

VALUATION OF NUTRITIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT ANGANWADI CENTERS IN PATNA DISTRICT

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Abstract:

Education is one of the most powerful tools for effecting change in the world and unlocking success across various fields. It expands one's worldview and forms the foundation for all our abilities. Children, as the most valuable resource and hope for the future, are born with innate fearlessness and curiosity about their surroundings. It is essential to nurture children carefully to help them realize their potential, establish strong emotional connections with their environment, and develop into physically, psychologically, and socially healthy adults. This paper aims to evaluate the amenities and services provided at Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) in accordance with the standards set by the Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) system, focusing on young children aged 0–6 years. It is crucial to determine whether the Anganwadi Centres are effectively fulfilling their responsibilities. The effectiveness of the Integrated Child Development Services program in addressing childhood issues is also assessed. The paper examines the educational and nutritional programs offered to children aged 0 to 6 years at Anganwadi centres (AWCs). The study analyses various perspectives on early childhood and presents a range of theoretical, scientific, and policy issues. Additionally it summarizes key debates in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The author emphasizes the needs of the child and proposes measures and potential solutions to enhance the quality of learning and improve learning outcomes for children participating in ECCE programs

Keywords: AWCs, Child, Education, ECCE, ICDS, Nutrition

Introduction

Children are like the seeds that are sown in fertile land, the more fertile the land is healthier the harvest is. The growth of children decides the future of any civilization. Living situations such as inadequate health care, nutrition, poverty, safe water, and the environment around them play a vital role in their healthy growth as they are more susceptible than adults. In their early years of growth and development emotional and mental fortitude is shaped and developed. Children's futures and, by extension, the futures of the society in which they reside are jeopardized by the consequences of lack of nutrition, hunger, poverty, and shortage of basic amenities(John et al., 2020). If society fails to provide a healthy growth environment for children has to pay an enormous cost. The results of the social study demonstrate that experiences at an early age have a substantial impact on children's future development¹. The

¹ Woodhead, M., 2006. Background paper prepared for the Changing perspectives on early

contribution of a child as an adult to society and what will be their human resource value depends on how they developed.

Children can overcome any challenges that stand in their way of achievement via education. The goal of education must be the healthy growth and all-around development of a child (Pandey and Rai, 2022.). The primary factor that determines how the child will be in the present or in the future reckon upon the level of education a person has within them. A healthy nutritious diet is crucial in the early years of child growth and development. It helps create in the child good eating habits and ingrain a solid foundation for maintaining health from an early age (Kumar et al., 2010). Three key advantages of early childhood nutrition are: it ensures proper brain and other organ development, enhances the activity and cognitive ability, and boosts a child's ability to fight contagious diseases. Proper nutrition for children is crucial because it prepares them for a lifetime of living a healthy and balanced lifestyle According to the Global Hunger Index 2018 undernutrition is a cause of nearly half of all death of children under age 5 in India. A child's stunted growth is because of poor nutrition during the first 1000 days of their life, which is linked to cognitive impairment and poorer performance in school and the workplace. India is ranked 102 in the 2019 Global Hunger Index out of 119 countries that qualify. A smooth transition to primary education can be ensured by UNESCO says: "Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. ECCE has the possibility to nurture caring, capable, and responsible future citizens."

ECCE: Need of India

India being the youngest country, political interest in early childhood care and education (ECCE) has increased, because improving the quality of early childhood education is an important issue (Kundu et al., 2021). India's main aim is quality improvement through family and community involvement, because cooperation between the parents, community, and early childhood education sector can contribute to the child's continuous development process. According to the specific needs in each stage of early childhood, this period can be subdivided into five phases:

- Prenatal to birth
- Birth to six months
- Six months to three years
- Three years to six years
- Six years to eight years

Parents and community participation can also enhance the quality of parenting and the learning environment at home. Moreover, it can promote early development in children and extenuate

Childhood: Theory, Research and Policy.

the negative effects of family background². when early childhood education centres collaborate with parents and communities and adopt a unified approach to child development and learning the continuity of children's experiences across settings is greatly enhanced.

