

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme: A Program for Enhancing Holistic Development of Children in India

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ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) of India established Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in 1975. ICDS has served a flagship program for India's health care system, and has received financial and technical support from UNICEF and the World Bank (UNICEF2012). The present study has highlighted the role of ICDS (Anganwadi centers) in enhancing holistic development of children as well as early child hood learning strategies and is based on secondary source. Although ICDS proved very beneficial for child health, education and development yet the researcher came to conclusion that the main aim and object of the government under which the scheme was launched has not achieved the better results because of the fact that all the families are not taking benefit of said scheme due to illiteracy, poverty, lack of understanding and false social status and also these centers are lacking proper infrastructure facilities as well as adequate teaching learning material which acts as a big hurdle in pre-school and non-formal education.

Keywords: *ICDS, Holistic development, Enhancing, Role, Children.*

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Introduction

Paediatric malnutrition always remained a burning issue of the nation. Wide publicity and various programmes on the subject were framed by the Indian government intermittently but failed to extend out to the focused group. Well defined open and progressive National Policy for children was made. In the response of this policy multicentre programmes with healthy package of services was initiated which was later formulated and shaped in the form of Integrated Child Development Scheme. This programme was initiated on 2nd Oct 1975 in 33 (4 rural, 18 urban, 11 tribal) blocks. Over the last 40 years it was expanded progressively and at present it has 7076 projects with 13, 46,186 AWC's are operational in 36 States/UT's covering 1022.33 lakh beneficiaries under supplementary nutrition and 365.44 lakh (3-6 yrs children) under pre-school component (<https://icds-wcd.nic.in>).

ICDS centers have been opened with the aim to train the children in the field of education together with proper healthy nutrition. As prepared fertile soil organic manure, timely irrigation, pruning, cutting, budding etc helps in the development of nursery of healthy saplings which after plantation yield immense of fruit, Similarly for the healthy growth of child with sound mind and mathesis power of child can only be possible when the parents especially the mother of child is aware of the health care education and proper development of the child which becomes the responsible citizen and plays a vital role in national building. A network of development includes health, family wellbeing and literacy, cultivation along with irrigation, women and child development schemes, hygiene,

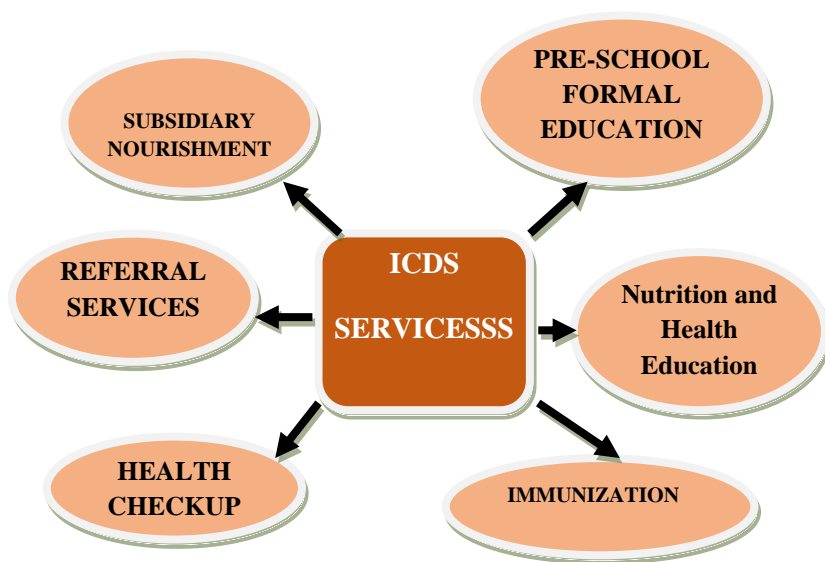
habitation /sheltering, portable water, metallic roads, proper transportation, development of border areas, social welfare throughout the country. The principle aim of introducing these schemes was to make the public aware of the benefits of these schemes in order to change the life style/living standard of people and create avenues of employment to reduce poverty. To improve the worse condition of poor people, the government of India launched so many schemes in rural/urban areas of the country, which include opening of ICDS centers throughout the country. A healthy child will be tomorrow's healthy citizen. Proper education, good health care can only be possible when these centers educate the beneficiaries like children (0-6), pregnant/lactating women by utilizing the service of Anganwadi workers to act upon their intermittent advice about proper nutrition and also prepare the mothers to take the benefit of the schemes introduced in these centers. The need and significance of initial childcare and education has been admitted by 11 year plan as a period which sets the base for lifelong growth and development with accomplishment of child's full potential and also suggested that every child of the age group (3-6) should be ornamented with one year pre-school education (National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, 2012). A child who takes part in early childhood programs acquires proper health care, enriched nutrition, and grab the opportunities to get prepared for every school related skills, active participation in all practice oriented plays and social progress.(Kaul, 1992)

