



11137CH13

# 13

## CARE AND EDUCATION

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter the learner is able to–

- state the significance of the periods of infancy and early childhood from the perspective of development.
- explain the need for providing ‘care’ and ‘education’ and the meaning of these terms with reference to early childhood and middle childhood years.
- discuss the nature of education in the early childhood and middle childhood years.
- analyse the factors that interfere in universalising elementary education.

### 13.1 INTRODUCTION

All living species take care of their young ones. But did you know that the human infant has the longest period of dependency on adults? There is a correlation between the period of dependency on adult care and the size and complexity of the brain. The human brain is the most complex and represents the highest end of the spectrum of biological evolution.

In this section we will study why care and education are important during childhood years. We will also reflect upon what is meant by ‘care’ and ‘education.’ You know that the period of childhood is divided into infancy (birth–2 years), ‘early childhood years’ (2–6) years and ‘middle childhood years’ (7–11) years. For the purpose of discussion in this section, we shall consider the period of infancy and early childhood together. The discussion on care and education in middle childhood years is given separately.

## 13.2 INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

### The significance of the first six years

On the basis of research evidence from across the world, we now know that the periods of infancy and early childhood are in many ways the most significant and critical in the life of an individual. Would you like to reflect why this is so, before you read further? Note your comments in the box and compare them with the discussion which follows.

**Box for your comments**

**Firstly**, the rate of development in all areas is the most rapid during these years.

List the various areas of development which you have read about earlier.

You know that the brain controls development in all areas and the rate of brain growth is the fastest in the first two years of life. Research on brain development has shown that while we have all the cells that our brain will ever have at the time of birth, the synaptic connections between these brain cells form rapidly during the first two years. It has been found in research, that the more the synaptic connections, the better the functioning of the individual. Because of the rapid rate of brain development the first six years of life are critical for various areas of development. By 'critical' period we mean a time period during which development in a specific area is particularly sensitive to favourable and unfavourable experiences. Unfavourable experiences such as lack of adequate food, unhealthy living conditions, lack of proper health care, illness, lack of love and nurturance, lack of interaction with adults and stimulating experiences can hinder development to a considerable extent.

On the other hand, favourable experiences can foster and enhance development. Can you state what we mean by favourable experiences? An environment where the child gets favourable experiences is also

called a stimulating, optimal or an enriching environment, while an environment where the child has unfavourable experiences would be called a deprived environment or one that creates difficult circumstances. The impact of unfavourable experiences during the critical period can be irreversible at times. In other words, the damage to the child's development cannot be undone even if positive experiences occur at a later period. Because of this vulnerability to deprivation, it is important that the child has a minimum of harmful experiences. The early childhood years have, therefore, been called critical periods in development. Figure 1 shows the development of synaptic connections between brain cells when the environment is enriching and when there is deprivation. Figure 2 shows critical periods for some aspects of brain development and function. For example, from the figure it is clear that while the development of binocular vision, emotional control and language continue till five years of age, the critical period lies between birth and two years of age.