Investing in basic education and early childhood is essential for multiplying the benefits. Several studies have confirmed that investing in the early years of a child's life will yield long-term returns. Programs like quality child care, parenting education and parental leave programs are vital (Kitano, 2011). Over 35 years A longitudinal study was conducted that calculated the benefits of early childhood education programs from birth to age 5 for disadvantaged children. These benefits are defined by better outcomes in social behaviour, education, health, and employment. The results show that we can achieve 13% annual return on investment if we provide

high-quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children (Sethi and Mahajan, 2018). Additionally, every dollar invested in quality preschool programs can yield returns of \$4 to \$16.

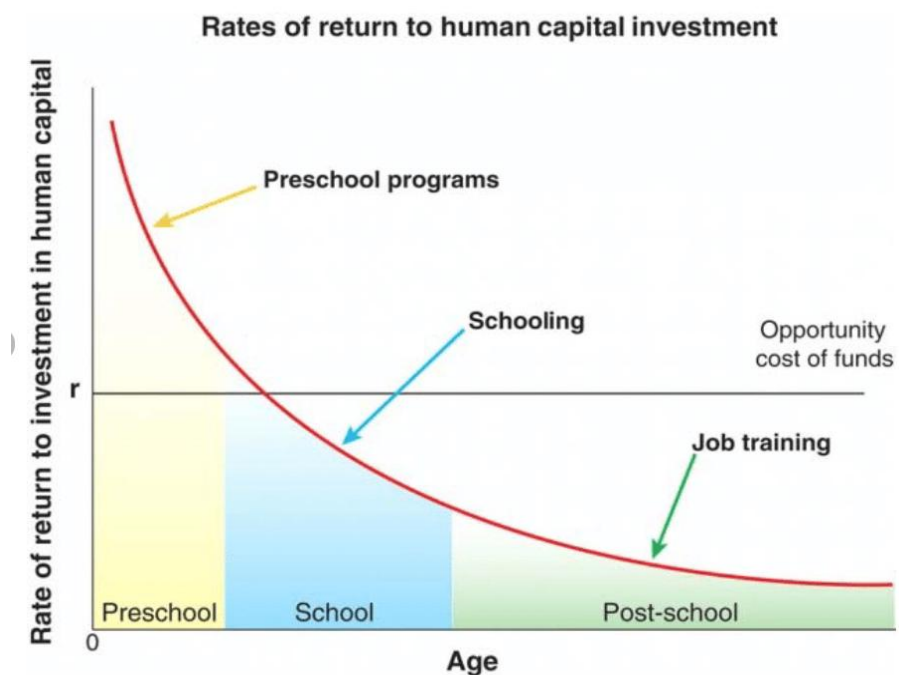
In 2006, Heckman proposed that the rate of return on investment in disadvantaged children decreases at different stages of education. Return on investment in education includes both - private (i.e., returns to individuals in terms of employment and wages with associated benefits) and social (i.e., benefits to society and the nation, reduction in public spending on welfare programs as a result of welfare, more civic society, as well as revenue generated from taxes)

The figure below, known as the Heckman curve, shows the maximum rate of return associated with early childhood education.³

² Pattnaik, J. (1996). Early childhood education in India: History, trends, issues, and achievements.

Early Childhood Education Journal, 24(1), 11-16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02430544>

³ Woodhead, M., 2014. Early childhood development delivering inter - sectoral policies , programmes 1–110.



The 'Heckman Curve'-the earlier the investment, the greater the return

Figure 1 : Heckman curve, shows the maximum rate of return associated with early childhood education (Adapted from (Woodhead, 2014))

Aim of early childhood care and education (ECCE)

Early Childhood Care and Education seeks to promote optimal development of the full potential of the child and lay the ground for all round development and learning for life time. Although parents and home are primarily responsible for the child's health, a good relationship between the community and ECCE centres are important for the child's well-being and achieving the following goals.

