



Qualitative Assessment of learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs and effect of Intervention on the knowledge level of AWWs.

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Abstract : A study was carried out in 200 AWCs from rural areas of Akluj block of Maharashtra state .Out of 200 AWWs, 50 AWWs were selected for capacity building intervention .With the help of adapted standardized tool and self-devised rating scale, data is obtained with regard to learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs and knowledge level of AWWs. Results showed that most of the centers were lacking in the availability of outdoor space, equipment's and materials for outdoor and indoor play, consequently reflected its use too. The quality of classroom environment i.e. Class arrangement, Age appropriateness of activities , Weekly/Daily schedule and Child produced display in AWCs reflected poor quality in most of the AWCs except for the parameter of class display. Statistically significant difference in the pre and post score on knowledge level of AWWs was noticed in using available learning /plays aids, planning programme schedule and making class arrangement in ICDS AWCs.

Keywords : ICDS, AWCS, AWW, Early Childhood Education, quality, learning aids, play aids, program schedule, class arrangement

INTRODUCTION:

India is a very highly populated nation and caters to a large majority of children's preschool educational need through the world's perhaps largest project i.e. ICDS. It is necessary to assess the quality of early childhood education in ICDS Anganwadi centers and provide research based answers to enhance the quality of education by creating a vision for preschool teachers, so that the maximum utilization of available resources is possible.

Quality of child care program for Indian context are well described by Swaminathan (1993). Learning /play aids are essential for conducting preschool programme. These aids provide an opportunity for children to develop gross and motor skills. Learning aids gives hands on experiences to children and help them understand the basic concepts. Programme schedule is important as it decides in what way children are going to spend a day. It is like a directive tool for teacher to utilize maximum time for conducting meaningful activities. It really helps to develop an objective oriented attitude in teacher whereas class arrangement is to be taken care as AWCS are having mixed age group. It is important to take their age into account while making class arrangement and developmental needs.

The aim of the present study is to measure the quality of ICDS Anganwadi centers, in terms of learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs. Plan, develop and intervene the programme of innovative strategies for the AWWs for the efficient use learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs and find the effect of Intervention on the knowledge level of AWWs. Keeping in view, the present study was designed and investigation is carried out on basis of following objectives:

Objectives-

- 1.To assess the availability and use of space, equipment and materials in AWC's
- 2.To find the quality of classroom environment in AWC's
- 3.To study the effect of intervention on knowledge level of AWWs with respect to improve the quality in using learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs.

METHODOLOGY :

The investigation was carried out in rural areas of Solapur district, Taluka -Malshiras, from Maharashtra state. For quality assessment, Anganwadi centers (AWWCs) and Anganwadi workers (AWWs) from Akluj block were selected. Purposive sampling method was used for this research. For quality assessments of AWCs, out of 233 AWCs in Akluj block, 200 AWCs were selected. Out of 200 AWWs, 50 AWWs were selected for further study.

Tool for Quality data collection :

1.A standardized tool named 'The Early Childhood Education Quality Assessment Scale' (ECEQAS), 2012 developed by Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University New Delhi was adapted for data collection. Scoring for the responses is as follows.

- Poor category – 0 score
- Average category -1 score
- Good category – 2 score

For finding the quality of Anganwadi centers, 200 Anganwadi centers were categorized in three groups i.e. Anganwadi centers in poor quality, average quality and good quality by using the following statistical method

- Poor quality = Arithmetic mean - Standard deviation
- Average quality = In between high and low
- Good quality = Arithmetic mean + Standard deviation

2.A rating scale entitled ‘Assessment of knowledge of AWWs for quality enhancement in AWCs’ was designed to obtain information about teacher’s knowledge on overall quality of AWCs.

With the help of above mentioned tools data is collected by visiting 200 AWCS, each by observing it for a day. Fifty AWWs were pretested on their knowledge for the innovative use of learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs. The observations obtained on the quality of AWCs and teacher’s knowledge was analyzed. The innovative strategies package was developed and these teachers were given capacity building intervention workshops in two phases - one by researcher and another by experts in order to upgrade the efficiency of teachers in the use of learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs. These AWWs were then post tested to assess the impact of intervention on their knowledge level.

The data obtained at the base line was tabulated, coded and analyzed statistically. Student’s *t* test was used to test the significant difference between the means of two groups. The scores for each category were totaled, compared and the mean scores, *t*- test, were obtained and data is presented.

Result and Discussion:

Table 1. Quality of learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs
N=200

Sr. No	Space, equipment’s and materials for	Quality of AWC’s in mean percentage		
		Poor	Average	Good
1	Outdoor play	69.50	30.50	0.50
2	Indoor play	64.00	35.00	1.00
3	Use of indoor learning material in the class	66.50	32.00	1.50

Table 1. denotes availability of space and use of equipment and materials in AWCs. Here in all the parameters most of the AWCs are showing poor quality.

It reflects from the table that most of the AWC’s had poor quality (69.50%), as these centers were lacking in the availability of outdoor space, equipment’s and materials for outdoor and indoor play, consequently reflected its use too. AWCs which were attached to Zilla Parishad schools were using outdoor play ground and available equipment’s such as slide, swing, and merry-go-round. In 66.50 percent AWCs use of indoor learning material

was not seen, whereas; in 64 percent of AWCs indoor play material was of poor quality. In some AWCs indoor play material like puzzle card, beads, blocks, picture books, drawing notebooks, ball, and bat were seen but in very few AWCs it was provided to children for playing (1%). It might be due broken material and enough material was not available which can meet the requirement of all the children. Audio visual material like chart, and T.V. was available but were not in use during the activities.