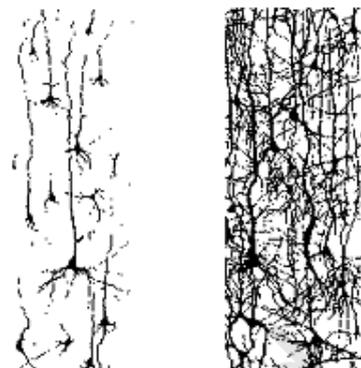
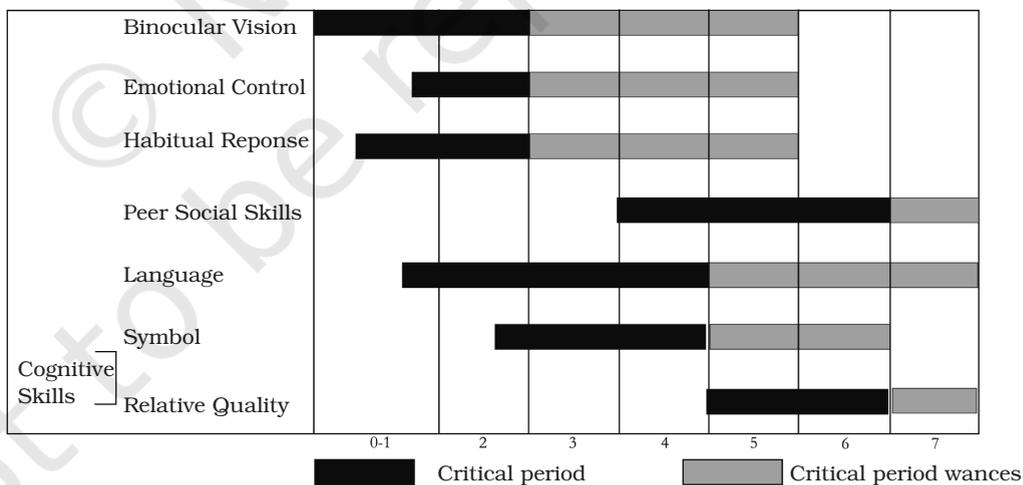


FIGURE 1: DEVELOPMENT OF SYNAPTIC CONNECTIONS BETWEEN BRAIN CELLS

(Source: <http://www.brainwave.org.nz/stages-of-brain-development-from-before-birth-to-18/>)

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(Source: *Reaching Out to the Child*, HDS, World Bank, 2004).

While development and learning continue throughout life, never again does a person acquire such a diverse range of abilities, skills and competencies in such a short period as one does during the first six years of life. You have to only think of a newborn, who is dependent on adults for survival, grow into an active and curious six-year-old capable of looking

after many of her/his needs herself/himself, communicating with others and developing relationships, to realise how true this is. Also, during this period the child acquires many competencies which, if missed, may not be acquired later, or if at all, with difficulty.

Secondly, while the early childhood years are sensitive periods in development wherein harmful experiences can have a lasting impact, these years are also a period of tremendous resilience. Thus, if the child has had unfavourable experiences in the early years and subsequently has favourable experiences, she can recover from the effects of negative experiences to a lesser or greater degree, though with some difficulty. Let us take the example of learning to speak, to understand this. The child utters the first word around the first birthday but does that mean language development starts from one year of age? No, development of language starts from the day the child is born as the child hears others speak and tries to make sense of all the sounds she hears. Around nine months of age, the child makes repetitive sounds called babbling. You may have heard infants make sounds like *bababa*, *mamama*. This is called babbling and this is followed by the utterance of the first word. It has been seen that children who cannot hear begin to babble at the same time as the children who can hear, but then the amount of babbling decreases and there is a delay in speaking. This is because they cannot hear language being spoken – neither their own babbling nor the speech of others. If the lack of hearing is not detected and the child is not provided with hearing aids then the child will not learn to speak. If hearing aids are provided later, then much more effort is needed to help the child to speak than if the hearing aids had been provided earlier. Thus the absence of feedback of language sounds demonstrates how critical this experience is to the development of speech in children.

Thirdly, the experiences of the few years of life influence and shape later behaviour to a large extent. Many of our attitudes, ways of thinking and behaviour can be related to experiences during the earliest years of life.

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## Meaning of care and education

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What activities come to your mind when you think of care and education for a child below 6 years of age? Note your comments in the box below before you read further.

**Box for your comments**

What do we mean by education? Typically, we think of education as studying in school. But then does that mean that when we stop going to school or college, we stop getting educated or that before the child joins school there is no education? This is not so. Education is not merely formal learning in institutions but begins from the earliest years of the child at home and continues throughout life. It is just that the nature of education, and where we acquire it, changes from one stage of our development to the next.

We have explained the meaning of care and education in terms of three basic needs of the child which must be met for optimal development, as discussed in the following section.