Early Childhood Care and Education's emphasizes on:

- Ensuring that each child is appreciated, respected, safe and develops a positive self-concept.
- Ingraining healthy eating habits, fitness, grooming, and self-help skills.
- Effective communication and promote both receptive and expressive language
- Stimulating intellectual curiosity and improve philosophical understanding of the environment through opportunities to discover, examine, and experiment
- Strengthening cognitive skills, relational skills, and emotional wellbeing
- Establishing aesthetic understanding and promote creative learning.
- Facilitating sensory growth and integration
- Sound foundations for each child's physical and motor growth depending on the ability of each child.
- Ingraining cultural healthy attitudes and fundamental human values of respect and caring for others.
- Unruffled transition from house to ECCE centre to formal schooling

According to CECED (2014), ECE serves two major objectives:

- Promotes all-round development of children through an age-appropriate program of play-based activities, interactions, and experiences that provide a sound foundation for lifelong learning and development.
- Develops school readiness through specific kinds of concept - and skill-based activities that will foster a readiness for learning of the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic), prior to entering primary school.⁴

ICDS in today's time

The most prominent government intervention in the field of ECE is the ICDS program. According to current data given in Lok Sabha 2020, there are 1.37 million AWCs across the country, catering to 27 million children between 3-6 years⁵. This flagship scheme of government scheme not only encompasses pre-primary education but also includes “nonformal child development programs” that cater to the health, nutrition, care, and protection of the children. Thus, there are provisions for (a) Supplementary Nutrition Programme (b) Immunisation (c) Health check-ups (d) Referral Services, and (e) Non-formal Pre-School Education for children between 3-6 years. According to MoWCD, ICDS has four pillars: early childhood care education and development; community mobilization awareness, advocacy, and information; care and nutrition counselling; health services; and education and communication.

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme was started with the aim of improving the nutritional and health status of children age between 0 to 6 years, laying the sound foundation for a child's proper psychological, physical, and social development, reducing the incidence of malnutrition, mortality, morbidity, and school dropout. It also aims to achieve effective policy and implementation coordination among the various departments to support child development. ICDS services are provided to beneficiaries by a vast network of ICDS centres, it is known as “Anganwadi”. ICDS has expanded rapidly in its scope and coverage. Although there had been vast increase in ICDS blocks, it was seen that there is a lack of infrastructure and basic amenities. Though immunization activities under ICDS have appreciable credibility, non-formal preschool, nutrition, and health education are not fully functioning in the way they were planned to be. The ICDS has a huge potential as a platform to provide comprehensive maternal and child services. Although there is a wide coverage under the ICDS blocks, many of them are not functioning optimally. Infrastructure and basic amenities, and training components need to be strengthened (Rao and Kaul, 2018). A UNESCO (2012) report has stated that children with poor health are more likely to drop out of school. India's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is the largest operational ECD scheme in the world. It consists of six services, including health and nutrition, that have been combined to provide an integrated approach to ECD

⁴ (n.d.). NCERT. https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/NCF_for_Foundational_Stage_20_October_2022.pdf

It is reaffirmed that ICDS is the prominent scheme through which the state can provide holistic ECCE. ICDS provides one of the best examples of a developmentally appropriate, non-formal curriculum for preschool children. Kapoor (2006) notes that the ICDS pre-school programme and the focus of learning in AWCs consists of structured and unstructured play and learning experiences, which promote social, emotional, mental, physical and aesthetic development of a child (ICDS, 2011). Pandya (2018) claims that out of all the ECCE providers in India, it is the AWC that has adopted the appropriate methods prescribed by the National ECCE Curriculum Framework. Additionally, teaching in AWCs is often conducted in the mother tongue, which is recognised as a good practice for early learning (UNESCO, 2007)

