

***“Children must be taught how
to think not what to think.”***

- Margaret Mead



NAVRIKA

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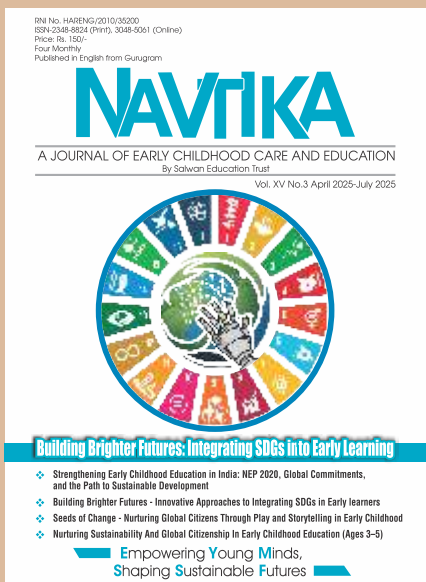
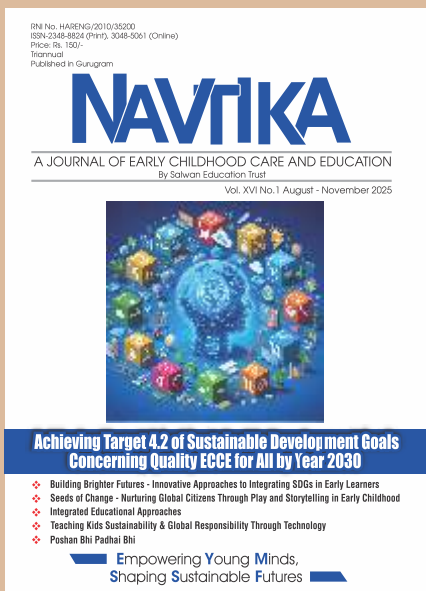
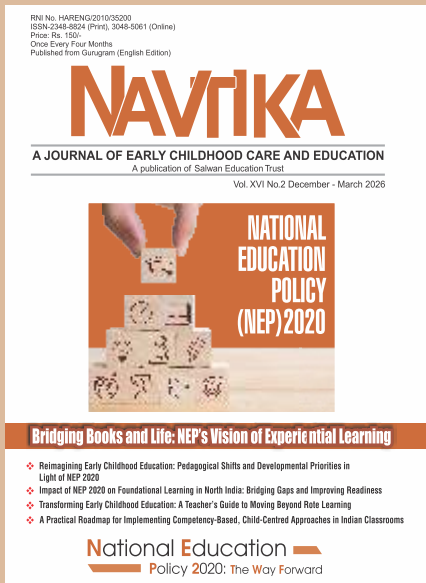


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The Thinking Child: Building Minds, Not Just Milestones

