

Status of Early Childhood Care Education in District Mandi of Himachal Pradesh

Jyoti¹, Dr Ajay Sharma²

¹Research Scholar: School of Education Abhilashi University Chailchowk, Teh- Chachyot , Distt- Mandi (HP)

²Assistant Professor School of Education Abhilashi University Chailchowk, Teh- Chachyot

Abstract

Early Childhood education is the most important part for empowering the children with skills and knowledge, and providing them a path for the coming schooling. All the children should be given the opportunity of early childhood education which will enhance their all-round development. The present study is concerned with early childhood care education in Anganwadis of district Mandi was selected. To study the status of Anganwadis. Status Anganwadi workers and helpers, budget and facilities in Anganwadis and Supplementary Nutrition Program are the main objectives of the study. The Anganwadis were observed and Anganwadi workers/helpers were interviewed to check the status of early childhood education provided. In some Anganwadis, there is no electricity and proper safe drinking water facility to the children. 50% of the AWC are running in rented buildings. The challenges faced by the Anganwadi workers/helpers to run the center properly are also enlisted in the study.

Keywords: Anganwadis, Helpers, materialistic, Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) .

Introduction:

Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) refers to plans and provisions for children from pre-natal to six years of age, which provides to the needs of a child in all areas of development i.e. physical, motor, language, cognitive, socio-emotional and creative and aesthetic appreciation, and ensures interaction with health and nutrition aspects (Govt. of India, 2012). It provides necessary thrust to universal enrolment and quality of learning at the elementary level of education. The integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is the main early childhood care and education in Himachal Pradesh. It is focused on the quality of early childhood education, i.e. preschool education and healthy nutrition of children. The government of India launched the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in 1975 and recommended that it might be worked in all states to meet the basic needs of children. The suggestion was made for pre school children cover supplementary nutrition feeding, immunization, health, care including mentioned services, nutrition etc. The state has to provide funds for supplementary nutrition. The central social welfare board, voluntary organizations, local bodies and panchayati raj institutions are to be actively involved in this programme for implementation. The purpose is to entrust the running of anganwadis to voluntary organization, local bodies and panchayati raj institutions. Anganwadi is a type of rural mother and child care center in India. It means 'courtyard shelter' in Indian languages. It provides basic health care in villages and also in Rural areas. The major activities run through anganwadi centers, are providing supplementary nutrition and basic education regarding this and preschool activities to the children in their

early age. The Anganwadi workers ensure antenatal and post-natal care of the pregnant women and nursing women.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Sood, N. (2003) conducted a study on planning and management of early childhood education in Himachal Pradesh as a special case study. It was reported in the study that nursery classes mostly run by the private schools, which accept 80% of the children in the age group 3 – 6 years. So, this age group was directly out of the system. The infrastructure facilities were poor and there was no availability of safe drinking water, electricity and lack of sanitation facilities.

Minhas, S. and Qadiri, F. (2010) conducted a comparative study of preschool education in early childhood education centres in India. They found that many of the Anganwadi centers were functioning in rented buildings and only few had Govt. accommodation. All the centers carried out all the activities concerned with preschool education. Only 15% Anganwadi centers were providing books for the children. The Anganwadis preferred 'Play Way' method to impart early education which was good.

Attri, R. (2014) studied role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in early childhood care education in Himachal Pradesh and found that emphasis was laid on the direct involvement on Panchayati raj institutions to monitor and supervise the Anganwadi centers and identification of beneficiaries. The findings of the study revealed that the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in supporting Anganwadi services is found to be wanting in several respects.