Schemes and Services under ICDS

There are six services which include supplemental nutrition, early childhood care and education, health

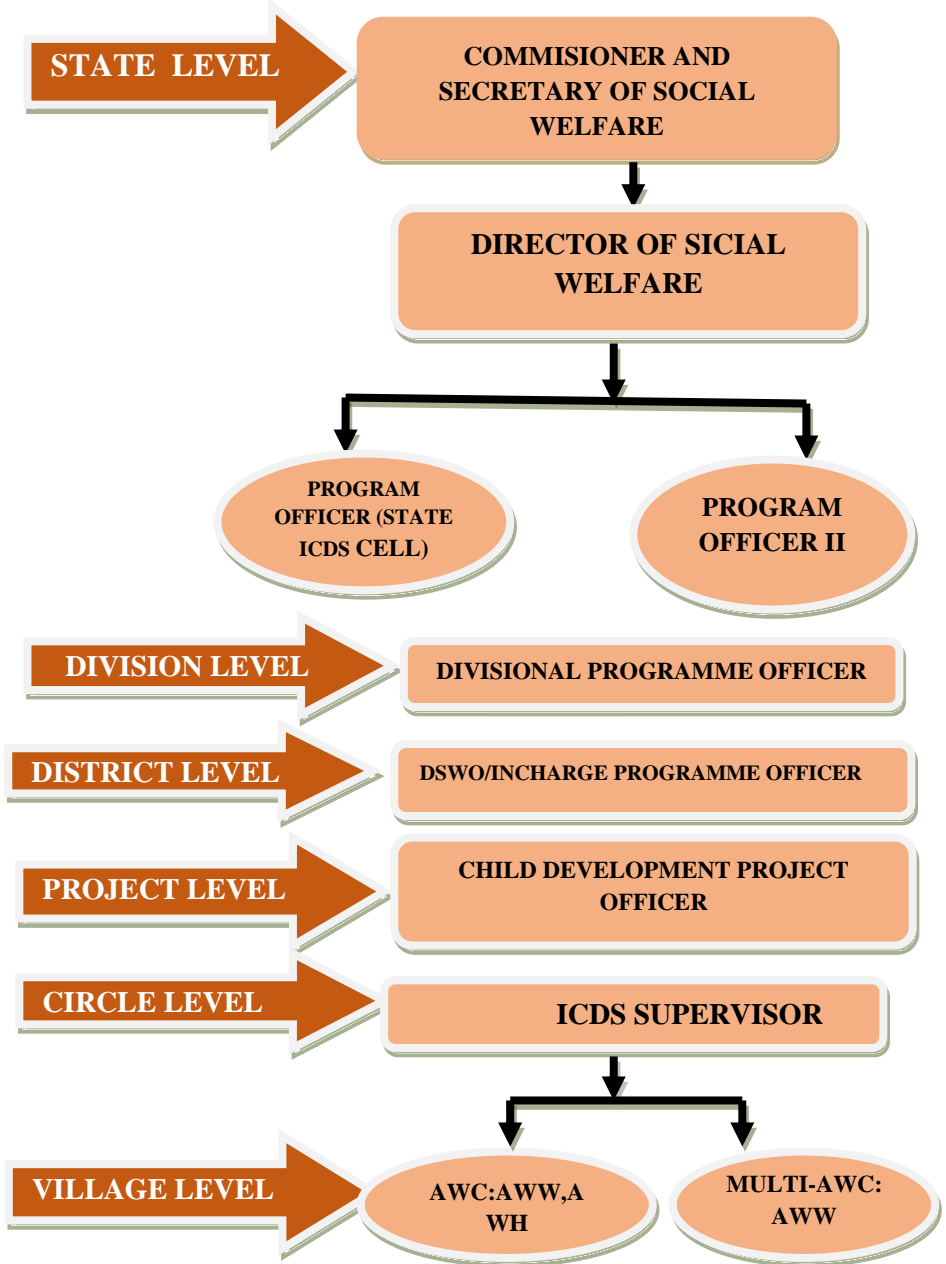
education, vaccinations, health checkups and referral services under ICDS umbrella. Out of these services, three pertains to physical fitness supplied through National Health Mission (NHM) including public health infrastructure. All the Anganwadi centers provide these services among common masses with the help of workers and helpers at grass root level.