- (i) **Need for physical care:** The need for physical care is apparent and obvious to most of us. The infant and the preschooler needs protection, food and health care in order to survive, grow and develop – this is an essential pre-requisite for development. It is equally important to meet the child's needs for stimulation and nurturance. When the child has a disability, such as when the child is unable to see or hear or walk or when her/his cognitive functioning is lower compared to other children of her/his age, then the child's needs for care and stimulation have to be met in context of the disability. Thus, over and above the physical care that needs to be provided to any child, the family will have to provide for needs that emerge from the specific conditions created by the disability. To give an example, most sighted persons learn about objects and people by seeing them – and this happens so spontaneously that we are not even aware of it. But when the child has difficulty in seeing, then the family members will need to make deliberate efforts to help the child learn by using her/his sense of touch, hearing, smell and taste. Thus how the child's need for stimulation gets fulfilled is influenced by her/his inability to see. Let us understand these needs in detail.
- (ii) **Need for stimulation:** Children are curious from the earliest days of their life and are eager to interact with and make meaning of the events that are happening around them. They enjoy exploring and finding out things. This is the way they learn and at no other stage in life is the urge for exploration so strong as it is in the early years. When we play, sing and talk to the infant, we stimulate her to think, reason and understand the world around her.

**Stimulation** thus means providing the child with a variety of experiences that are meaningful for her and are in accordance with her maturational status. Through such experiences the child learns about the things and people around and makes meaning of experiences. In this way by active exploration of objects and active participation in events around the child makes sense of the world and constructs her/his understanding. Exploration and discovering things for oneself is a

pre-requisite for optimal cognitive development. The word 'constructs' means that the child creates her/his own understanding by active participation; it is not something that can be 'taught' to them by someone else while the child is passive. Of course, what the child finds meaningful will change as she/he grows from one stage to the next. Also, the child needs the adults for helping in understanding experiences and to introduce her/him to new and challenging experiences according to the current level of development.

### ACTIVITY 1

In the above passage we have introduced certain concepts and used certain terms which you will understand fully only when you observe children for yourself. Therefore as part of Activity 1 carry out three such tasks that help you understand the concepts you are reading about.

- (a) As said earlier children enjoy exploring and discovering, and in this way they learn about things. Observe a child between one and six years of age involved in any activity of her/his choice. What do you think the child is learning from this activity? In which area is development being fostered through this activity? Discuss your observations and findings with the teacher and other students in the class.
  - (b) Observe two children – one aged 2 years and the other aged 5 years, engaged in doing something. Do you think that they found the activity meaningful? Was there any difference in the two activities in terms of their difficulty level or complexity? Do you think the 2-year-old child would have enjoyed the activity being done by the 5-year-old and vice versa? Would she/he have found the activity meaningful? Why do you think so?
  - (c) Observe a 6-year-old child involved in an activity with an adult – father, mother or any other adult. Describe the activity that the child was involved in and explain in what way did the adult help the child to understand her/his experiences and introduce her/him to new experiences
- (iii) **Need for nurturance:** Love and nurturance are the foundation of all development. Development is not a result of the mechanical act of feeding the child, taking care of health needs and providing stimulation and learning experiences. If the child's needs for affection and love are not met, if the child does not develop warm, trusting and loving relationships with the adults around she/he will not feel emotionally secure, may have low confidence and self-esteem, and this can hinder development in all areas. You have read in the chapter on self that when the infant finds consistency in care and affection in the first year

of life, she/he develops a feeling of trust. It has been seen that when the child feels secure and has a trusting relationship with caregivers, she/he explores more and, therefore, learns more. When the child does not have a feeling of trust she/he is apprehensive of new situations and is unwilling to explore and clings excessively to the caregivers. This comes in the way of the child's learning. Similarly, the child needs to develop feelings of autonomy, initiative and industriousness. During the early and middle childhood years, as has been explained in the chapter on self, these are necessary for the development of a positive self-concept.

