

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN INDIA: “HISTORY, TRENDS, ISSUES, AND ACHIEVEMENTS”

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ABSTRACT

The changes within the social and economic structure of India have intensified the requirement for universal infancy education. The formidable challenges before the Indian Government are: to supply prime quality infancy education programs; to preserve indigenous practices like multilinguality, family/community involvement, participation of older children as caretakers of their younger siblings; and to supply infancy education to any or all children despite serious financial constraints. This text presents a short overview of the standard childrearing practices in India, chronicles government initiatives in infancy education, describes the range of programs available in India, and identifies goals which will shape the long run of infancy programs in India.

Keywords: *Childrearing Practices, Infancy Programs, Teacher Training, International Infancy Education.*

Introduction

The View of the Kid in Indian Society

Throughout Indian history, children have always enjoyed a special status in society. In India, childhood is taken into account to be a novel and enjoyable period in a person's life, so children are pampered by the adults within the family and within the community. Numerous special occasions within the community mark the importance of this developmental period. For instance, the entire community celebrates the birth of a baby, a child's first intake of solid food, the naming ceremony for a baby, and also the child's first day of formal education. Informal learning of young children during a natural environment through songs, dance, play, and talk are a daily component of the childrearing responsibilities of adults and older children in India. However, the growing demands of a newly industrialized nation have altered many of the fundamental childrearing practices in India. The requirement for more structured infancy teaching programs and stronger governmental involvement within the education of young children is rapidly emerging.

History of Infancy Education in India

Universal infancy education in India could be a relatively recent development. Throughout the history of India, formal education was limited to only male members of the high caste groups. Mass illiteracy among children of low caste families and feminine children has had a cumulative effect of unequal distribution of educational opportunities among the population. The conscious and systematic try and educate children from all sections of the society began in 1937 with the academic philosophy of Gandhi. Gandhi's basic education scheme was designed to line up free and compulsory education at the national level. Maria Montessori's 1939 visit to India implanted the foundations of preschool education in India and teachers were trained in Montessori's method of education. Her major books were translated into many Indian languages. Today, there are many Montessori preschools in India, and a few schools in Delhi and Bombay are affiliated with Montessori International. Infancy education has been a relentless focus of all major committees and commissions established by the govt of post-independent India. In 1953, the Committee on Infancy Education recognized the restrictions of leaving total responsibility for infancy education with parents and recommended inclusion of preprimary classes within the existing Indian primary schools.

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Trends and Issues Affecting Infancy Education in India

The following economic, societal, political, and academic trends and issues have had a serious impact upon infancy education in India. The Enrollment of girls within the Workforce Is Growing in India. This is often not only true for ladies from middle and upper middle-class backgrounds who have white-collar jobs, but also for ladies from social class backgrounds who work as migrant laborers in construction sites, agricultural laborers, skilled or unskilled laborers in industrial sectors, maidservants privately homes, or women engaged in income-generating activities reception. Due to the unavailability of knowledge on women working within the private sector, a reliable estimate of the quantity of girls working within the labor in India isn't available. The relations System Is Gradually Disintegrating. The growing industrialization and consequent change in economic infrastructure has caused the wage earning members of the many families to maneuver to urban areas in search of employment, leaving a part of their family back in their rural homes. Therefore, the standard role of the relations members to supply care and informal education to young children is diminished by distance. Second, the first childhood education movement at the international level has also influenced research and policy issues. Many innovative research projects and pilot programs are initiated by major agencies in India. For instance, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has launched the Children's Media Laboratory Project in ten states of India with funding from UNICEF. The educational materials (print and nonprint) produced by the laboratory in several languages are distributed freed from cost to any or all infancy centers and organizations within the country.

Emerging Educational Expansion to Incorporate All Children

In 1993, the "Program of Action" report of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in India identified certain groups as major target groups for expansion of infancy education in India. These groups include young children:

- Who reside in very low-income urban communities?
- Who board ecologically depressed areas (rural areas and artisan households) where they're required to participate in agricultural and household chores?
- Who are the offspring of itinerant, seasonal, or construction laborers.
- Who have special needs or physical disabilities (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1993)

Programs Available in India

There are a range of federal, voluntary, and personal programs serving children birth through age eight. Programs go past the govt. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is India's national program to serve children between 0-6 years (Muralidharan, 1992). In fact, it's the most important child development program within the world serving approximately 16 million children a year (Young, 1996). ICDS services are operated through a network of Anganwadis (courtyards) and are "supported by the globe Food Program, CARE, UNICEF, the eu Union, USAID, and therefore the World Bank" (Young, 1996, p. 73). ICDS services combine both care and education and are supported four comprehensive objectives. These include:

- To provide quality health and nutritional services to pregnant and lactating mothers.
- To reinforce physical and social development of youngsters, birth through age six.
- To facilitate coordination between various departments involved in affairs of state and implementation of babyhood education.
- In order to fulfill these objectives, the ICDS programs provide a range of services, such as: supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-up, referral ~services, treatment of minor illness, nutrition and health education, and preschool education.