Chandra atl(2017) Conducted study on Quality Early Childhood Care and Education in India: Initiatives, Practice, Challenges and Enablers. A number of initiatives have been taken by the Government of India for bringing quality in the form of policies, plans, constitutional amendments, acts, development of quality standards and curriculum framework, schemes and flagship programs like Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS); District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). In this endeavor, somewhere India has compromised with the non-negotiable quality standards for ECCE, leading the emergence of expected and unexpected issues and challenges. As a result, the country has missed the target of ensuring quality in ECCE. However, recent studies give evidence of tremendous progress towards quality reforms. Of course, there are low achievements in some aspects and in some regions, but also improvement in others which shows that ensuring quality is an attainable target. This paper intends to describe initiatives of the Government of India, assess the ground realities, identify major challenges in quality reform in ECCE and suggest possible enablers to reach out the same.

From the review of the studies, it is noted that no study in early childhood education area has been conducted in Mandi district. Therefore, this study has been undertaken to get a view of early childhood education system in this district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the status of Anganwadi centers.
2. To study the status of Anganwadi workers and Anganwadi helpers' salary.
3. To study the Supplementary Nutrition provided in Anganwadi centers.
4. To find the main challenges in early childhood education in Anganwadi centers.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Type of Study: Community based qualitative study.

Place of Study: The present study of early childhood care education in Anganwadi was undertaken in district Mandi of Himachal Pradesh.

Methodology of the Study: The present qualitative study was based on the descriptive research method. Descriptive research studies are designed to obtain related and precise information about the current status of any phenomena. The researcher collected and provided the type of information of what exists with respect of variables or conditions in a situation. The researcher preferred and used the method keeping in view the objectives and nature of the study.

Data Collection: Used to collect the required information from the Anganwadi workers. Also, the Anganwadi centers were visited personally to observe the activities and functioning of Anganwadi.

Results

The data collected through the semi structural interview scale and personal observation has been analyzed thematically and explained simply as follows.

OBJECTIVE -1 STATUS OF ANGANWADI CENTRES

The district wise distribution of ECCE/Anganwadi centers, total population of children of 0-6 years along with beneficiaries under the same age in Himachal.

Table No- 1

Sr No	District	No. of ECCE/Anganwadi Centers	Total Population (0-6) years	Population of Beneficiaries under various schemes in ECCE/Anganwadi centers	
				Total population (0-3)	Total population (3-6)
1.	Bilaspur	1136	35826	16564	13372
2.	Chamba	1495	55271	24512	21594
3.	Hamirpur	1399	40177	17423	6584
4.	Kangra	4177	133412	52625	26411
5.	Kinnaur	266	6903	3089	2514
6.	Kullu	1110	40133	17230	10874
7.	Lahul -Spiti	156	2329	944	806
8.	Mandi	2994	94233	40487	34109
9.	Shimla	2050	66410	27098	14551
10.	Sirmour	1509	52213	23267	14854
11.	Solan	1289	48233	19381	10334
12.	Una	1390	47944	20455	8381
	TOTAL	18971	623084	263075	164384

Source: Directorate of Women and Child Development, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Table 1 indicates that there are 18,571 Anganwadi/ECCE centers in Himachal Pradesh. Total population of children between age 0-6 years is 6, 23,084. The children who are receiving the benefit of the various schemes under ECCE/Anganwadi centers between age 0-3 years are 2, 63, 075 and 3-6 years, are 1, 64, 384 while 1, 95, 625 children are either not attending Anganwadi centers or are in private care centers.

OBJECTIVE – 2 STATUS OF ANGANWADI WORKERS AND ANGANWADI HELPERS SALARY.

Table-2

Name of Post	Salary Prescribed by Central	Additional Salary by State Govt	Total Salary
Anganwadi Worker	4500	5500	10000
Helper	2600	3200	5800

Source: Directorate of Women and Child Development, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

It is clear from the Table 2 that monthly salary of 4500/-, 2600/-, has been fixed by the Government of India for Anganwadi workers, helpers respectively w.e.f. 25 /05/2025. The State Government is also paying 5500, 3200 per month to Anganwadi workers, Anganwadi Helpers.

