

Community involvement strategies in non-formal education service of ICDS: An unique experimental development

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■ **ABSTRACT** : The present research was taken up with the objective of planning various strategies of community participation in the non-formal preschool education service of ICDS in the Anganwadis in the Village namely, Netaji Nagar, Chandan Nagar, Anandpur Colony and Kotha Narayanpur. Opinions of the community were obtained on the planned strategies and implementations of strategies opined by the community were done. The rationale for the selection of this research was that "If you give man a fish, he will eat for a day; so teach him to fish, he will eat life long". The qualitative research has been done, taking total sample of 160 respondents. Community people were mobilized to participate and two Anganwadis were established by researchers with community support in proposed ICDS Blocks. After experimentation of strategies, it was found that the level of community participation was improved and seen different for both proposed and functional ICDS blocks. The findings of the study signified the importance of creating awareness of the programmes among community as well as community be made aware of type of involvement needed from them and be motivated to participate in the programme for the successful running of the programme.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Non-formal pre-school education, Experimental development, Community support

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The young child holds an important place today in the society. His physical and psychological wellbeing is of unprecedented parental and community concern. The prediction made some eight decades before that this century would be the century of the child seems more than a wish. Today the progress and prosperity of a nation are intimately related to the optimum growth and development of its children. Research studies and investigations conducted in the field of child development have shown that the early years are the most crucial for the growth and development of children and that the environment exercises its maximum effect during the period of early childhood. The provision of pre-primary education would ensure a favourable environment conducive to the development of the pre-school children. Over the years, the child psychologists have also proved that there is continuity between infancy, early childhood and late childhood. During the past few decades, there has been an

accumulation of scientific evidences that has strengthened the conviction that the first few years in the child's life are crucial time for learning. Increasing attention has been drawn to cognitive development in infancy, early childhood and to the role of early stimulation in intellectual development.

Keeping these facts in mind, the government of India envisaged an ICDS Scheme, which would emphasize on total development of the child. The scheme was launched on October 2nd 1975 on an experimental basis in 33 projects- 17 rural, 12 tribal and four urban with a budget provision of three crores. Today the ICDS scheme is an important national programme for the welfare of women and children through these packages of services :

- Non-formal preschool education
- Health checkups
- Immunization
- Supplementary nutrition

- Medical referral services
- Nutrition and health education

These services are provided to the community through the Anganwadi, located with the village/ slum itself. Each Anganwadi is run by an Anganwadi worker and a helper. Non-formal pre-school education component of ICDS not only imparts formal learning but will also develop in the child desirable attitude, values and behaviour patterns and aims at providing environmental stimulation.

There are around 130 million pre-school children who need development services. It is neither possible nor desirable for the government to take full responsibility of looking after the growth and development of such a large child population. India needs large resources to provide optimum services to pre-school children which government alone cannot possibly mobilize. Even, if the government initiates programmes of child development and establishes Anganwadis, it cannot continue to spend its limited resources on these services endlessly. Ultimately the responsibility has to be taken by the community itself. Along with it, this is also true that if you “Give man a fish, he will eat for a day, so teach him to fish he will eat lifelong”. Thus, there is a strong need of community participation in ICDS scheme. The parents and the community are also responsible for growth and development of the young children. Therefore, child development should be the responsibility of local people. But researches have shown that at present in the ICDS set up, community involvement is in terms of recipient of services only.

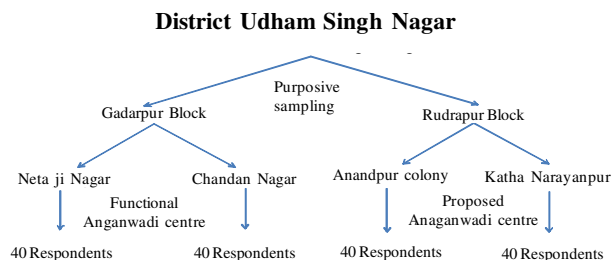
Objectives:

Therefore, in view of the lack of people’s participation and the importance of non-formal pre-school children, the present investigation was proposed with the following objectives:

- To select functional and proposed Anganwadi centres.
- To experiment the strategies already planned and opined by community in selected villages.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies experimented in selected villages.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The complete sampling procedure is being depicted clearly with the help of the line diagram.



Four villages were selected by simple random sampling, using lottery method, whereas respondents were selected by simple random sampling without replacement. The entire sample of 160 respondents was divided into two groups namely, Functional ICDS villages (where Anganwadis are running since last 9-10 years) and Proposed ICDS villages (where Anganwadis are proposed to run by government but yet not established). The experimental development research design was used to determine the resultant effect of the study. Pre-test data on the traits of both groups were collected. All the four villages were exposed to stimuli consisting of preplanned and preopined strategies to strengthen the non-formal pre-school education component of ICDS. Post test evaluation through focus group discussion was carried out in both the groups, whereby the difference between before and after evaluation determines the changes in both groups. In order to impart knowledge and make people aware about the ICDS, sessions were organized in all the villages in accordance to the time availability and convenience of the community as a whole. Charts, folders and films were used to motivate them for community support.