## ACTIVITY 2

We often underestimate the role of emotions in learning. Reflect on your experiences and think of a situation where your learning was influenced by your emotional state, like fear or embarrassment, rather than the complexity of the task as such. This will help you to understand the importance of love and nurturance in learning of the child.

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- (iv) **Meeting the needs through early childhood care and education:** We have spoken of these needs separately for the purpose of discussion. But it is important to understand that all these needs of the child have to be met simultaneously for optimal development. Can you say why this should be so? This is because development across areas is highly inter-related, particularly in the early childhood years. In other words, development in one area influences and is influenced by developments in all other areas. The child grows as a whole person — deprivation with respect to any one aspect of development influences others. The formation of synaptic connections, which were described earlier in the chapter, is dependent on receiving adequate nutrition, being free from serious and chronic illness, and engaging in stimulating learning experiences in an emotionally secure environment.

Because of the highly inter-connected nature of physical, cognitive, language and socio-emotional development in the early years, we speak of care and education together as 'early childhood care and education' (ECCE). ECCE refers to the totality of the inputs with respect to physical care, stimulation and nurturance that must be provided to the child. Education in the first 6 years of life is not conceived of in terms of subject areas that we are so familiar within our school life. Rather, it means experiences that help the child develop in physical-motor, socio-emotional, cognitive and language domains. We will discuss the nature of ECCE experiences a little later in the chapter. Let us first reflect upon who provides ECCE to the child.

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## Who provides ECCE?

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ECCE is provided in the country by the government, private institutions and the voluntary sector (NGOs). The services are provided through crèches and preschool centres which are known by various names such as nursery schools, kindergartens, play schools anganwadis and balwadis. The distinction is that crèches provide ECCE to children from birth to 3 years while preschool centres cater to children in the age group 3–5+ years.

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## Why provide ECCE services?

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There are many reasons why we need services to take care of children's growth and development.

**Firstly**, in our country all children do not grow up in an optimal environment. Many children live in conditions of poverty where their basic needs of food, health and hygiene are not met. In such a situation, ECCE services can help to meet the basic health and nutrition needs of children, provide early stimulation to the children in the age group 0–3 years, and additionally, impart preschool education to children in the age group 3–6 years.

A **second** reason for providing ECCE services is that a large number of women across all socio-economic strata work outside the home to earn a livelihood. So the family is not physically available in many homes to take care of the child. Of course, you may say that other options are available to the family such as

- leaving the child with a family member or friend during the day
- the mother taking the child to her workplace
- leaving the child with hired help in the house
- leaving the child with older child at home.

However, each of these options has its limitations. Hired help is expensive and families from lower and middle socio-economic strata may not be able to afford their services. The mother taking the child to the workplace is appropriate if there are crèche facilities available for the child. If not, the environment at the workplace can be inappropriate or hazardous for the child. You may have seen many young children playing at construction sites while their parents work as labourers. Do you think the environment is safe for the child, let alone stimulating and caring? Even if the child gets the company of other children it is at the cost of the child's safety. In our country many women have no choice but to take the child with them as there are not enough crèches for children's care. The first alternative stated above is possible only when there are adults at home. In the cities many families are nuclear – when both the parents are out earning a living, there is no one to look after the child at home; in families from lower socio-

economic strata often all the adults have to go out of the house to earn a living. The fourth option – that of leaving the young children with an older sibling, usually a girl, is what most families from lower socio-economic strata depend on, but this deprives the older child of schooling. The only option that is in the best interest of all is to provide child care services in the form of crèches.

The **third** reason for providing ECCE services is that even the best of family environments cannot provide the child with adequate play activities and the company of children which a preschool is able to provide. In a preschool centre, children get opportunities to interact with each other and engage in collective activity. This provides a context for learning to share, understand each other's point of view and develop universal values of harmony and compassion for all.

