Research Paper Education

Integrated Child Development Services (Icds): a Stepping Stone for Universal Elementary Education

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ABSTRACT

Integrated Child Development Service has been an effective pre-school education in the country laying emphasis on integrated delivery of early childhood services and services for expectant and nourishing women. It aims at improving nutritional and health status of children in age group of 0-6 years, to lay the foundations for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child. The ICDS Scheme delivers a package of supplementary nutrition, health education, immunization, health check up, referral service and Non-formal pre-school Education. The Anganwadi centres are the focal point of delivery of ICDS package. The Anganwadi worker , helper, supervisor and Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) are the persons exercising overall responsibility with the help of local community.

KEYWORDS | ICDS, Nutrition & Health education, Referral Service, Pre-school Education, Anganwadi.

Introduction

Children are the most crucial resource of a country. The destiny of the nation depends on the education that we impart to the children in the first five or six years. This early stage of life is the foundation of the child upon which the super structure of life is built. India, being the second largest populous nation of the world, envisages a large number of child welfare programmes to bring all-round growth of its future citizens. Integrated child development services (ICDS) is a centrally sponsored scheme translated into action in pursuance of national policy for children. The scheme was launched on 2nd oct 1975.It lays emphasis on integrated delivery of early childhood services and services for expectant and nourishing woman. The ICDS scheme was evolved to make a co-ordinated effort for an integrated programme of delivery of a package of such services.

Objectives of ICDS

The objectives of Integrated Child Development Services are:-

- To improve nutritional and health status of children in the age group of 0-6 years.
- To lay the foundations for proper psychological physical and social development of the child.
- To reduce the incidence of mortality , morbidity, malnutrition and school drop-out.
- To achive effective co-ordinated policy and its implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development.
- To enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.
- To provide non-formal pre -school education to the children within 3-6 years of age group.

Delivery of services

The following services are delivered under ICDS programme.

- Supplimentary nutrition
- Nutrition and health education
- Immunization
- Health Check up
- Referral services
- Non-Formal pre-School Education.

Non –formal pre-school Education in ICDS

Non- Formal pre-School education is very important and crucial component of the package of services envisaged under ICDS scheme, as it seeks to lay the foundation for proper physical, psychological, cognitive and social development of the child. Children between age group of 3 to 6 years are imparted non-formal pre-school education in an Angawadi (Child care) centre which is situated in the each village and each urban sub-unit with a population of about 1000. Emphasis is not on imparting formal learning or to teach 3 Rs but to develop in child desirable social attitude, values and behavioural patterns and provide environmental stimulation .Emphasis is laid on fostering of creative activities through play. The children are also encouraged to produce their own play materials. Attempts are also made to link the Anganwadis with elementary schools, So that children move from the Anganwadi to the School with necessary emotional and mental preparation.

Administration and management of ICDS

The Anganwadi is the focal point for the delivery of ICDS package of service. Every Village is having one Anganwadi and in case of a big village an additional mini-anganwadi is provided. The Anganwadi is run by an Anganwadi worker preferably a lady who is in charge of delivery of various services of the scheme. Each Anganwadi worker is assisted by a helper who is also supposed to be a lady. The AW is responsible for organizing pre-school activities in the centre for about 40 children within the age group of 3 to 6.The work of the Anganwadi is supervised by supervisors. A full time Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) is appointed for implementation of the ICDS programme in each project area. In rural and tribal projects the Block Development officer (B.D.O) exercises overall responsibility . However the CDPO is directly in charge of the scheme and is responsible for administering and implementing the scheme at the field level.

Content and method in ICDS

The content of ICDS scheme is pre-school activities largely centered around the organized play activities. It is undesirable to force young children to formal methods of schooling by making them sit in rows, keeping silence, parroting lesson, copying from black-board etc. Young children are active by nature and they learn by doing and by interacting with their environment . Play is the main activity by which the child learns and develops. Therefore, rich and diversified programme of play activities rooted in indigenous materials and culture form the core of early childhood education.

For learning and practicing the basic principles of healthful living the child is made sensuous of the healthy activities like

cutting the nails, brushing the teeth daily, combing hair, keeping the body clean, keeping clothes clean, washing hands etc.

Universal elementary education and ICDS

Integrated child development services act as a strong foundation for universal elementary education. It boost the attitude among small children for a healthy school life. A child receives basic skills in an ICDS centre which is helpful for continuance in a formal school. ICDC seeks to lay the foundation for physical, Psychological, cognitive and social development of the child. The study of Aggarawal and Yadav (2008) reveals that the rate of wastage is lower than the learners attending ICDS centres in comparison to non-ICDS learners. The study further reveals that learners having ICDS background have better language proficiency and are the better in cognitive development. As ICDS provides a strong foundation for an effective school life, it facilitates a child to complete his primary course successfully.

Conclusion

The difference as between the ICDS and Non-ICDS children in various areas of development are significant. ICDS beneficiaries are found to be better in over-all areas of development. The children attending ICDS centre are found to be significantly better in their language and cognitive sphere as well .

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