Preplanned and preopined strategies were :

- Involving community in providing infrastructure support, play material, stationery and work books.
- To offer volunteer’s help in children’s pre-school programme.
- Regular conduct of parent meeting/mother meeting.
- Celebration of special days.
- Provision of outdoor play ground by the village community for young children.
- Book bank or play material bank with community support.
- Involvement of Gram Panchayat
- Facilitation of self-help group in villages.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Result of quantitative analysis of the strategies opined, experimented and evaluated in both proposed and functional ICDS block is given in tabular and graphical form.

It is clearly evident from Table 1 that in proposed ICDS block only around 25 per cent people were ready to give infrastructural support to start an Anganwadi because most of the people in the area were not having their own spaces to live, they were bonded labours and were living in their employers place. But as far as building material and man power was concerned more than 80 per cent people were ready to support the researchers. Around 96 per cent persons had given support in terms of providing building material I(Grass, wood and other material to make a hut).

In functional ICDS Block, After a long conversation with researchers, people were ready to support the anganwadi centres in terms of providing play material, books, and

Table 1: Quantitative analysis of the strategies opined, experimented and evaluated in proposed ICD's block

*Strategies opined	**Strategies experimented		***Post evaluation of strategies (% contribution)		
Strategies	Opinion in mean per cent (n=80)		Kotha Narayanpur	Anandpur Colony	Mean %
Providing infrastructure support		Providing infrastructure support			
Space	26.25	Space	8.34	8.34	8.34
Building material	95	Building material	100	91.66	95.83
Man power	80	Man power	33.33	58.33	45.83

* Obtained from interview schedule, **Experienced at community level and ***Obtained from focus group discussion

Table 2: Quantitative analysis of the strategies opined, experimented and evaluated in functional ICD's block

*Strategies opined	**Strategies experimented		***Post evaluation of strategies (% contribution)		
Strategies	Opinion		Netaji Nagar	Chandan Nagar	Mean %
Play material, book bank and stationery support	86.25	Play material, book bank and stationery support	50	83.33	66.67
Celebration of special days	100	Celebration of special days	100	100	100
Facilitation of SHG	57.5	Facilitation of SHG	83.33	100	91.67
Financial assistance	50	Financial assistance	75	91.67	83.33
Participation as volunteers	18.75	Participation as volunteers	25	41.67	33.33
Participation in parent meeting	100	Participation in parent meeting	100	100	100
Providing outdoor play ground	93.75	Providing outdoor play ground	-	-	-

* Obtained from interview schedule, **Experienced at community level and ***Obtained from focus group discussion

stationery voluntarily, all the people agreed that each and every festival should be celebrated in the centre to make their children aware about their traditions Fig. 1. But As far as their participation in day to day activities of Anganwadi was concerned, only 33.33 per cent people agreed to do that Table 2. Most of the people had the opinion that it was the employees' work and she should do it by own. All the parents were anxious to know about their children's daily activities and therefore they demand for a regular parent meeting.

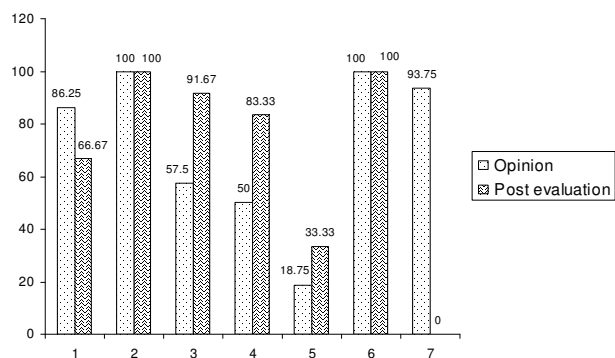


Fig. 1: Comparison of strategies opined, experimented and evaluated in functional ICD's block

Conclusion:

So it is evident from the results obtained that community

participation in functional ICDS block was less as compared to proposed ICDS block. The reason may be that people of functional ICDS block were habitual to obtain the facilities without any investment on their part because government is providing them the facilities since last 9-10 years. So the community people have set their mind that it is government's responsibility to fulfil their needs. Whereas in contrast to it community people of proposed ICDS blocks were more excited to participate because they have never been earlier in this kind of situation to obtain the facilities.

It can be concluded that if the community is motivated to participate in their welfare programme from the very beginning, the target of the programme can be better achieved with less investment in terms of both human and materialistic resources. For this the community people should be motivated to take a lead role in implementation of the programme.

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