The **fourth** reason for providing ECCE services comes from the benefits that the ECCE programme brings to children both in the short run and in the long term. In the short term perspective, a good ECCE programme helps the child to be prepared for primary school both in terms of academic preparedness and social preparedness. Can you say what these terms mean? Academic preparedness does not mean that we teach the child to read and write in the ECCE centre – it means that we prepare the child for formal schooling by developing in the child the skills needed in school. Some examples are sharing, following a schedule and adaptation to a new environment. Social preparedness means that the experiences of the preschool help the child to learn to relate with other children and adults which will help in the adjustment in the primary school. It has been found that children who have attended an ECCE programme are less likely to drop out of primary schools, they show fewer instances of delinquency and drug addiction and become productive as adults, contributing to the family income as well as to the nation's economic capital. Thus, this fourth reason for providing ECCE services can be called the economic argument for investing in children.

The **fifth** and perhaps the most important reason for investing in early childhood programmes is that every human being has the right to grow and live in a healthy and enriching environment so that she/he attains her full potential. This is called the rights perspective to human development.

### ACTIVITY 3

Carry out a survey of five families in your neighbourhood (or in your family) where both the parents are working and they have at least one child under the age of 6 years. Find out what arrangements for child care are made by the family?

## The nature of ECCE

As discussed above, ECCE comprises health, nutrition, stimulation, and preschool education inputs so that there is sound and holistic growth and development of the child. Health inputs include health check-ups, immunisation, referral services, and treatment of illnesses. Nutrition inputs include providing supplementary nutrition in the form of mid-day meal and vitamin supplements. Stimulation and preschool education inputs means providing developmentally appropriate meaningful experiences that foster development in various areas. These experiences must be provided to the child through the child's activities and play, and not through formal education. Children learn as they play and are involved in activities that are appropriate to their age and developmental level.

Children's learning does not occur in narrowly defined subject areas – rather learning and development are interrelated and most activities that stimulate one aspect of development also affect other dimensions. Let us understand this with an example. Singing rhymes is a common activity that most parents carry out with the child from the time the child is a few months old. Rhymes are an integral part of the curriculum as well in preschool centres. This activity helps in the child's language development as she/he sings the rhymes and hears others speak; it helps in the child's cognitive development as the child's parents or teachers in the preschool talk about the objects, events or concepts being described in the rhyme; it helps in social and emotional development as the adult is interacting closely with the child in a pleasurable manner during the singing of the rhyme and both the child and the adult are deriving satisfaction and pleasure from doing an activity together; if the rhyme is sung with actions, it also contributes to the child's physical and motor development. The stimulation activities in the first three years and preschool education in the 3–6 years should be based on play, art, rhythm, rhyme, movement and active participation of the child.

### 13.3 CARE AND EDUCATION DURING MIDDLE CHILDHOOD YEARS

The middle childhood years are the years when the child receives primary education. The goal of primary education is to develop in the child basic literacy and numeracy skills which serve as the foundation for learning at the secondary stage. Even after seven decades of independence, the nation has not been able to achieve universal enrolment in primary education. The enrolment in Classes I–V is 51.9 per cent for boys and 48.1 per cent for girls, which shows there are more boys than girls in primary classes. The drop out rate of children at the primary stage is 6.35 per cent. (Source: *School Education in India*, U-DISE Flash Statistics, 2016–17, NIEPA). Even after

enrolling in the primary school, many children drop out without completing the five years of primary school. Thus, not all who enroll complete their primary education. The government has now adopted a campaign mode to universalise primary education through which it is making concerted and continuous efforts to enroll and retain the children in the primary school. You must have seen advertisements of this campaign on the television and in newspapers. Can you recall the name of this campaign? Yes, it is *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan*. Special incentives and efforts are being made to get the girl children in school since it is they who are often made to stay back at home to do household tasks or look after the younger children.

Can you think of some reasons why we have not been able to universalise primary education? Note your answer in the box and compare with the discussion which follows.