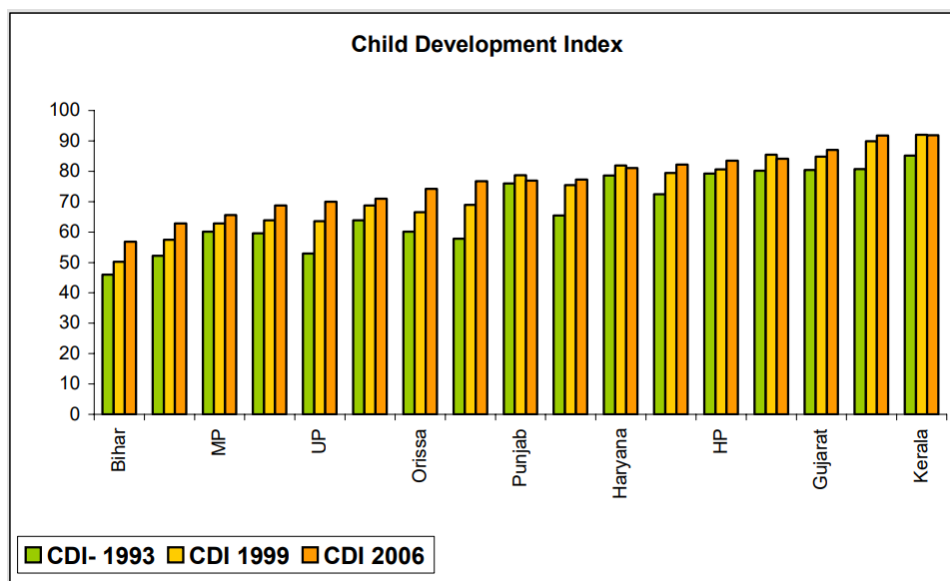


Figure 2: Child development index of India during the year of 2006

Anganwadi: eyes and hands of ICDS

Anganwadis were started in 1975 by the Indian government as part of the Integrated Child Development Services program to combat child poor growth, hunger, and malnutrition. Services at anganwadi centre are delivered by anganwadi workers (AWWs). Around 1.37 million Anganwadi Centers (AWC, s) are present nationwide and run by the government. The Ministry of Women and Child Development supports ICDS program. These centres provide six services to women who are pregnant, nursing and have children under the age of six. Services consist of informal preschool instruction for kids aged three to six, community awareness programs, and health and nutrition assistance. The fundamental structure of program is the same nationwide and has already been universalized, the quality of execution varies from state to state. The classroom at the centers should have an inclusive and empowering learning environment that offers freedom, openness, acceptance, meaning, belonging, and challenge to every child. The importance of physical space in providing safe, fun, and comfortable environments, it's the catalyst for learning at the basic stage. An ideal adult-to-child ratio, appropriate and regular daily/weekly planning, and classroom management are necessary for a well-rounded, age-appropriate ECE program that is child-centered and caters to all domains of development. A pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1 will be ensured at the level of each

school; areas having large numbers of socio-economically disadvantaged students will aim for a PTR of under 25:1.⁶ Caring is the heart of the elementary-level classroom.

