

AECED and Mobile Creches Early Years World Conference 2022



CALL FOR PAPERS AND POSTERS

DATES TO NOTE

Abstracts due: December 10th

Notification of acceptance: December 30th

Papers due: January 20th

ABSTRACT GUIDELINES

- a. Kindly refer to the conference title, concept note and sub-themes and please indicate one or two most relevant sub-themes for your paper/poster abstract from the conference concept note in the pages that follow (*please refer to pages 3-7*)
- b. **Abstract Template:** Please use the abstract template for your submission. (*abstract template on page 2*)
- c. **Biography Format:** Your abstract must include a brief biography in the format given. Abstract and biography are to be sent as a single file. (*biography format on page 2*)
- d. **Abstract text:** maximum of 300 words for Paper abstract submission and 250 words for Poster abstract submission.
- e. **Font:** 12-point, single spaced, Times New Roman for abstract submission.
- f. **Line spacing:** Text should be single spaced.
- g. **Italics for:** Foreign terms not normally used in English and titles of: (artworks, films, books, journals). No short forms, citations/quotes to be included in abstracts.
- h. **Language:** The Abstract should be submitted in English. If it has been written in another language, a translated version will be acceptable.
- i. **Title:** Please make sure the title is concise and reflects the content of the paper/poster.
- j. **Submission Format:** Abstract to be submitted in MS-Word as a .doc or .docx document
- k. Abstracts should represent original work.
- l. Abstracts could be theoretical, research, or classroom-based. Informative abstracts and critical abstracts will be accepted as well.
- m. Documents that do not conform to the guidelines will need to be revised.
- n. Documents received after the given deadline, will not be accepted unless the deadline is extended.
- o. Send your paper proposal by email on: ecceworldconference2022@aeced.org.in
- p. **Please add the following to the mail "subject" line while submitting adding the sub theme-**
Abstract - Sub-Theme/s _____ for AECED-MC World Conference 2022
- q. Each sub-theme has a concerted time dedicated to paper and poster presentations in the conference.
- r. The papers and posters will also be included in a conference publication subsequently after another round of screening for which authors will be expected to submit final articles as per publication guidelines to be shared later.
- s. If your abstract (paper or poster) is accepted, you will be invited to register for the conference.

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BIOGRAPHY FORMAT

TITLE BOLDED, 12-point Times New Roman, centered
Contact author's full name: 11-point Times New Roman, centered, bolded

Contact author's institutional affiliation, position, department/organization, country, phone number, e-mail address, and LinkedIn account (if any): 11-point, Times New Roman, centered

Contact author's brief professional biography: Word limit of 100 words listing professional credentials, background, experience, and research interests/initiatives.

Second author's name (if any): 11-point Times New Roman, centered, bolded

Second author's institutional affiliation, position, department/organization, country, phone number, e-mail address, and LinkedIn account (if any): 11-point Times New Roman, centered

Second author's brief professional biography: Word limit of 100 words listing professional credentials, background, experience, and research interests/initiatives.

Type of Submission (Paper/Poster Abstract):

Sub-theme: (1-2 most relevant sub-themes from the conference tracks)

ABSTRACT TEMPLATE

Abstract text (max 300 words for paper abstract/ 250 words for poster abstract)

Abstract: The body of your abstract begins here. An abstract is a single paragraph, without subheadings, indentations or references. It should be an explicit summary of your presentation that states the problem, the objectives, the methods used, and the major results and conclusions. Do not include acronyms, bullets or lists in the abstract. It should be single-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman. The first part of your abstract should state the problem you set out to solve or the issue you set out to explore. The problem or issue might be a research question, a gap in critical attention to early years issue, or an early childhood education or development concern This section of the abstract should explain how you go about solving the problem or exploring the issue you identified. If applicable, your abstract should also describe the research methods; this section should include a concise description of the process by which you conducted your research/project. Next, your abstract should list the results or outcomes of the work you have done so far. If your work is not yet complete, you may still include preliminary discussion/results or your hypotheses. Finally, your abstract should close with a statement of implications and contributions to reimagining and reshaping early childhood care and education in the contemporary perspective.