Box for your comments

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### Difficulties in children's primary education

In India there are wide variations in young children's schooling from the beginning. A large number of them are unable to attend school for the reasons that follow.

**Firstly**, in many families that belong to the lower socio-economic strata all hands in the family are needed to help in earning a living. So as soon as the children are able to they are involved in the income generating activity of the family or they help in the house.

**Secondly**, even when the children are enrolled in the school they are withdrawn at harvest time or during the sowing period as their services are needed at home. This is because the school breaks for summer/winter do not coincide with the farming seasons.

**Thirdly**, the curriculum in the school is far removed from the child's reality and, therefore, the child does not find it meaningful. Sometimes the lessons being taught do not relate to the child's experiences and they may not reflect the issues and concerns of communities living in diverse

geographical and cultural parameters. Not finding the education relevant for their present or future life, the children drop out of school or are pulled out by the family.

**Fourthly**, poor infrastructure in schools, for example, inadequate toilet facilities and distant locations, hinder attendance.

**Fifthly**, many children with disability are not able to join school for various reasons. One of the primary ones is that all schools in our country are not equipped to deal the special needs of the children with disability, and therefore are reluctant to enroll them. This prevents the children with disability from receiving education along with other children of their age. There are special schools for children with disability but these are very few compared to the need and are mostly located in urban and semi-urban areas. Besides, it is being increasingly felt that the children with disability should not receive education in separate schools; instead all schools should enroll all children, with or without disability – in other words, **the education system should be inclusive** in nature. But to make this vision a reality, we need to train the teachers and equip the system at various levels so that the needs of all children can be met. This is happening at a slow pace and will take time.

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## The nature of primary education

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As was said when we were discussing ECCE, children are not passive beings who absorb information given to them, but they actually construct knowledge for themselves as they encounter various people and events. Therefore, education during primary years should be such that it engages children in activities through which they can construct their own understanding. It needs to be flexible enough to suit the diverse social, cultural, economic and linguistic contexts of our country. The pedagogy and curriculum transaction in early primary grades – Classes I and II – should be activity-based and experiential to retain continuity with approach and methodology of teaching in the preschool years. This will help the child to adjust in the new and unfamiliar environment of the primary school.

However, as in the case of ECCE, there is a large gap between what ought to be and what is.

In the past few decades, there have been several attempts by government and non-government organisations to address these gaps in education. Many innovative and path breaking initiatives have been taken by educationists. One of the latest initiatives with far reaching impact is the National Curriculum Framework developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 2005. While the NCERT does this exercise every five years, the innovation in this particular exercise is that it has explicitly laid down the theoretical foundations on which education should ideally be based. It provides guidelines for textbook

writers to present the material in a way that would encourage the learners to be active creators of knowledge instead of being passive recipients of information contained in the books.

In the next chapter, we move from education to the fascinating areas of clothes for children. You will be surprised to know how many functions are served by what we wear. Do read about this in “Our Apparel”.

### Key terms and their meaning

**Critical/sensitive periods:** a time period during which development in a specific area is particularly sensitive to favourable and unfavourable experiences.

**Trust:** the feeling that the environment is a safe and secure place where one's needs will be met. This feeling develops when the infant receives consistent care and affection in the first year of life. Active exploration of objects and active participation in events around the child makes sense of the world and constructs her/his understanding.

**Stimulation:** providing the child with a variety of experiences that are meaningful for her and are in accordance with her maturational status. These experiences involve active exploration of objects by the child and active participation in events around the child. This enables the child to make sense of the world, learn about the things and people around and construct her/his understanding.

**ECCE:** the totality of the inputs with respect to physical care, stimulation and nurturance that must be provided to the child in order to ensure all round development.

**Children with disability:** children who have characteristics such as intellectual impairment, visual or hearing impairments, or difficulty in using their limbs, etc. In many ways they are like all other children.

**Activity based and experiential curriculum:** curriculum where the child is involved in activities which stimulate the child to explore, find out and think for herself/himself.