Need of holistic development of the child

“A newborn's brain is composed of trillions of neurons...The experiences of childhood determine which neurons are used, that wire the circuits of the brain. Those neurons that are not used may die” (Begley, 1996). Children learn naturally. They are like curious cub, active, eager to learn, and responsive to exploring new things with interest. They have an innate ability to question, explore, try, and discover to make sense of the world. Children learn best through activities, play, and actions. At an early age play is central to their learning and development. It has a vital role in their holistic development. For young kids to develop their gross motor skills and maintain their general physical health, outside play is essential. Additionally, it fosters social relationships and how to work well in a group. Empathy and respect are at the heart of nursing: an attitude of concern and responsibility towards children. In today's time due to rapid progress and the sophistication of technology children prefer to play with gadgets and play stations rather than traditional children's games. These games are not just games but also teaches about many lessons such as practicing patience, cooperation, responsibility, tolerance, and caring among others. As, it is necessary to plant good character traits early in early childhood, so that good character can be well embedded early on. Character is not formed by learning in class, but it requires habituation. Storytelling plays a vital role in character and behavior building. With good and inspiring stories, it is hoped that children will recognize, understand and be able to feel the values contained in the story, so good character values can be embedded in the child. The habit of telling stories or storytelling about folklore needs to be done at school, especially at home, so that communication between teachers, parents, and children can be established in instilling the ch Learning through classroom play also provides multiple opportunities of growth and development in children. It actively engages them in all areas of development and all curricular goals. Choice, surprise, and joy are important aspects of children's play. Training one's body is just as important as training ones mind to stay healthy and fit.ildren's character. (Sethi and Mahajan, 2018)

To develop all-important logical skills in their school days and life strategy games, logic and word puzzles and recreational math are the best. To keep kids occupied with math, jigsaw puzzles, playing with blocks, and solving mazes will help develop a child's spatial thinking. Strategy games (eg chess) develop strategic thinking and problem-solving skills. Playing games (eg Snakes and Ladders, Ludo, etc.) helps them learn about counting, strategy, cooperation, healthy competition, and camaraderie. Classrooms should be organized around all these dimensions. The term environment refers to both the physical space of the classroom and the 'atmosphere' or psychological environment. The physical environment is a structure that provides them with safe exploration, cognitive growth, and challenges. The atmosphere or psychological environment comprises all the social interactions and relationships that take place in the classroom. A safe, secure, comfortable, and happy classroom environment helps children learn better and flourish to their optimal potential. To achieve this,

⁶ National Education Policy 2020

it is important to ensure that all children have access to the necessary facilities, such as spaces for learning materials, aids, equipment, activities, collaboration, and play, so that they can learn better.

Panchakosha Vikas (Five-fold Development) Perspective of ECCE:

A keystone in Indian tradition the child is a whole being with panchakoshas or five layers. The layers are annamaya kosha (physical layer), pranamaya kosha (life force energy layer), manomaya kosha (mind layer), vijñanamaya kosha (intellectual layer) and anandamaya kosha (inner self). Each layer exhibits certain distinct characteristics. The holistic development of a child takes into account the nurturing and nourishment of these five layers. To enable the development of each of these koshas specific types of practices are designed. The Panchakosha concept also maps into the different domains of development envisaged in ECCE.

Table 1: Types of Play

	Free Play	Guided Play	Structured Play
Roles	Child-led Child directed	Child-led Teacher supported	Teacher-led Children actively participate
What do Children do?	Children decide all aspects of their play - what to play, how to play it, for how long to play, with whom to play.	Children plan and lead their own play, similarly as they do during free play.	Children actively listen, follow rules, participate in activities and games planned by Teachers.
What do Teachers do?	Teachers organise a stimulating play environment in the classroom, observe children, and help when children ask for support.	Teachers offer support and actively facilitate play. Teachers guide the children in different tasks that they are involved in, ask questions, play with the children to meet specific learning objectives.	Teachers carefully plan activities and games with specific rules to promote Competencies in a learning sequence. Language and mathematics games, nature walks, songs and rhymes are planned on a daily basis.

- **Physical Development (Sharirik Vikas):** Age-specific balanced physical development is physical fitness, flexibility, strength, and endurance; development of senses; nutrition, hygiene, personal health, expansion of physical abilities; building body and habits.
- **Emotional/Mental Development (Manasik Vikas):** It is the inculcation of concentration, peace, will and willpower, courage, handling negative emotions, developing virtues (maulyavardhan), the will to attach and detach from work, people and situations, and happiness.
- **Intellectual Development (Bauddhik Vikas):** It helps build observation, experimentation, analytical ability, abstract and divergent thinking, logical reasoning, linguistic skills, imagination, creativity, power of discrimination, generalization, and abstraction.