Note: We recommend that you download and refer to the conference call for papers and abstract guidelines attached and use this template for your abstract as it contains necessary format and styles. The content of the abstract will be the basis for acceptance of the paper presentation at the 'Early Years Virtual World Conference'. The abstracts will be peer reviewed and authors will be notified about acceptance for presentation via email. Be sure to adhere to the word limit for the abstract - maximum 300 words for paper abstract and 250 words for poster abstract.

Keywords: (Provide 4-5 key words related to the theme of your paper/poster).

CONCEPT NOTE

The lives of children and their families have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the globe, the countries have taken unprecedented steps in an effort to prevent and contain the spread of the virus. Most of them have used containment measures like closures of schools, childcare services, and community activities and lockdowns along with norms for physical distancing. Children in marginalized conditions such as children of women in the unorganized sector, migrant families, those living in urban slums, as well as the most marginalized homeless children or those living in street situations are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has produced huge shocks for these marginalized groups in the form of unemployment, loss of income, food insecurity, domestic violence, and limited social security measures. Children in the poorest families deserve our greatest attention to support their overall wellbeing- their nutrition, physical and mental health, learning, and protection. At least 40 million children worldwide have missed out on early childhood education in their critical pre-school year as childcare and early education facilities remained shut (UNICEF, April 2020). “Childcare and early childhood education build a foundation upon which every aspect of children’s development relies. The pandemic is putting that foundation under serious threat.” (UNICEF Executive Director, Henrietta Fore). *This is a time to reimagine and reshape Early Childhood Care and Education in an inclusive and holistic manner.*

The crisis continues as the situation remains uncertain, and there are still no definite plans for opening of the childcare centres or schools. It has been described as the “largest simultaneous shock to all education systems in our lifetimes” (World Bank, 2020). The closures have also exposed a deeper crisis for families of young children especially in low- and middle-income countries. Children of migrant workers and others in the unorganized sector are impacted distinctively by being pushed out of the essential nutrition and health services. Economic shocks have caused reverse migration of workers and many children are disconnected from the childcare programs leaving them at risk of malnutrition and their learning stimulation disrupted. Families and children in the unorganized sector could face the long-term impact of pandemic due to toxic stress building around poverty, unemployment, and other associated impacts of the pandemic. The lockdowns have left many parents struggling to balance childcare and paid employment, with a disproportionate burden placed on women who, on an average, spend more than three times longer on care and housework than men (UNICEF, 2021).

Educational institutions are preparing for a post-pandemic era characterized by a “new normal.” This expression first emerged in the field of business, but the term has since been used in different contexts to imply that unprecedented circumstances have become typical. In this instance, there remains much fear and uncertainty regarding the pandemic itself. For instance, we are nervously watching for evidence of the third wave, keeping our fingers crossed, as some institutions of higher education shakily try opening on an experimental basis.

The crisis for children has further worsened with the disappearance of the public space into the screen space. Covid-19 has moved the curriculum online, forcing children physically apart from each other and from their teachers and especially from the live dialogical encounters that classrooms can provide. Like the virus, the pandemic curriculum has become embedded in devices that technologize our children’s learning and lived, embodied experience and intellectual independence is being erased (Pacheco, 2020). There is a severe impact on ECCE where children develop foundational social, emotional, behavioural and academic skills that are critical for all later development to build on. We could see the ripples of adverse effects throughout the learning experience of this group of children.

“We cannot return to the world as it was before”

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This crisis that engulfs the entire world and its children, can also be looked at as a catalyst for innovation, an opportunity to create broader change, and a better system for every child beyond the pandemic (McKinsey, 2020). So, as we approach a post-COVID-19 era, there is a need to envision early childhood care and education anew to consider emerging opportunities and challenges. It is an opportunity for holistic and sustainable support to marginalized families concertedly as these have implications on the overall wellbeing of the children. In the post-pandemic world, there would be a need to shift a focus from the individual child approach to the whole environment approach to promote the young child's wellbeing and development.