ICDS centers are like nursery forms where in mothers of the children are cardinally invited to participate and be aware of the progress of their children and mothers are also trained in respect of child's nourishment and educational components. If necessary these centers take classes of mothers intermittently to feedback them the basic concept and role of mothers in building up the carrier growth of child. ICDS programme which is carried out by means of community level system "Anganwadi Centre" provides pre-school education, supplementary nutrition, health education not only to children but also to their mothers and has played a pivot role in enhancing and making childhood learning and development more effective. Children are given motherly affection more pacific way, good gesture, affable manner of teaching without controlling by rod and nod. The journey of child study from kids to youngster is very industries. In these centers, the child is given free hand and is monitoring by the centre of his/her activities towards the studies of his/her choice. Noticing his/her cupidity towards the chosen subject the child thoroughly understands the ins and outs of the studies. Proper attention and due care is paid by the trained teachers recruited by these esteemed centers.



(Source: Handbook for Anganwadi workers: National institute of public cooperation and child development)

Flowchart showing the administrative and organizational setup of ICDS scheme



(Source: Handbook for Anganwadi workers: National institute of public cooperation and child development)

For the purpose of good effective learning, adequate arrangements like techno equipments sufficient playgrounds etc are provided to the children. ICDS centers plays a role of training institution wherein the children are properly cured, physically and mentally developed and prepare like a trained soldier enabling them to join the primary classes without any fear and show their worth in the field of co-curricular activities together with indoor/outdoor games. Child's mind is molded towards the good habits, strict discipline and moral values in these centers ICDS has child oriented approach established on the principle that child care, cognitive and psycho-social development and nutritional wellbeing mutually reinforce each other. ICDS plays a very crucial role in inculcating moral values and good habits at an early stage and enhancing pre reading, writing and learning skills and also to interact with peers.

Early years of child's life are very crucial and lays a strong foundation for all round development as well as enhance early childhood learning strategies. These years also decide the child's life survival and growth. It is in early age when child develops physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively and also this development is essential for success in his/her life. the first step towards the both world of knowledge as well academic life is early childhood education and this education plays an important role for the child to be independent and more confident (Mustard & Mustard,2006). A child throughout this spell of time is always ready to seek his/her physical environment/surroundings in order to interrelate with world and boosts own form of appearance. This period performs genuine

function in setting the inclusive foundation of child's life in all aspects i.e. educationally, socially, emotionally and academically and therefore it is known as pre-school age.

Need and Significance of the Study

In order to achieve the main target through implementation of the said scheme and make it effective and functional in terms of all facilities and nutrition fairly, this study becomes beneficial in exhibiting the actual figure under which the scheme has been launched. The present study is also significant as it helps in revealing the real picture of this scheme in terms of its achievement of the fixed objectives.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the role of ICDS in holistic development of children.
2. To study the role of ICDS in enhancing childhood learning strategies.

Review of Literature

Aruldoss & Davis (2015) in their article has focused on children's rights with special references to the early childhood provision and well being. For this study, ethnographic research was used to collect data. It was concluded that children participation especially in early childhood wholly rests on the place in which they situate. The interpretation and analysis of the study indicate the dynamic organization of young child and encourages the readers to acknowledge children capabilities to assist pedagogy and practice.

Balarajan & Relch (2016) conducted a study to explore the ICDS scheme with an objective to study the issues of said scheme with respect to child nutrition with main focus on the failure of scheme in sustaining the attention of policy makers using kingdom's model. It was found from this study that in spite of supportive factors for the promotion of policy reform, there is a lack of sources to move the reform process ahead. This study has suggested need of attention which helps in enhancing the political feasibility of future policy reform which will play a crucial role in improving child nutrition in India.

Samanta et al. (2017) conducted a cross sectional study with an objective to evaluate childhood care and education component of ICDS services by measuring the school readiness among children. For this study, data was collected from 30 Anganwadi workers through cluster sampling, children (5 years of age) and their care givers. It was concluded from this study that there should be the provisions of well infrastructure facilities in Anganwadi centers (AWC's), timely supervision of Anganwadi workers (AWW's) as well as compatible environment at homes which will play a crucial role in enhancing children to be ready for formal schooling.

Baghel et al. (2018) conducted study in an urban area of central Indian city with an objective to assess the extent of malnutrition among children less than six years of age together with the components related with under nutrition of selected children. Two stage sampling procedure was adopted and with the help of lottery method 38 AWC's were selected in first stage. Similarly for second one 10 child beneficiaries from the selected centers were chosen

for this study was selected randomly from the selected AWC's. Out of total 380 children 192 was males and 188 were females. The findings of the study revealed that 47.4% of children were under nutrition out of which 55% children were of grade1, 34.4% were grade2 and 10.6% children were of grade 3 as per the Indian Association of Pediatrics (IAP) classification of under nutrition.