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- ❖ **Emergent Curriculum in Practice: A Classroom Case Study of the Project Approach at** Chetan Balwadi-Mithuna Nair & Niyati Pandya
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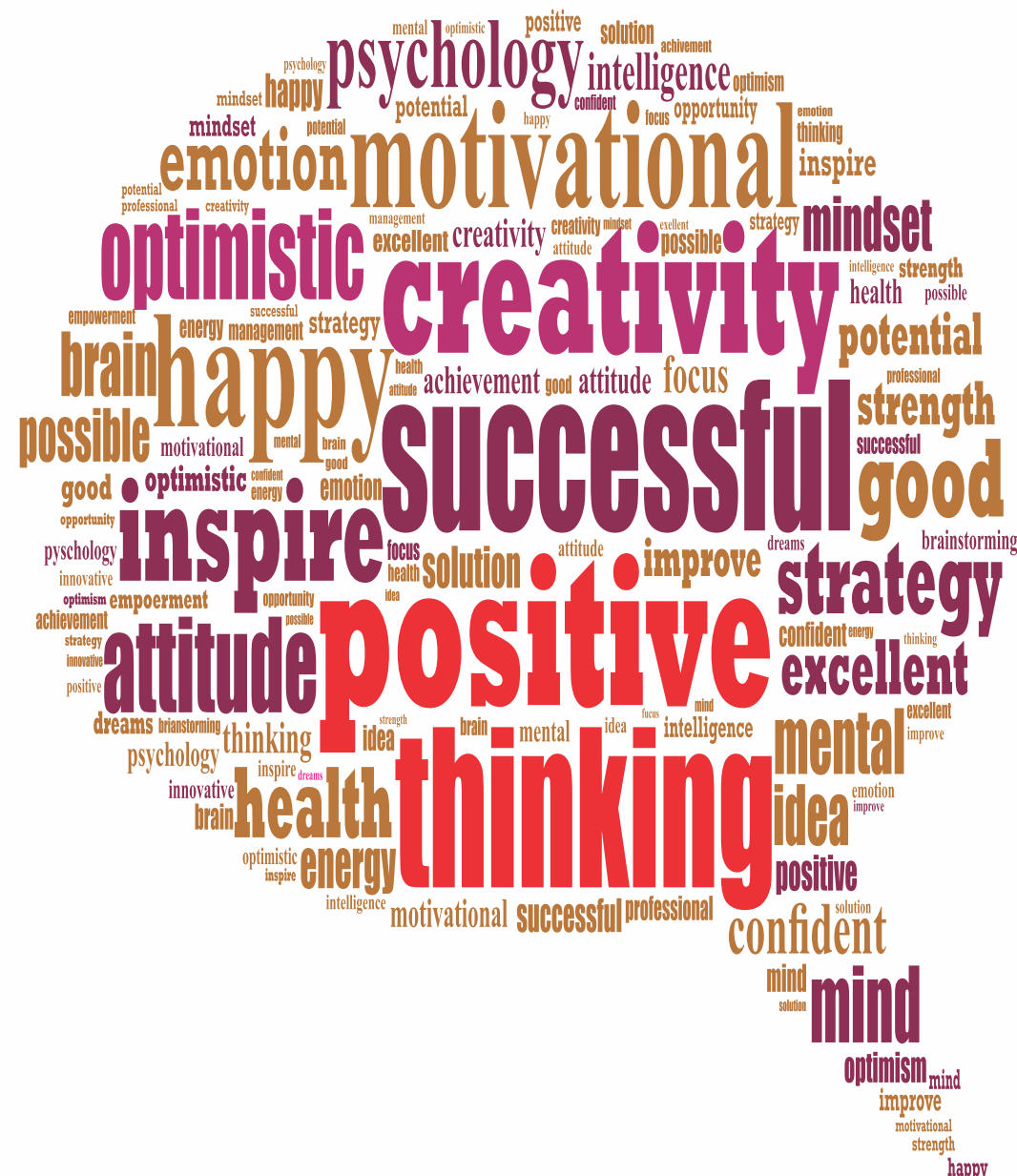
**From Milestones to Mindscapes: Shaping
Thoughtful Learners in Foundational Years**



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By Salwan Education Trust

Navtika is a journal that serves as a practical guide for teachers, parents and other caregivers who nurture and monitor children during the foundational years, i.e., three to eight years. It seeks to provide valuable information, deepen knowledge and address parental concerns, empowering teachers and parents to deliver better care. The journal publishes original work based on standards of excellence and expert views.



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FROM THE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S DESK

In the evolving landscape of education, a subtle yet profound transformation is taking shape, from evaluating what children accomplish to truly understanding how they think. For decades, Early Childhood Education has been anchored in developmental benchmarks, focused on children's ability to recite, recognise, and reproduce information. While these indicators are relevant, they often eclipse a deeper, more enduring purpose: nurturing thoughtful, reflective minds. As India advances with the visionary frameworks of NEP 2020 and NCF-FS 2022, the direction is unmistakable. Education must move beyond checklists and measurable outputs to cultivate learners who are aware, inquisitive, and self-directed.

