NCERT documents: the **NCF (2005)** and the **NCF (2005) Position Paper on Early Childhood Education** — both source the objectives and guiding principles of ECCE.
- Mentions key thinkers (Maria Montessori, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky) and the Government of India's ECCE delivery channel — **anganwadis** under the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**.
- Outlines skills, training pathways (UG degree in child/human development, one-year diploma, Open University, Nursery Teacher Training), scope of work, and career destinations.

## Detailed Notes

### 2.1 Core concepts

- **Significance of ECCE.** Infants begin learning very early, develop attachment to family (especially mother/primary caregiver), and around 8–12 months show fear of unknown people — evidence that they recognise familiar faces (NCERT §Significance, p. 102–103).
- **Why substitute care is increasingly needed.** Traditionally another female of the household cared for the child (especially in joint families); with mothers working outside the home, there is a growing need for institutional child care in the form of informal family care settings or crèches (NCERT §Significance, p. 103).
- **Around age three, activities expand.** The child becomes capable of engaging actively with the environment; the best learning environment is safe, secure, loving, with a variety of people, play materials and a caring adult (mother, grandparent, preschool teacher or sibling) (NCERT §Significance, p. 104).

- **Forcing formal-school discipline too early is harmful.** A child made to sit in one place like in a formal school will lose curiosity and become anxious and insecure (NCERT §Significance, p. 104).
- **Preschool benefits.** Child-centred approach and play-way method suit young children; preschool prepares the child for formal schooling and is especially beneficial for children from difficult circumstances or homes lacking stimulation (NCERT §Significance, p. 104).
- **Older siblings benefit too.** In communities with fewer resources, older school-going children are often given the responsibility of caring for the younger child; institutional care releases the older child to attend school (NCERT §Significance, p. 105).
- **NCF (2005) Position Paper objectives of ECCE.** (i) Holistic development of the child to realise his/her potential, (ii) Preparation for school, (iii) Providing support services for women and children (NCERT §Significance, p. 105).
- **Early childhood — age band.** Birth to 8 years; divided into two sub-stages — birth to 3 years, and 3–8 years (NCERT §Basic concepts, p. 105).
- **Infancy.** Birth to one year (some experts extend to two years); a period of intense dependence on adults (NCERT §Basic concepts, p. 105).
- **Crèche vs Day care.** **Crèche** = institutional setting specifically designed for the care of infants and young children in the absence of home care. **Day care** = care of children in the preschool years and may also include infants and preschoolers in absence of a primary caregiver at home; both are usually all-day programmes (NCERT §Basic concepts, p. 105–106).
- **Toddler vs Preschooler.** A child between two and three years is called a **toddler** (from the "jumpy walk" the young child has at this age). A **preschool child** is so called because he/she is ready for experiences beyond the family — extra-familial (NCERT §Basic concepts, p. 106).
- **Montessori schools.** Pre-schools for young children are often called Montessori schools, based on the principles of early childhood education outlined by the educationist **Maria Montessori** (NCERT §Basic concepts, p. 106).
- **Government delivery channel.** The Government of India offers pre-school education through **anganwadis** under the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** — in urban and rural areas (NCERT §Basic concepts, p. 106).
- **Jean Piaget.** A developmental psychologist who spent his life trying to comprehend and explain that young children have different ways of understanding the world and need a supportive environment to explore phenomena in their own ways (NCERT §Basic concepts, p. 106).
- **Cultural context.** Any ECCE institution must respect the cultural context within which it operates and work along with, not in opposition to, the family (NCERT §Basic concepts, p. 106).