Programs go past Private Institutions, These programs are supported by high tuition fees from students. The preprimary schools in camera sectors serve mostly as feeder schools to the first schools. Therefore, the curriculum is more academically oriented. Moreover, the demand and competition within the formal schools is also a contributing consider the growing academic orientation in preprimary schools in camera sectors. The language of instruction in some schools is Hindi (the national language), in others one in every of many alternative state languages or in still others, English. Instruction in English is demanded by the fogeys due to the demand of English people language in education and within the job market.

Teacher Training

Training of teachers varies per the character of the programs. ICDS programs train all three levels of personnel involved in its programs. Training of Aganwadi Teachers. Aganwadi teachers, both for preschool and creche programs, are drawn from the local communities. The minimum academic qualification for an Aganwadi teacher is that the successful completion of the eighth grade. A comprehensive manual is published by the National Council of Public Cooperation and Child Development for training of preschool workers. Usually the training course for the preschool programs is residential. The preschool training runs for 3 months and includes preschool education, nutrition, health education, child development, communication, and population education. Crèche workers are appreciate the teaching aides. Girls between 16-25 are recruited by babyhood Education in India from the community for the creche programs and are given on-the-spot training for 1 month. The training of creche workers includes health education, nutrition and academic care, craft, language, accounts and administration, and sociopolitical awareness. Trainees are provided hospital experience to become intimate with child care, and maternal care, both prenatal and postnatal. The course is supplemented with seminars and workshops on creche management and babyhood education.

All time of life teaching programs go by the govt are evaluated regularly and in contrast to many program evaluations conducted within the u. s., qualitative methods of evaluation instead of quantitative methods are generally emphasized. for instance, the supervisors and project officers in ICDS programs conduct on-site evaluation of the Aganwadi programs. National agencies are involved within the program evaluation (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, 1992). The program evaluation of ICDS programs include many alternative aspects of the program delivery additionally because the program's long-term and short-term impact on children enrolled into the program. Young (1996) reported studies on nutritional impact, morbidity rates in ICDS areas, school enrollment of ICDS children, and college drop-out rates among ICDS children. Nath and Ray (1993) also reported qualitative studies on community participation models operated in ICDS programs.

The Language of Instruction in Government Programs

Because of multilinguality in India, selecting a language for teaching poses a challenge to teachers of time of life and first schools. This problem is acute in metropolitan areas and various strategies are implemented to deal with the difficulty. In some schools, children are taught in their home language for a few activities and for other activities, they're taught together through a standard language (either the state or the national language). In other schools, the building is split into different language medium areas under the leadership of 1 administrator (e.g., English-medium wing, Hindi-medium wing, Gujarati-medium wing). The teachers are generally fluent in several of the languages. In rural areas, teaching during the first childhood years is typically conducted through the state language.

Early Childhood Education in India: Recent Achievements

In spite of the financial constraints India faces, advances in Indian time of life education are evident. They include:

- Providing Developmentally Appropriate Education in Early Years. India's National Policy on Education (1986) has taken a robust stand on developmentally appropriate practices and child-centered programs. The document states: "Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) are child-oriented, focused around play, and individually-oriented. Formal methods and introduction of the three Rs are discouraged at this stage. The local people are fully involved in these programs"
- Integrating Children with Special Needs within the Regular Classrooms. India is additionally an advocate of inclusion. The "Integrated Education" plan for the disabled is coordinated and implemented by the National Council of Educational Research and Training. Under this plan, children with special needs are integrated into regular classrooms. Institutions for kids with special needs are established at the national level, but these facilities and services haven't yet reached the agricultural population.
- Combining Western Models of time of life Education with Indigenous Practices. Some Western educational philosophies have had a widespread influence on time of life education in India, like Montessofi, Piaget, and Froebel. A concentrated effort is being made by the govt to release education in preprimary years from the tyranny of the three Rs. The curriculum in time of life education is continually revised to raised meet children's needs. Songs, games, and stories from local cultures are included within the time of life curriculum. Materials to be used for time of

life classrooms are indigenously prepared and care is taken to keep up their appropriateness to the cultural values. Following her visit of an Aganwadi center in India, French (1992) reported that Indian educators typically use natural resources, like leaves and stones, to show various mathematical concepts. She also remarked on the general child-centeredness of the curriculum amidst visible resource constraints.

- Conducting Program Evaluation through Case Study Methods. Case study methods are the well-liked means of evaluating various program components of the ICDS programs. Nath and Ray (1993) reported that a case study approach was accustomed evaluate the community participation models of Garden Reach (urban) ICDS project in Calcutta.

Conclusion

Providing high-quality education to any or all the nation's children may be a responsibility shared by the State Governments and therefore the Union Governments of India. This collaboration has brought a clear change in plan-ning, monitoring, and funding of the first childhood programs. Action has been taken at the national level to create the programs child-centered, context-oriented, and aware of the requirements of people and groups. within the future, time of life education in India faces three important challenges: to coach all of the nation's Young children, to elevate the professional status of time of life educators (strengthening time of life teacher preparation, hiring well-qualified teachers, increasing salaries for time of life teachers), and to preserve the long-revered cultural tradition of community involvement in children's informal learning. If implemented successfully, these goals will persuade be new milestones within the history of Indian education.

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