- **Development of Life Energy (Pranik Vikas):** It is the balance and retention of positive energy and enthusiasm, smooth functioning of all major systems (digestive, respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems) by activation of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system.
- **Spiritual Development (Chaitisik Vikas):** It is to discover happiness, love and compassion, spontaneity, freedom, aesthetic sense, the journey of ‘turning the awareness inwards.’

Pancha kosha is an ancient elucidation of the importance of the body and mind. This approach is non-dichotomous to human development and gives clear pathways and direction toward a more holistic education and development.⁷

Anganwadi centres in Patna district:

Like other states in the country Bihar also provides Anganwadi Services Scheme under umbrella of ICDS, which is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India. It is Centrally Sponsored Scheme that provides a package of six services comprising of (i) Supplementary Nutrition (SNP); (ii) Immunization; (iii) Health Check-ups; (iv) Referral Services; (v) Pre-School Non-formal education and (vi) Nutrition & Health Education since 1975. The aim of the scheme is to address health, nutrition, early learning, and the development needs of young children as well as pregnant women and nursing mothers. Under this scheme, the main beneficiaries are children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers. The Scheme operates through a network of functional 80211 Anganwadi Centers spread over 544 Projects under 38 districts of the state. Under universalization 10880 additional/ mini Anganwadi Centres have been sanctioned and they are in the process of implementation.⁸

State also aims to strengthen the ‘Early Childhood Education’ component of Integrated Child Development Services by providing uniforms to children between 3-6 years of age as an incentive to attend the Anganwadi centres (AWCs) through The Anganwadi Bachchon Ke Liye Poshak Yojana/Mukhyamantri Poshak Yojana. This Scheme also attempts to inculcate feelings of identity, harmony and unity among the children through these uniforms. Implementation Status: In the financial year 2010-11, Rs. 7615.10 lakh was allotted for the Scheme, benefiting 3,046,040 children. To improve nutritional status, the Poorak Poshahar Scheme by the state provides supplementary nutrition to the children between six months and six years of age, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls. The Scheme is funded by the Centre and State Governments on a 50:50 ratio basis. Implementation Status: The Scheme is benefitting over 79 lakhs children and women at present. Nutrition Distribution Implementation Committee Poshahar Vitaran Karyanvayan Samiti has been created by convergence of village community and AWCs for procurement and distribution of Supplementary Nutrition.

⁷ (n.d.). NCERT. https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/NCF_for_Foundational_Stage_20_October_2022.pdf

⁸ [file:///D:/synopsisworkfolders/researcharticles/AAGANWADI/DevelopmentServices,Bihar Integrated.html](file:///D:/synopsisworkfolders/researcharticles/AAGANWADI/DevelopmentServices,Bihar%20Integrated.html)