- **NCF (2005) guiding principles of ECCE (10 listed).** Play as the basis for learning; Art as the basis of education; Recognition of the special features of children's thinking; Primacy of experience over expertise (experiential learning); Experience of familiarity and challenge in everyday routines; Mix of formal and informal interactions; Blend of textual and cultural sources; Use of local materials, arts and knowledge; Developmentally appropriate practices, flexibility and plurality; Health, well-being and healthy habits (NCERT §Significance/principles, p. 107).
- **Preparing for a career — why even parents benefit.** Parents benefit from knowing how and why children behave as they do, expected differences between same-age children, and individual differences — to avoid competitive comparisons (NCERT §Preparing for a Career, p. 108).
- **Teacher's focus shifts in preschool years.** Less supervision of physical care (the child can now control bowel/bladder, speak, eat independently); more focus on stimulating opportunities — physical, language, social-emotional and creative experiences (NCERT §Preparing for a Career, p. 109).
- **Lev Vygotsky.** Psychologist-educator who outlined the great need that children have for a concerned, caring and knowledgeable adult; tasks should be neither too easy nor too difficult — otherwise the child loses interest or motivation (NCERT §Preparing for a Career, p. 109).
- **Skills required (NCERT list).** Interest in children and their development; knowledge about their needs and capabilities; capacity and motivation for interaction; skills for creative and interesting activities; enthusiasm for story-telling, exploration, nature and social interaction; willingness to answer children's queries; capacity for understanding individual differences; be energetic for considerably long periods of physical activity (NCERT §Preparing for a Career, p. 109–110).
- **Training routes.** UG degree in a subject that includes child/human development or child psychology; one-year diploma; Open University courses; **Nursery Teacher Training** (NCERT §Preparing for a Career, p. 110).
- **Additional competencies.** Administrative/management skills for record-keeping, accounting, report-writing; arts repertoire — story-telling, dance, music, voice modulation, organising playful indoor/outdoor activities; adaptive and flexible (children have short attention spans, so lesson plans must be quickly changed) (NCERT §Preparing for a Career, p. 110).
- **Scope and careers.** Teacher in nursery schools, caregiver in day care/crèches, team members for child programmes, professionals in Govt/NGO campaigns, entrepreneur in child-related activities (camps, edu-picnics, activity clubs, preschool centres), coordinator or trainer of teachers, higher studies (PG diploma/degree in early childhood education and doctoral research) (NCERT §Scope, p. 110–111).
- **Services in the field.** Crèches, Day care centres, Nursery schools, NGOs, ICDS, Training institutes (NCERT §Scope, p. 111).

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is the first of four career-stream chapters in HEFS Class XII Unit III (Human Development and Family Studies). India is the world's largest ECCE-population country: roughly 158 million children aged 0-6 years, served principally by 13.99 lakh Anganwadi centres under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS, launched 2 October 1975, the world's largest community-based child development programme). The 2013 National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education and the National ECCE Curriculum Framework provide the policy backbone; the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has made ECCE a foundational stage of the 5+3+3+4 schooling structure.

The developmental framing is age-graded. Infancy (0-1 year, sometimes extended to 2 years) is the period of intense dependence — feeding, sleeping, attachment formation, sensorimotor exploration. Around 8-12 months infants show 'stranger anxiety' — fear of unknown people — a developmental milestone signalling secure attachment to primary caregivers. Toddlerhood (2-3 years) is named for the 'jumpy walk'; the period is marked by autonomy struggles, language acquisition (vocabulary explodes from ~50 to ~1000 words), and beginnings of pretend play. The preschool stage (3-6 years) is when extra-familial experiences become central — interaction with peers, structured play, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy through play-way method.

The 'why now' for ECCE in India has three intertwined reasons: (a) demographic — joint families have declined, women's labour-force participation is rising (especially in urban areas), and substitute care is essential; (b) developmental — research consistently shows that the first 8 years (and especially the first 1,000 days from conception) lay foundations for brain architecture, language, emotional regulation and lifelong learning; (c) equity — preschool benefits are largest for children from socio-economically disadvantaged homes, where home stimulation may be limited.

