

Playschools across India to be watched by government ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

New Delhi: Hitherto unregulated, mushrooming day care centres and playschools across India would now be watched over by the government to ensure they maintain certain standards.

The women and child development ministry has finalised a draft Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy' which will not only make registration and accreditation of such centres mandatory but for the first time also spell out the kind of curriculum and learning tools children are provided with.

As of now, there is no regulation in place to monitor the quality of service being provided at such facilities that have mushroomed across India.

A senior official of the women and child development ministry told IANS that standards will also be laid down for the kind of play material, play space and furniture to be provided at such facilities. The policy will also cover anganwadi centres.

The policy will specify the minimum qualification required for employment at such centres. The standards would be valid across public and private service providers, the official said.

This is for the first time the government would be addressing the educational and nurturing needs of children up to the age of six. India has 158.7 million children in this category, as per the 2011 Census.

According to the draft policy, violation of norms would invite stringent penalties.

"The draft policy has been finalised and would be presented before the union cabinet for its approval soon," the official said.

He said that to ensure proper implementation, a National ECCE Council with experts will be formed, with corresponding councils at the state level and later the district level.

The council will guide and oversee the implementation of the policy as well as keep ECCE programmes consistent with the national policy.

A developmentally appropriate national curriculum framework for the ECCE will be developed. It will promote play-based, experiential and child-friendly provision for early education and all-round development, the draft says.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) which came into effect April 1, 2010, has also addressed early childhood care.

Section 11 of the Act states that to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years, the appropriate government may make necessary arrangement for providing free pre-school education.

The draft if the policy states that it seeks to universalize the provision of ECCE for all children mainly through the Integrated Child Development Scheme in the public sector and through other services across sectors and providers regulated by quality standards.

Special plans will be developed to reach the most marginalized groups which include children located in isolated and remote hamlets, tribal and dalit hamlets and slums.

Children belonging to seasonal migrants, nomadic populations, construction and roadside workers will also be included.

The implementation of the new policy will be reviewed every five years. Periodic appraisals will also be made to assess the progress of implementation and make midcourse corrections if and when required.

-reprinted from Parda Phash

Region: Asia ^[2]

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