OBJECTIVE -3

SUPPLEMENTARY NUTRITION PROGRAM:

Under this programme, supplementary nutrition is provided in Anganwadi Centers to children, pregnant / lactating mothers. Ratio have been fixed (per beneficiary per day) children, pregnant/ nursing woman. The union Budget 2025-26 allocates Rs 26,889.69 crore to the ministry of women and child development, highlighting major funding for Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN include nutrition support 2.0 with Rs 21,960 crore. Key initiatives include nutrition support for women and children, child protection services, and women's empowerment program.

Source <https://www.google.com/search?q=current+financial+year+budget+provision+for+Anganwari>

Table 3: Age – Wise Detail of the Supplementary Nutrition

Sr No	Beneficiary	Type of Supplementary Nutrition		
		Take Home Ration	Breakfast	Cooked Food
1.	Children (6 Months – 3 Years)	Nutri Mix, Rice, Sweet Dalia	-----	-----
2.	Children (3 Years – 6 Years)	-----	Nutri Mix	Rice Pulao, Sweet Dalia, Namkeen Dalia, Sweet Rice
3.	Pregnant Ladies/Lactating Mothers	-----	-----	Rice Pulao, Sweet Dalia, Namkeen

				Dalia, Sweet Rice
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Source: Directorate of Women and Child Development, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

It is clear from the Table 3 that Nutri Mix, Rice, Pulao, and Sweet Dalia is provided in the form of take-home ration (uncooked) to children of the age (6 Months – 3 Years) and Nutri Mix is provided to children of age 3 years to 6 years as breakfast and Rice Pulao, Sweet Dalia, Namkeen Dalia, Sweet Rice is provided after cooking. Same ration is provided to Pregnant Ladies/Lactating Mothers.

OBJECTIVE - 4. MAIN CHALLENGES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN ANGANWADI CENTRES

The main challenges faced to impart early childhood education to the children came out during the observation of AWC and interview of the AWC workers/helpers. These are enlisted as follows.

- The parents of the children send their children to the private schools at the age of 2.5 years whereas these children are to be enrolled in near AWC. Therefore, the enrollment of children in AWC and mini AWC is very low. It is not easy to keep them in AWC after attaining this age.
- In most of the Anganwadi Centers the enrollment of the children is low. So, there is no child to play with each other at an early age. It is not easy to educate them.
- The rented buildings are not in good condition. There is no electricity facility and safe drinking water facility for the children and to making the food.
- Most of children attend the AWC only for food. There is no mind set of the parents to educate their children in AWC.
- The AWC in villages are situated at distant areas. It is not easy to bring the children daily to AWC.
- NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of ECCE and aims to improve the quality of education in Anganwadi through a National Curriculum Framework for ECCE.
- The policy aims to ensure universal access to ECCE by strengthening Anganwadi centers with high-quality infrastructure, play equipment, and well-trained Anganwadi worker and helper.
- While NEP 2020 emphasizes teacher training, some Anganwadi workers may not have adequate training to implement the new curriculum and pedagogical frameworks.
- Implementing the NEP 2020 curriculum effectively can be challenging due to limited resources and training opportunities.
- Some Anganwadi teachers may not be fully prepared for the changes introduced by NEP 2020, including the shift from rote learning to conceptual understanding.

Conclusion:

Early Childhood education is the most important element for empowering the children with skills and knowledge, and providing them a pathway for the coming schooling. All the children should be given the opportunity of early childhood education which will enhance their all-round development. This study has discovered that the Central and State Governments are taking initiatives for early childhood education but the schemes are not followed properly at the ground level

From the above results it can be concluded that the role of community and panchayats in supporting ECCE services is also found to be expecting in several respects. In some Anganwadi, there is no electricity and proper safe drinking water facility to the children. 50% of the AWC are running in rented buildings. Panchayat have been given role and functions regarding ECCE in Himachal Pradesh. The NEP 2020

presents both opportunities and challenges for Anganwadi, which are crucial for early childhood care and education (ECCE) in India.

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