Results obtained from research conducted by Quadri and Manhas (2009) in Kashmir and results of Hangsing (2011) in Arunachal Pradesh are in the line of the above results. These researchers mentioned that AWCs in Kashmir are functioning in limited space for conducting indoor and outdoor activities and also lacked outdoor equipment.

Table 2. Quality of classroom environment in AWCS

N=200

Sr. No.	Classroom environment	Quality of AWC's in mean percentage		
		Poor	Average	Good
1	Class arrangement	82.00	16.50	1.50
2	Age appropriateness of activities	62.50	35.00	2.50
3	Weekly/Daily schedule	50.50	49.00	0.50
4	Class display	44.50	45.50	10.00
5	Child produced display	95.00	3.50	1.00

Table 2. shows the quality of classroom environment in AWCs. In this result, all the parameters are showing poor quality in most of the AWCs except class display.

From the table it is illustrated that 82.00percent of AWCs did not show any special arrangement for group or individual activities or the indoor activities such as creative art activities, storytelling, readiness activities or corners like block ,doll, science, book etc. The space in the classroom was used to dump the material like gunny bags of supportive nutritional services for pregnant women, children, medicines, fuel, various cooking material and kitchen equipment's.

In 62.50 percent of AWCs teacher conducted activities without taking age of children into account, whereas; 35.00 percent AWCs children with age group of 3-4 were made to sit separately, unsupervised or doing something on their own on slate. Few activities were conducted by including these children such as singing of rhymes and songs.

With respect to weekly/ daily schedule in half of the AWCs(50.50%) neither had nor appeared to follow any pre-planned schedule and in other half (49.00%) of AWCs planned schedule was displayed but was not observed to be followed by teacher. It may be due less focus on preschool education activities in AWCs. It is

age old belief still continued to exist that AWCs are nothing but ‘nutritional centers’ and not for preschool education. As a result AWWs were not focused on providing planned preschool education to children and even they did not know how to plan a curriculum for conducting preschool activities.

Moving ahead for observation regarding class display it was seen that in 45.5 percent AWCs children could see display but it was too high on the wall, in 44.50 percent AWCs there was no display and some AWCs display was not meant for children but for visitors. In only 10.00percent of AWCs interesting class display which was understood by the children and was also placed at their eye level was noticed.

In 95.50 percent AWCs Child produced display was a very rare phenomenon. Only in 3.50 percent of AWCs some display was seen which was more than one month old and only in two (1.00%) AWCs Childs recent work was displayed and changed every month.

Above results are contradictory with the quality aspect stated by Ishimine (2011). In his case study he stated that centers, which had written documentation, follow specific theme for every month and weekly and day to day planning reflected high quality. Whereas these results are at par with the observations done by Choudhury (2006) as researcher noticed that there was hardly any preparation done by teacher before daily teaching by the teachers in Delhi.

Table 4. Mean percent, standard deviation and ANOVA for knowledge level after the intervention of innovative strategies for AWWs about quality in AWCs N=50

Sr. No.	Quality parameters		Mean	Standard deviation	df	F-value	Result
2	Learning/Play Aids, Programme Schedule, and Class Arrangement	Pre Test	53.30	16.76	49	4.04*	Significant
		Post Test	68.00	18.04			

*Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table 4.exhibits mean percent, standard deviation and ANOVA for knowledge level of AWWs about quality in AWCs.

Statistically Significant improvement is noticed in post test analysis in terms of knowledge level of AWWs about Learning/Play Aids, Programme Schedule, and Class Arrangement. Training included the aspects for improving the knowledge and building up the capacity in programme planning, preparing learning /play aids and class arrangement, knowledge about curriculum planning, its principles, types , unit planning, along with proper distribution of time in a day’s schedule, do’s and don’ts whereas; it further elaborated in depth on integrated curriculum was practiced with them. A session was conducted where they had to plan a weeks’ schedule along with the details of activities, teaching aids and content in it. It was noticed that they were unable to develop and give continuity in content on a same theme for a week. For this they were divided into groups

and topics were given to them for planning. Then they were made to realize the needs and levels of the children and develop a suitable curriculum. Along with, they had to give the details like class arrangement, learning aids to be used for conducting each activity. Preparing teaching aids from waste products like wedding card, boxes, papers, sticks, marbles, cycle tiers etc. were also conducted. This helped them to improve significantly on their knowledge and understanding about planning and learning aids.

These results are in the line of the results of Upadhyaya and Sonawat (2003). A study was conducted with the aim of constructing a module and conduct awareness program that will help the caregivers to be aware of the quality in ECCE or all those who are associated with the ECCE programme. The results revealed that there was an improvement of 35% in the awareness of the total sample confirming positive effect of intervention on teacher's level of knowledge on quality in early childhood education.

CONCLUSION:

In terms of the learning /play aids, programme schedule and class arrangement in ICDS AWCs most of the AWC's had poor quality (69.50%), as these centers were lacking in the availability of outdoor space, equipment's and materials for outdoor and indoor play, consequently reflected its use too.

The quality of classroom environment i.e. Class arrangement, Age appropriateness of activities , Weekly/Daily schedule and Child produced display in AWCs reflected poor quality in most of the AWCs except for the parameter of class display.

Statistically significant difference in the pre and post score on knowledge level of AWWs was noticed in using available learning /plays aids, planning programme schedule and making class arrangement in ICDS AWCs.

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