### ■ REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why are the periods of infancy and early childhood considered to be the most significant and critical in the life of an individual?
2. What is meant by 'critical' / 'sensitive' periods in development?
3. Why do we need to provide ECCE services in our country?
4. Describe the basic needs of the child, giving examples. Why is it important to fulfil these basic needs?
5. Explain the meaning of the term 'Early Childhood Care and Education'? How are the basic needs of the child met through ECCE services?
6. What are the reasons for our country not having been able to universalise elementary education?
7. What is *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan*?

## ■ PRACTICAL 13

### Care and Education - A

**Theme:** Observation of two children in the neighbourhood and reporting on their activities and behaviour

**Tasks:**

1. Observing two children in the age group birth to 10 years, for one hour each
2. Noting their activities and behaviours
3. Writing the report

**Purpose of practical:** We see children around us but we rarely stop to think how children in different age groups are different from each other and what do they have in common. We rarely stop to view events and situations from their perspective. This practical will help you to enter briefly into the world of children and enable you to become aware of their interests, their ways of thinking and responding to situations.

#### Conduct of practical

1. Identify two children in your neighbourhood whom you can observe easily and who would not feel hesitant or shy in your presence.
2. Identify a time during the day when it is convenient for you to observe them in their home or outside when they are engaged in some activities.
3. Keep a note pad with you and observe the activities of each child separately for an hour. Take brief notes in the note pad which you will expand later.
4. Use the following format for recording the activities of each child

Name of the child \_\_\_\_\_  
 Age \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sex \_\_\_\_\_

#### Activity

**Theme of the activity: e.g., eating/playing**

Time period of the activity – in minutes

People involved in the activity – who all were part of the activity

Description of the activity – what the child and the others with her/him did during the activity

Child's behaviour during the activity –

For each activity that each child does during the one hour period, make a record using the above format.

5. Compare the nature of the activities of the two children and their behaviours. Analyse on the basis of the following points–
  - were there differences in the duration of involvement in an activity?
  - were the nature of activities of the two children different?

- did they show different behaviours in response to the same activity?
- were these differences and similarities due to the age and the sex of the children?

## ■ PRACTICAL 14

### Care and Education - B

**Theme:** Collecting information from different regions of India about child care practices in early years and gender similarities and differences therein

- Tasks:**
1. Collecting information about child care practices from three regions of India
  2. Analysing whether there are differences in child care practices from different regions.
  3. Analysing whether there are differences in child care practices on the basis of the child's gender.

**Purpose of practical:** While all families want to have children, it has been seen that unfortunately in many parts of our country the boy child is preferred over the girl child. This may lead to discrimination in child care practices such that the health, nutrition and education of the girl child suffers. Being aware of the child care practices will help you to be aware of discriminatory practices and to prevent the same to the extent possible.

### Conduct of practical

1. Identify three families from different regions of the country such that you get at least one family with a girl and one family with a boy. The families should be willing to spend time with you to give you information about the child care practices in their community and the practices followed by them in bringing up their children.
2. Spend two-three hours with each family asking them about specific health nutrition and education practices they have followed with their children. You will most likely be able to meet the mother or the grandmother. Following are some of the questions you can ask–
  - How is the birth of a child celebrated in your community? Are there different celebrations for boys and girls?
  - What are the practices with regard to feeding of the newborn child?
  - What ceremonies are performed in the different months during the first year of the child's birth? Are their different ceremonies for boys and girls?
  - How does the food and feeding pattern change as the newborn grows in the first year? Are girls and boys given different types of food?

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- What do you do when the child falls ill – try a home remedy, go to the doctor, go to a local healer?
- What type of toys are bought for the child?
- When is the child sent to school?

These are some examples. You can ask more questions.

3. Record your findings using the following format.

Child Care Practices	Girl	Boy
Health		
Nutrition		
Education		

**Analysis** – This should indicate what similarities and differences you found in child care practices with respect to the girl child and the boy child.