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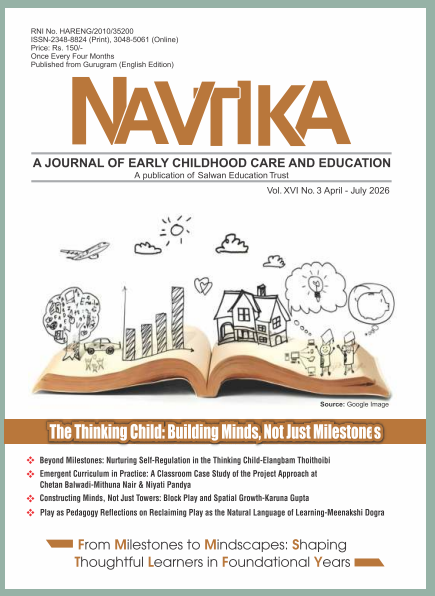
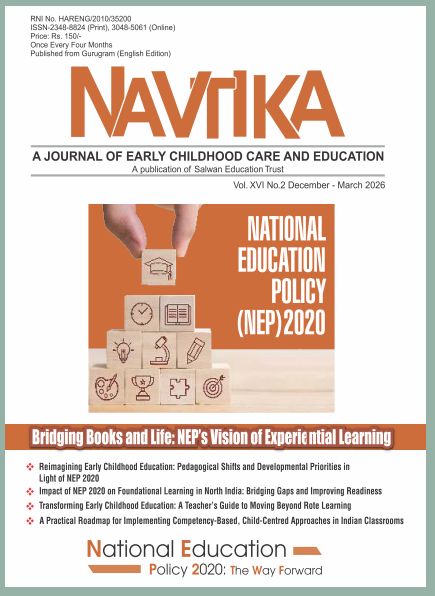
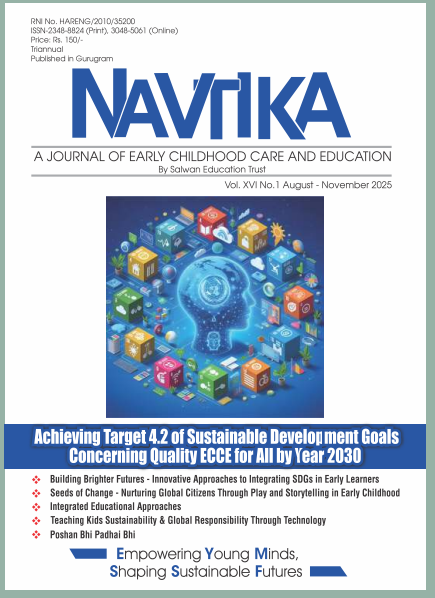
The fourth Estate of Childhood: Voice, Choice and Advocacy in Early Childhood Learning

- Jaadui Pitara and Cognitive Development in the Foundational Years-Prof (Dr)Romila Bhatnagar
- Children's Voices for Sustainable Futures: Choice, Agency and Participation in Early Childhood Learning- Dr. Jigisha Gala and Fatema M. Sadriwala
- Playing to be Heard: Child-led play as a source of developing agency, voice and negotiation-Yashika Malhotra
- When Children's Voices Shape Learning: Meaningful Group Discussion at Chetan Balwadi- Jayana Padalia, Rachana Bhangaokar

Voice to Express, the Choice to Participate,
and the Vision to Shape Tomorrow.







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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

When we speak of the early years, we speak of beginnings that are far more than preparatory. It is during these years that a child first learns how the world responds to them, how relationships are formed, and how a sense of self begins to emerge. In this delicate and powerful period, children learn whether their voice matters, whether their choice is valued, and whether their presence is truly seen.

This edition of **The Fourth Estate of Childhood: Voice, Choice and Advocacy in Early Childhood Learning** grows from that understanding. The child, especially in the ages of three, four, and five, is not only developing physically and linguistically, but also shaping identity through observation, interaction, and participation. Children listen far more than we realise, model far more than we notice, and respond not only to what we say, but to how we say it, how we include them, and how we allow them to choose. The early years are therefore a time of profound responsibility for all adults who shape a child's world.

Every communication becomes a lesson. Every interaction becomes a message. Every planned activity becomes an opportunity to shape not just knowledge, but character. Voice and choice, in the early years, are not isolated permissions; they are developmental opportunities. When children are invited to choose, to express, to negotiate, and to participate, they begin to build autonomy, confidence, and responsibility. At the same time, these freedoms must be guided through responsive structure, care, and thoughtful adult support.

Advocacy for young children is equally vital. It means listening to them closely, interpreting their needs sensitively, and creating emotionally safe spaces where they can speak, explore, and grow. It means recognising that children communicate in many ways through words, actions, emotions, play, and silence. As educators and caregivers, our task is not only to offer opportunities, but also to help children learn how to use their voice constructively and their choices wisely.

In this edition of the journal, we will read papers and research that make these thoughts visible, grounded, and manifested in practice, offering fresh perspectives on how voice, choice, and advocacy are being lived, explored, and reimagined in early childhood settings. These contributions remind us that early childhood education is not merely about preparing children for the future, but about honouring childhood in the present.

The spirit of **NEP 2020** and **NCF-FS** encourages us to create learning environments that are child-centred, inclusive, and responsive to developmental needs. This issue reflects that vision and invites us to continue building classrooms where children are heard, respected, and empowered. In doing so, we help shape not only stronger learners, but also thoughtful, responsible human beings.

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 a Member of the Editorial Board

The FOURTH ESTATE of Childhood: Voice, Choice and Advocacy in EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

Rashi Oberoi

Read More .....

The Fourth Estate of Childhood: Voice, Choice and Advocacy in Early Childhood Learning invites us to reflect on an important aspect of early education: recognising children as active participants in their own learning. This theme is especially relevant today as educators increasingly acknowledge the importance of children's voices, choices, and well-being in the foundational years. At the same time, it reminds us of a timeless truth: the early years are when children begin to develop their identity, build relationships, and lay the foundations for lifelong learning and character.

The title itself carries a powerful message. Traditionally, the “Fourth Estate” refers to a voice that informs, influences, and shapes society. In the context of childhood, it suggests that young children too deserve to be heard and respected. Their ideas, questions, preferences, and experiences matter. When we view children as contributors rather than passive recipients of information, we create a more inclusive and meaningful approach to education.

The early years are not simply preparation for future learning. They are a period of intense growth and development. Between the ages of three and five, children learn to communicate, cooperate, make choices, express emotions, and build relationships. They closely observe the adults around them and learn from everyday interactions. Every conversation, routine, story, song, and classroom experience contributes to their understanding of themselves and the world.

This issue highlights the importance of voice and choice in early childhood. When children are given opportunities to make choices, they develop confidence and a sense of ownership. When adults listen to them with respect,

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"We truly educate only when we co-operate with children... through which they may discover for themselves the secret of their own complete development."

- Rabindranath Tagore

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