Three foundational thinkers are central here. Maria Montessori (Italian physician-educator, 1870-1952) — pioneer of the Montessori method emphasising self-directed activity, mixed-age classrooms, prepared environment, and sensorial materials. Jean Piaget (Swiss psychologist, 1896-1980) — cognitive-development stages (sensorimotor 0-2, preoperational 2-7, concrete operational 7-11, formal operational 11+); demonstrated that children construct knowledge through active exploration. Lev Vygotsky (Russian psychologist, 1896-1934) — social-cultural theory; Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD: tasks neither too easy nor too difficult); scaffolding by a 'more knowledgeable other'; central role of language and culture in cognition.

NCF 2005 Position Paper on Early Childhood Education lists three objectives — holistic development, school readiness, and support services for women and children — and ten guiding principles: Play as the basis for learning; Art as the basis of education; Recognition of special features of children's thinking; Primacy of experience over expertise; Familiarity and challenge in everyday routines; Mix of formal and informal interactions; Blend of textual and cultural sources; Use of local materials, arts and knowledge; Developmentally appropriate practices, flexibility and plurality; Health, well-

being and healthy habits. These ten principles are CUET-perennial and best memorised as a numbered list.

Crèche vs Day Care: crèche is specifically for infants and very young children (typically 0-3 years) in the absence of home care; day care covers preschool-age children and may include younger children when the primary caregiver is unavailable. Both are typically all-day programmes (8-10 hours). The Maternity Benefit Amendment Act 2017 mandates crèche facilities in establishments with 50+ employees — a labour-law point that often appears in CUET.

Indian ECCE institutional landscape: Anganwadi centres (ICDS) — most extensive, government-run, free for under-6 children and pregnant/lactating women; provides supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-ups, preschool education, growth monitoring. Anganwadi worker (AWW) and Anganwadi helper (AWH) are key frontline staff. Pre-primary classes in government schools (KG / nursery). Private nursery schools, Montessori schools, kindergartens, and play schools. NGO-run ECCE centres (Mobile Crèches, Pratham, Akshara Foundation, Save the Children, CARE India).

Training and career pathway: B.Sc./B.A. with Human Development / Child Development / Child Psychology specialisation → Nursery Teacher Training (NTT) certificate/diploma → M.Sc./M.A. in Child Development or Early Childhood Education → Ph.D. for academic careers. Career destinations: ECCE teacher, Anganwadi worker / supervisor / CDPO (after CDPO exam), day-care centre administrator, NGO programme officer, child-life specialist in paediatric hospitals, ECCE curriculum developer, entrepreneur (preschool franchise — Eurokids, Kidzee, Shemrock, Bachpan), trainer of teachers, researcher.

## 2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education — the field concerned with the care, learning and holistic development of children in early childhood	105 (Basic concepts)
Early childhood	Phase of life from birth till 8 years; divided into birth–3 years and 3–8 years	105
Infancy	Period between birth and one year (some experts: till two years); period of intense dependence on adults	105
Toddler	A child between two and three years; the term derives from the jumpy walk that the young child has at this age	106
Preschool child	A child ready for experiences beyond the family (extra-familial)	106
Crèche	An institutional setting specifically designed for the care of infants and young children in the absence of home care	105–106
Day care		105–106

Term	Definition	Page
	Care of children in the preschool years; may include infants and preschoolers in absence of a primary caregiver at home	
Montessori school	Pre-school for young children based on principles of early childhood education outlined by Maria Montessori	106
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services — Government of India scheme delivering pre-school education through anganwadis	106

### 2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Photographs:** "Children at play" and "Children enjoy painting" illustrating play- and art-based learning (NCERT p. 107) — reinforce "Play as the basis for learning" and "Art as the basis of education" principles.
- **"Children exploring nature"** photograph (NCERT p. 108) — anchors the principle that environmental exploration is central to ECCE.
- **CAREERS box** (NCERT p. 111) — lists six career destinations (nursery teacher, day-care/crèche caregiver, team member, Govt/NGO professional, entrepreneur, higher studies/research).
- **KEY TERMS strip** (NCERT p. 112): ECCE, Child care, Preschool education, Caregiver, Day Care, Crèche — the six items examiners frequently target.