At the core of this paradigm shift lies metacognition: the capacity to reflect on one's own thinking. Often described as "learning how to learn," it enables children to plan, observe, and evaluate their understanding. In early childhood, this may emerge in simple yet powerful ways, like a child wondering why the moon seems to follow them, or trying a new approach after encountering difficulty. These moments are far from trivial; they are the seeds of lifelong learning.

The foundational years, spanning ages three to eight, are marked by rapid brain development. Neural connections are highly responsive to experiences, making this a critical window for shaping cognitive habits. Integrating metacognitive practices at this stage does not require formal or abstract instruction. Instead, it involves weaving reflection naturally into everyday learning experiences. When children are prompted to express their thinking, "How did you figure this out?" or "What might you try differently next time?" they begin to recognise themselves as active learners. This self-awareness nurtures resilience, adaptability, and independence. Mistakes are no longer sources of fear but become growth opportunities. Gradually, children transition from passive receivers of information to active creators of knowledge.

Classroom practices such as storytelling, open-ended questioning, collaborative dialogue, and reflective conversations become powerful tools in this journey. Through these approaches, the aspirations of NEP and NCF are not merely discussed but meaningfully enacted. In such learner-centered environments, the role of the teacher undergoes a significant transformation. Educators become facilitators and co-explorers, guiding children to uncover their own understanding rather than offering ready-made solutions. Assessment, too, evolves from a tool of measurement to a means of insight, helping educators understand each child's learning process.

'Building minds, not just milestones' is more than a theme. It is a philosophy that redefines the very purpose of early education. By embedding reflective practices within the curriculum, we prepare children not only for academic success but for life itself. When young learners develop the ability to question, adapt, and think critically about their own learning, they cultivate resilience, creativity, and enduring curiosity—qualities that no standardised benchmark can fully capture.

This issue includes articles and case studies by educators and policymakers where they reimagine early childhood classrooms as spaces where thinking is intentionally nurtured. It encourages a shift from performance-driven outcomes to meaningful, experience-rich learning. When children are guided to reflect on what they know, how they learn, and why they make certain choices, they become empowered participants in their own educational journey. The future of education does not lie in how swiftly children meet predetermined goals, but in how deeply they understand themselves as learners. And that journey begins early—with a quiet yet powerful shift: from doing to thinking, from achieving to understanding, and from milestones to minds.

Warm regards,

Dr. Indu Khetarpal

Editor-in-Chief

*All articles in this issue of Navtika have been peer reviewed and critically assessed for academic authenticity and accuracy.

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Perspectives from the Member of the Editorial Board

Parenting Beyond Milestones: **NURTURING MINDS** for Life

Dr. Shraddha Kapoor

The True Goal of Parenting

Parenting is a job with the aim of being jobless. Human parents are in the job the longest, as it takes a human child the longest to be a self-sufficient adult. In developmental psychology parlance, it is a person who is physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively able to live an independent and fulfilling life. When a baby is born, the parents work towards making this baby a mature adult, and developmental milestones become their parenting road map. Milestones are bricks on the side of the highway indicating how long it will take you to reach your destination. Developmental milestones are skills and behaviours that most children can perform by a certain age in different domains, such as motor skills, language, cognitive, and social-emotional skills.

Understanding Developmental Milestones

As parents, we want children to grow up developmentally robust, reach age-appropriate milestones, have opportunities to reach their maximum potential, and be able to live independently physically, emotionally, financially, and socially. All parents endeavour to care for their children so that they have good physical development. However, you may have noticed that I replaced cognition with financial as most parents in society believe that our children will be independent when through education, they will have a secure income. So starts the focus from infancy – training to do well academically to be in a profession that “pays well”. Sometimes, the focus on mental development is so much that parents often do not give as much importance to physical and socio-emotional development.

In today's world, where digital devices have taken over family life, it's important that children and parents step out and children participate in any physical activity. Encourage outdoor play,

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