

Evaluation of Non-Formal Pre-School Educational Services Provided at Anganwadi Centres (Urban Slums of Jammu City)

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KEYWORDS Integrated child development services; anganwadi; non-formal pre-school education

ABSTRACT The present study was conducted with the objectives to assess the non-formal pre-school educational services provided at Anganwadi centres to the children, awareness of parents and level of utilization of these services. Using stratified random sampling technique a sample of 15 Anganwadi centres, 15 Anganwadi Workers and 30 parents was selected. Results of the study revealed that non-formal pre-school education was provided to the children at the Anganwadi centre. Anganwadi Worker used two-way interaction method and takes the help of teaching aids for imparting education to the children. Indigenous material was used to make teaching aids like puppets, vegetables, and fruits. Most of the parents were satisfied with the non-formal education provided at the Anganwadi centre but few weren't, as they felt that Anganwadi worker laid more emphasis on nutrition.

INTRODUCTION

Children are most important assets of the country because they will be tomorrow's youth and provide the human potential required for a country's development. The national policy for children enunciated on August 1974 has placed high priority on early childhood care and education and has emphasized on its integration into ICDS programme (Tara and Kumar, 1988). Under ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) scheme a package of services viz. supplementary nutrition, immunization, health-check up, referral services, health and nutrition education, non-formal pre school education are provided to children (below six years of age), expectant, nursing mothers and women in the age group of 15-45 years. Non-formal Pre-school Education is imparted to the children in the Anganwadi by Anganwadi Worker. Non-formal Pre school Education is a crucial service provided under the ICDS scheme and caters to the development needs of children between 3 and 6 years of age. Activities in the Anganwadi are designed and carried out by the Anganwadi Worker to stimulate the physical, motor, social, emotional, language and cognitive development of children. Educational status of children had improved as a result of ICDS programme (Renu

and Rekha, 1982). Activities conducted in the Anganwadi enhance the skills of children to manipulate objects of materials, coordinate and control their movement. The children in ICDS areas show significantly better state in all three scholastic variables viz. regularity in school, academic performance and general behaviour in the school. The ICDS scheme has shown good results in increasing the awareness of parents about children's education and also in enhancing children's scholastic achievement (Chaturvedi, 1987). Activities organized in the Anganwadi centre are directed towards promoting in children the ability to express thought and feelings and also understanding the concepts like colour, shape, texture, size and directions. The most common activities organized at Anganwadi are morning prayers, songs and free conversation. But lack of teaching aids and play material are considered as major constraints in organizing pre-school education successfully (Aijaz, 1987). It is not only important to provide these services under ICDS scheme but also to evaluate these services time to time. In the light of above, present study has been conducted to evaluate the non-formal pre-school educational services provided at Anganwadi centres, awareness of parents regarding these services and also the level of utilization of these services.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 15 Anganwadi centres, 15 Anganwadi Workers and 30 parents (whose children were enrolled in Anganwadi centres) were selected using stratified random sampling

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technique. In order to collect the required information two interview schedules were prepared: first for Anganwadi Workers to assess information about teaching method and teaching aids used for imparting non-formal pre-school education and second for parents regarding educational facilities being provided to children, their purpose of visits to the Anganwadi centre etc. Those aspects, which may not have been reported through interview schedule, yet they had significant implications for the issue, were studied through observations. The data obtained through various tools was coded, tabulated and then subjected to both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the study revealed that more than half of the children (80%) attending Anganwadi were in the age group of 1-3 years and rests were in 3-6 years of age group. Also 60% children were males and 40% were females. It was also observed that parents prefer to send their male children to Anganwadi, as they believe that males are the future bread earners so they should be given more nutrition and education. 60% children were enrolled in Anganwadi centre at the age of 1 or 2 years, as parents viewed that early years of life are important for child's development. All the children spend 3-4 hours per day at the Anganwadi as per the timings of Anganwadi centre. It has been observed that no child leaves the Anganwadi centre before the stipulated time. Parents feel happy when their child spend full time at the Anganwadi centre as they admitted, that due to poverty and lack of resources they are unable to meet the required needs of the children but in Anganwadi these needs are met to some extent. Similar views are held by (Chandershekhar, 1986) that children participating in Anganwadi had significantly higher physical development, greater mental ability and better behavioural aspect. All the Anganwadi workers in the present study were literate but majority of the Anganwadi helpers (57%) were illiterate. All the parents were aware about the Anganwadi and also about the services provided under ICDS scheme in the Anganwadi. 93% Anganwadi Workers use two-way interaction method in which they jointly sit with children, sing songs and recite poems. Activities like identification of objects, finding the missing

object are also conducted in the centre. Pictorial charts, puppets and posters are the only teaching aids used in the Anganwadi centre for imparting education to the children. Only 33% of the Anganwadi Workers use indigenous material for making teaching aids like posters, puppets and the indigenous material used for making teaching aids are fabric pieces, old socks, and wool. 67% of the Anganwadi Workers teach children using charts that are provided to them by the government. It was also revealed from the responses of Anganwadi Workers that no funds are provided for making teaching aids. But the government is providing charts of animals, birds, alphabet, number etc. in the Anganwadi centres. Similar results were found by Aijaz (1987) that inadequate infrastructure facilities, no uniformity in supply and procurement of pre-school education material and also its replenishment adversely affect organization of effective pre-school education for children. Although after interviewing parents (in the present study) it was found that 83% of them were aware of the teaching method being used by the Anganwadi Workers. It was also found that 60% of the Anganwadi Workers pay no home visits, 27% of them visit fortnightly whereas 13% visit once in a month. Parents also make visits to the Anganwadi centre but their purpose is different. As 67% pay visits to the centre just to accompany the child and to bring him back to the home, 13% visit to the center to get information regarding their child's performance. It was also observed in the present study that parents who made no visits to Anganwadi centre were mostly illiterate and were unaware of the services provided at the Anganwadi. Maruthilatha (1987) in his study also found that Anganwadi Workers were poor in building up rapport with the beneficiaries. Results of the present study also indicate that the performance of these workers pertaining to home visits was unsatisfactory. 97% parents were found satisfied with the non-formal pre-school education imparted to children, but few parents weren't satisfied as they felt that in Anganwadi, more emphasis is laid on nutrition as compared to education. According to them children go to Anganwadi centre, eat meals and come back to their respective homes. All the parents responded that their child shows interest in studies after his/her enrollment in the Anganwadi centres. When asked about their views about Anganwadi, it was found that all the parents

believe that Anganwadi centre is the best place for their children to get good nutrition, health and education, free of cost. They consider Anganwadi as the best place for children as their children get better nutrition and education for their overall development.

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