### 2.5 Key data / child-development table (Indian context)

Item	Value / fact	Source
Early childhood age band	Birth–8 years	NCERT p. 105
Sub-stages of early childhood	Birth–3; 3–8	NCERT p. 105
Infancy	Birth–1 year (extends to 2)	NCERT p. 105
Toddlerhood	2–3 years (jumpy walk)	NCERT p. 106
Stranger anxiety appears	8–12 months	NCERT p. 102
ECCE objectives (NCF 2005)	Holistic development; School readiness; Support for women & children	NCERT p. 105
ECCE guiding principles (NCF 2005)	Ten	NCERT p. 107
Indian ECCE delivery scheme	ICDS (1975-onwards)	NCERT p. 106

Item	Value / fact	Source
ICDS delivery point	Anganwadi centre	NCERT p. 106
Number of Anganwadi centres (India)	~13.99 lakh	India context
ICDS launch date	2 October 1975	India context
NEP foundational stage age	3–8 years (NEP 2020)	India context
Maternity Benefit Amendment 2017 crèche threshold	≥50 employees	India context
Maria Montessori	Italian educationist; Montessori method	NCERT p. 106
Jean Piaget	Swiss developmental psychologist; cognitive stages	NCERT p. 106
Lev Vygotsky	Russian psychologist; ZPD, scaffolding	NCERT p. 109
Career qualifications	UG (child development); NTT diploma; PG	NCERT p. 110
ECCE services	Crèches; Day care; Nursery schools; NGOs; ICDS; Training institutes	NCERT p. 111
Indian women workforce participation (rural/urban)	~25%/~20% (India context, NSO 2022-23)	India context
Indian preschool franchise examples	EuroKids, Kidzee, Shemrock, Bachpan	India context

## 2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **Crèche vs Day care.** Crèche is specifically for infants/young children in absence of home care; day care is broader — preschool-age children plus possibly infants/preschoolers when primary caregiver is absent. NTA loves swapping these.
- **Early childhood age band.** Birth to **8 years** (not 6, not 5); infancy is birth to **1 year** (some extend to 2); toddler is **2–3 years**.
- **Authorship of ECCE principles.** The objectives and guiding principles of ECCE come from the **NCF (2005) Position Paper on Early Childhood Education** — not from Piaget, Montessori or Vygotsky personally.
- **Anganwadis run under ICDS, not under NCF.** NCF gives objectives/principles; ICDS is the delivery scheme.

- **Vygotsky vs Piaget.** Piaget = "young children have different ways of understanding the world." Vygotsky = "great need for a concerned, caring, knowledgeable adult" + tasks neither too easy nor too difficult. Do not flip them.
- **Maria Montessori** is an educationist (founder of the Montessori method), not a developmental psychologist.
- ECCE objectives are **three** in NCF 2005 — holistic development, school readiness, support services for women and children — not five.
- NCF 2005 lists **ten** guiding principles — students often try to memorise seven or twelve.
- Anganwadi worker (AWW) is paid 'honorarium' (not regular salary) — a labour-economics point sometimes tested.
- ICDS scheme started in 1975 — predates NCF 2005 by three decades.

## Practice MCQs

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## PYQ Alignment

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This chapter is a high-yield career-stream chapter and typically contributes around 10 MCQs in CUET 2023–25 papers — usually direct factual recall on ECCE definitions (early childhood age band, crèche vs day care, toddler), the NCF (2005) objectives/guiding principles, the ICDS-anganwadi linkage, and identifying thinkers (Montessori, Piaget, Vygotsky). Statement-based and match-the-following items on key terms and on skills/services in the field are also common.