The pandemic ushers in a "new" normal, in which digitization enforces modifications in work and learning. In this fast-moving digital world, how is education for young children going to be inclusive? As the United Nations (2015) declares, education should ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. But can this inclusive education happen through technologization? In the last two years all nations have made efforts in different ways to address the educational needs of children. It is particularly challenging to reach out to preschool children in this phase. Developmentally, they are not able or willing to learn only through online classes. This is the stage of life when learning thrives in live settings, in direct interaction with adults and other children, engaged with objects in safe and stimulating environments. In the absence of such opportunities, and with extended months of children being house-bound and fearful, what are the ways in which different communities and countries have attempted to meet and solve these challenges through their policies, programs and practices?

Association for Early Childhood Education and Development (AECED), India is a national body registered in 2008 and with its registered office at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India. AECED is a network of individuals and organisations with a mission to promote quality early childhood development through a network of committed skilled professionals as well as aware, caring and sensitive families. AECED engages in influencing policy at the national level and also organising national conferences providing thought leadership on ECCE focused topical issues. Acknowledging the need to work more concertedly with practitioners, it currently has two active branches in Mumbai and Chennai which are vibrant in their repertoire of seminars, workshops, state policy inputs and varied advocacy initiatives. It is in the process of starting three more branches in different geographies of the country as well. During the COVID-19 pandemic, AECED and its branches continued their guidance and advocacy through practice based webinars and expert led panel discussions especially for ECD administrators, teachers and parents. AECED also released its "Position Statement for In-person reopening of Early Childhood Care and Education settings - Wait, Watch, Prepare, Respond". AECED has been consistent in hosting National Conferences to provide a platform for sharing of recent relevant research and innovations in the field as well as catalyse thought and inspire action. The last three conferences have been-

- **2014:** "*Concerted Action for Enhancing Childhood*" organized in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences and UNICEF.
- **2016:** "*Re-defining the Early Childhood Profession in India: Challenges and Potential*" organized in collaboration with Azim Premji University, co-sponsored by UNICEF.
- **2018:** "*Every Child's Right to Early Childhood Development: Evolving Inclusive Practices*" in collaboration with CECD, Ambedkar university.

For the 2022 conference we are collaborating with *Mobile Creches* which is a pioneering organisation working for the right of marginalised children to Early Childhood Development. *Mobile Creches* work spans from grassroot level interventions to policy advocacy at the national level. The Child care services at construction sites ensures creche services to 5,000 children of migrant workers, at 40 locations in Delhi/NCR. The Programme at 7 slum settlements in Delhi reaches out to 5000 children of slum dwellers, through family based interventions and access to state services. Their capacity Building Teams work with NGOs, state programmes, and communities across North India to provide training in childcare - knowledge, skills and attitude. Training assumes a critical role in our attempt to ensure delivery

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of a high quality programme in challenging circumstances. *Mobile Creches* ECD Partnerships, and Community Engagement targets all young children across India with the goal of policy change, effective legislations and improved services by way of institutional structures, quality, coverage and budgets, for the young child. During the COVID-19 pandemic they addressed the needs of entire communities, including children under six years by responding swiftly to meet the urgent need for safety, food, health, protection, and most importantly justice.

Conference Objectives

The 2022 Early Years virtual conference, '*Reimagining and reshaping Early Childhood Care and Education for the “New” Normal*', aims to explore how children, teachers, leaders, parents and other relevant stakeholders can cope, grow, learn, and thrive in a new normal of uncertainty, and volatility. It aims to reconnect to what we know works, reimagine ways to create thriving schools and classrooms, reshape meaningful learning, responsive teaching and parenting and dynamic and joyous learning environments that boost thriving in an uncertain Post-COVID Age.