Service Delivery Structure

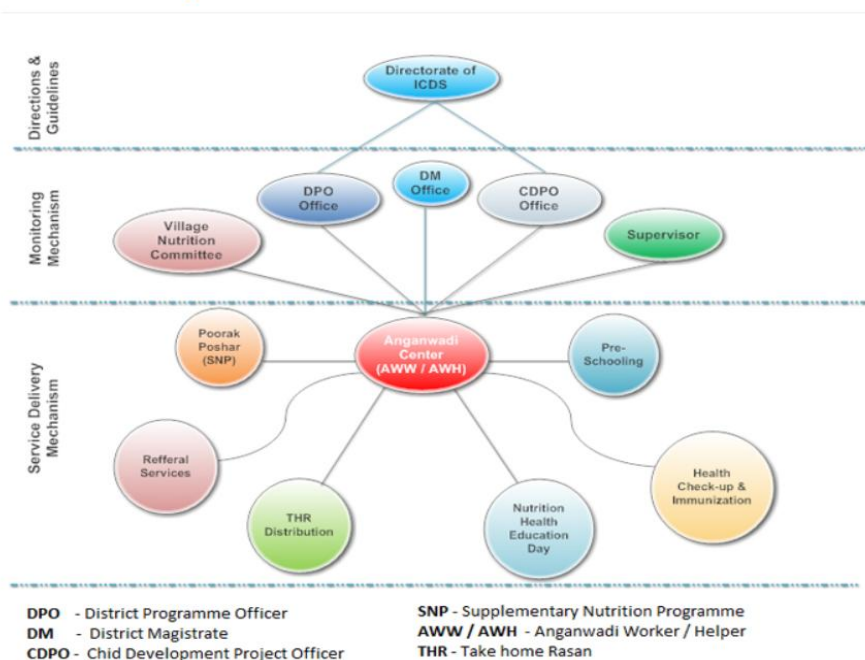


Figure 3: Service delivery system.

Innovation in preschool, on every Saturday, 'Bachpan Diwas' is celebrated at AWCs by conducting a set of extra-curricular activities, like drawing painting, gardening, dance, reciting etc. to improve the quality of PSE. The state is now taking up NABARD loan for construction of AWCs and CDPO offices. The RTMS- Resource Tracking Management System- by which DPOs and CDPOs have been given a common user group by BSNL so that they can communicate without cost and equipment provided will have GIS to track movement of the officials. Introduction of referral slips and budgetary provisions made for the same –in convergence with health department. 'Bachpan Diwas' is celebrated at AWCs by conducting a set of extracurricular activities, like drawing painting, gardening, dance, reciting to improve the quality of PSE⁹. 'Poshahar Nigrani Samiti' created to procure food grains locally and to monitor quality of Supplementary Nutrition Programme with participation of community.

On Ground Problems

Due to poor amenities and services provided at Anganwadi, people tend to prefer private kindergartens school. Anganwadi workers are not so professionally trained according to the curriculum for early education and care. Classroom are not better equipped, just small rooms which are not even well lighted. Anganwadis generally act as a place where children primarily come to collect their mid-day meal and spend some time when parents are away at work.

⁹ ICDS, 2011. Introduction of APIP in ICDS Learning from First Year: 2011-12 MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT GOVERNMENT OF INDIA Introduction of APIP in ICDS.

Generally, there is no planned ECE activity and children can be found playing among themselves while the Anganwadi worker does their own administrative work. Some activity takes place, it is invariably recitation of poems or rhymes or learning of letters or numbers just for maintaining their record books. Lack of play materials appropriate for children, if materials are available they are not in appropriate numbers. The material is rarely taken out for children as the worker fears it will get damaged. Questions about the relationship between program quality and children's developmental outcomes have resulted in a proliferation of research related to this topic. An early childhood supported by high-quality care workers healthy development of children and their families while also increasing possibilities for success later on in a child's life, into adulthood (Barnett 2011; Nores and Barnett 2010; Walker et al. 2011)