Mohapatra et al. (2021) carried out research with an objective to analyze ICDS in terms of implementation and monitoring in the state of Odisha. This study is based on secondary source and data was collected from government documents and secondary literature. This article has thrown light on existing policies of the said programme in terms of nutrition procurement, storage and supply, cooking and serving procedures in Odisha and has also evaluated this scheme on the basis of its outreach to the common masses in a particular state. The study has given the recommendations which will prove helpful for the upcoming advancement of several other sectors of the scheme.

Research Methodology

In present study the researcher has tried to evaluate the purpose of the said scheme in enhancing initial childhood care and holistic development through the review of existing literature regarding the above aspects. All the related studies conducted from the year 2000 to 2021 were searched by the researcher on several data bases which include research papers, books, handbooks etc. the keyword searched in order to obtain the relevant literature including holistic development, children, learning strategies, ICDS,

early childhood care and education. Moreover for this research, the investigator has consulted peer reviewed research articles including various reports issued by some notable organizations such as WHO, UNICEF etc. Hence for this study total 18 publications were considered out of which 10 were research papers and articles and rest were the reports.

Analysis and Discussion

The coverage performance of Anganwadi centers and mother/child healthcare amenities provided by these centers still require more up gradation. As per as the norms , the non formal component of the said scheme offers the most cheerful play way like activities for about 3 hours a day. This component is mainly meant for training and preparing a child for formal education in their later stage of life. The pre-school education is mainly provided by allotted workers with full zeal and dedication in these. Studies of various ICDS centers have revealed the infrastructure disparities in terms of scarcity of indoor/outdoor space constraints, insufficient supplementary nutrition, lacking pre-school activities, immunization and health checkups. Also these centers lack proper teaching learning materials which act as a big hurdle in pre-schooling component of the said scheme. Pre-school education is provided by the trained workers to the enrolled children in the courtyard. There is a provision of adequate teaching learning material in each centre to provide proper pre-nursery schooling to the enrolled children in the age group of 3-6 years. In these centers different provisions are made to impart pre-school education also and for fulfilling this component successfully, adequate teaching learning material in the

form of toys, alphabetical blocks, pictorial charts etc are meant to establish a kind of formal education in the child's next phase of survival. In some centers this component is completely lacking. It was found that very less attention is paid towards these things because of less participation of beneficiaries and community support.

Conclusion

A child is such a spurting bud or sapling of a tree which needs every care of proper development, nourishment, adjustment in such an environment where the child gets immense wealth of educational accessories like good health, good manners and right faith, fraternity, discipline, act of roagation, behavior, talent etc. Equipped with sound body and mind helps the child to grow rapidly and get honorable place in the society ICDS centers every year produce bounties of trained children. At present this scheme is considered as one of the largest scheme throughout the globe for enhancing effective pre-school child care and learning strategies in order to ensure a proper all-round evolution of child both socially, emotionally as well as cognitively. To go into the depth of procedural work of these centers, it is assumed that some centers are lacking adequate facilities such as lack of ventilated rooms, proper sitting arrangement and supply of pure drinking water, medical facilities and above all effective teaching learning material. In some centers there is lack of proficient staff.

It has been observed that these centers remained confined to supply of nutrition only and children are attending simply when food/nutrition is served. In addition to pre-

school education, physical education, proper crèche facilities, scientific teaching/ learning material must be provided. Adequate arrangement of indoor/outdoor games with proper equipments must be available so as in to train the children in such a manner which helps them in choosing their own carrier in the interested field. There is need to provide all the facilities in these centers so that these centers function like preparatory schools.

Although new schemes are being introduced in the ICDS centers by the government intermittently. Non-formal pre-school education procedure is adopted in these centers. the investigator think that non-formal education may be introduced in all ICDS centers, so as to develop interest and infuse a spirit of brotherhood and nationality among children by way of exhibiting toys and portraits of grand national personalities, warriors, freedom fighters, distinguished scientists, educationists, agriculturists etc and highlight their yeoman's services, rich contributions in building the nation and make the children aware of national heroes from their early childhood. To infuse the spirit of interest and inclination towards the pre-primary schooling, children showing quick pick up, identifying and understanding the things easily may be rewarded in the form of issuance of appreciation certificates, trophies, portraits of national personalities, picture posts, drawing charts, color boxes, crayons, sports equipments, eatables etc. More emphasis should be laid on the care of girl child particularly in nutrition care and it should be extended even at their higher age. There is a need of in-depth studies to formulate more effective policies for the holistic development of children.

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