The objectives of the conference are thus:

1. To bring together an international and inter-disciplinary team of experts, academics, administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders, to discuss the challenges of ECCE during the pandemic.
2. To discuss strategies for facilitating children's return to early childhood programmes.
3. To deliberate on possibilities to reimagine ECCE in ways that will accept, understand, and adapt to possible future challenges
4. To detail the different dimensions of children's development under the present challenges
5. To discuss preparation of ECCE workforce to meet these and other possible challenges in the future
6. To prepare to build stronger bridges with the community, parents through innovative collaborations
7. To place a special focus on vulnerable groups who have been hardest hit during the pandemic like grassroot workers, migrant workers, health-care professionals, and others

The conference will bring together different ECE stakeholders from India and other countries, from ministries to networks, administrators to academics, teachers to technology experts, parents to community leaders and other relevant stakeholders committed to ECCE. They shall share experiences and ideas, challenges and solutions, practices and policies that will prepare for children's return to the preschool and care facilities, and find ways of addressing alternative solutions to be prepared for eventualities.

Conference Sub-Themes and Enquiry questions

The conference sub-themes will have keynotes, plenaries, workshops and paper presentations towards reimagining, recommitting and reshaping a better system of education for the young child in the post pandemic future.

SUBTHEME 1

Reimagining, Reshaping and Recommitting to ECCE in the post pandemic future- from academic focus to focusing on holistic development and well-being of children.

Enquiry:

1. What are the innovative solutions for inclusive, holistic, and sustainable childcare arrangements amidst the pandemic?

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2. What are some of the things in preschools and care facilities that we now have an opportunity to not just rebuild, but rebuild better?
3. How can we recommit and reshape child protection in light of our learnings from the pandemic?
4. What are the strategies, processes and essentials for facilitating children's return to early childhood programmes?
5. What have been the key challenges of ECCE during the pandemic and what were/are the innovative, sustainable and replicable strategies used?
6. What are the various dimensions of young children's development that have been impacted by COVID? What are the implications of the changed developmental trajectories, if any, for reimagining ECCE in ways that will accept, understand and adapt to these changes?
7. How do we challenge the norm of traditional learning models which ill equipped our children in a crisis and recommit to integrated early childhood development placing well-being at the core of ECCE work?

SUBTHEME 2

Reimagining Professional Development for ECCE Workforce in the future – from burnout to turnaround

Enquiry:

1. How can we build greater value for the ECCE profession?
2. How can we prepare the ECCE workforce to meet these and other possible challenges in the future?
3. What have been the key challenges for educators and caregivers during the pandemic and what were/are the innovative, sustainable and replicable strategies used?
4. How do we encourage conditions that give frontline workers autonomy and flexibility to act collaboratively and positively?
5. What are the different dimensions of teacher development under the present challenges which also catalyse reimagining the teacher in ways that will accept, understand, and adapt to possible future challenges.
6. How can we educate teachers for Well-being more meaningfully?

Subtheme 3

Reimagining Parents and families as partners and collaborators in the post pandemic future- from responsible parents to responsive and responsible parents

Enquiry:

1. How can we build stronger bridges with the community, families and parents through innovative collaborations?
2. What have been the key challenges for parents during the pandemic and what were/are the innovative, sustainable, and replicable strategies used?
3. How can we support and empower the working mothers in the unorganized sector to mitigate the economic challenges and the double burden of paid work and childcare?
4. How can we prepare the parents to meet these and other possible challenges in the future?
5. How can we harness remote learning approaches, along with better support for parents and caregivers?

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6. What would be the best strategies to support marginalized families for post pandemic recovery to promote nurturing care and responsive parenting?

SUBTHEME 4

ECCE as a sector in the post pandemic future - from survive to thrive

Enquiry:

1. From our learnings from the pandemic, how can we build ECCE systems that are more equitable and resilient?
2. How can we change the metric of success of our education systems from academic and economic outcomes to well-being and thriving of all students, teachers, caregivers, communities, and the planet?
3. How can we use this window of opportunity for reform and make more impactful investments in ECCE?
4. How can our education and care systems thrive instead of just about survive in the aftermath of the pandemic?
5. What are the coordination and strategic partnerships between international agencies, civil society and public and private sectors that have been beacons of hope?