Discussion

Major themes embraced by Childhood Studies include: Young children's development is a social process. They learn to think, feel, communicate and act within social relationships in the context of particular cultural settings and practices, mediated by beliefs about how children should be treated and what it means to be a child, as well as when childhood begins and ends ((Richard, 1986); (Schaffer, 1996). Cultures of early childhood are also profoundly social, expressed through peer group play, styles of dress and behaviour, patterns of consumption of commercial toys, TV, and other media (Vaghela, 2004). Childhood is a social phenomenon (Rivista et al., 2009). Childhood contexts and social practices are socially constructed. There is not much 'natural' about the environments in which children grow-up in and spend their time, in built environments, classrooms, and playgrounds, as well as in cars, buses and other forms of transport, in shopping malls and supermarkets. These are human creations that regulate children's lives (Woodhead, 2006). Childhood is an ambiguous status, even within a given time and place. Individual children are faced with, and frequently take creative delight in exploring the multiple versions of being a young child - at home, at preschool, in the playground, including the contrasts and inherent contradictions, especially in multi-ethnic, urban contexts. (Corsaro 2000); (Woodhead, 2006). Childhood has been differently understood, institutionalised and regulated in different societies and periods of history. Early childhood has perennially been re-invented - and differentiated according to children's social and geographical location, their gender, ethnicity, their wealth or poverty, amongst other factors (Johnson et al., 1992). Early childhood is also political issue, marked by gross inequalities in resources, provisions and opportunities, shaped both by global as well as by local forces (Montgomery et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Care and education of children must meet the needs of protection, food and health care, as well as emotional, safety, stimulation and learning needs. Good child care ensures that children develop and grow to their full potential and become productive adults. Early childhood care and education has historically been neglected in India. The National Education Policy 2020 has come at the right time and provides a beacon of hope that adequate attention will henceforth be paid to ECCE. However, NEP still remains essentially an aspirational policy, and not an enforceable legislation. For substantive changes to happen in the domain of ECCE, the

country's lawmakers need to step up and, first, revisit Section 11 of the RTE Act in light of the increased advocacy for ECCE. It is also crucial to understand that while ECCE adopts a more holistic approach to the overall development of younger children, the mandate and expertise of delivering education lies with the MoE and not MoWCD. This would need to be adequately translated into practice, not just through laws but also through adequate financing and standardised policies.

. With diverse periods, stages, and developmental milestones, young children's physical, mental, social, and emotional functioning differs significantly from that of older children and adults. From early infancy through the start of schooling in contemporary civilizations, there are several progressive changes in children's physical, mental, cognitive, and social-emotional skills. These changes signify the development of abilities and talents, as well as interpersonal, communicative, educational, and recreational modes; Early infancy is the time in life when people need most on safe, receptive connections with others (adults, siblings, and peers), not just for their physical survival but also for their emotional stability, social integration, cognitive development, and cultural competency. Early starvation, lack of care, and responsive parenting can all have detrimental effects on a child's development, but young children are more vulnerable to these effects (Woodhead, 2006). While the policy draws out a roadmap on how to achieve universalisation of ECCE in the country, it does not speak of how much needs to be invested in achieving this goal and how it will be financed (ECCE Report, 2018).

The National ECCE Policy is a huge step towards mainstreaming ECCE in India's policy landscape. Calls to strengthen ECCE and ECE provisions in the country have been rising owing to the great body of evidence supporting such a move as well as advocacy by members of civil society. As a result, the National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP) begins with a section on ECE. Recognising the foundational aspect of ECCE, one of its goals is to universalise ECE by 2030. SDG 4.2: It states that the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will create a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for ECCE (NCPF-ECCE) to guide teachers and parents on early childhood learning, keeping local traditions and practices in perspective. It also stresses on developing a workforce trained specifically for ECE and on a convergence with other relevant ministries. However, there are a few things that have not been adequately dealt with in the NEP. While recognising diversity in terms of ECE provisioning, the NEP advocates reducing inequity, but does not state how this can be done when the nature of service and service providers is so varied. It is silent on the longstanding demand to bring ECE under the ambit of the RTE. And, most important of all, there is no discussion on what the cost will be to make the ECE vision under the NEP a reality and who will bear it. However, it has been noted that since its inception, the efficacy of ICDS has been greatly hindered by a policy-implementation gap. This inefficiency can be attributed to poor resource allocation, poor governance, and programmatic deficiencies (Grant et al., 2018). They have also stated that ECE receives relatively less attention in ICDS compared to supplementary nutrition. To address some of these gaps, a restructuring of ICDS is approved in the NEP 2020, whereby ECE was given a renewed focus, as stated in the National ECCE Curriculum Framework

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