

Abstract

This is an ethnographic study carried out with an aim to gain in-depth understanding of the ways in which differing ideas about Early Childhood Education (ECE) are reflected in socio- cultural context that are “still developing” or “undergoing rapid social change”. The goal of the study was to identify the ways that educators, parents and community can better prepare their children for formal schooling, while preserving the integrity of locally valued ways of raising children. Therefore it was attempted to understand and study linkages/interface between policy- program directives, practices and adults conceptions. The study was carried out in rural setting of Gurgaon Block of Haryana State. The sample comprised of (a) The National and State policy documents. (b) Four Anganwadi centers from four different villages of Gurgaon block. Within the pre-school setting three children from each Anganwadi Centre (age group-3to 6years) were randomly selected as focused children. (c) **Adults: Parents (40):** The sample comprised of 40 parents i.e. **20** mothers and **20** fathers (ten from each village). They were native of same village. Four Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), One Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), One Supervisor and Nine members of Village Education Committee (VEC) were included as the sample. Semi-Structured Interview Schedules, Observation Checklist along with the Naturalistic Observations and Focal Child Observations were used as tools for Data Collection. The Key documents on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) both at National and State level were collated, to get an insight into policy makers conceptions on ECCE, their program directives and implementation strategies of those polices. The Observations were carried out in each Anganwadi centres (AWCs) (Preschool setting). These observations were aimed to get an idea as to how the pre-school program is transacted in practice. The Semi-Structured Interview schedules helped to understand the adult’s conceptions on ECCE. The data from all the three sources was analyzed qualitatively. The results of the study have

highlighted that Policy and Program principles were not fully reflected in actual practice. Interface was reflected between Policy, Practice and Adult's conceptions on select issues like play way method of teaching, play being an important activity for children, training as an important component for efficient working of Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), upgrading of infrastructural facilities, school readiness, or access to the centre. Some interface was seen in practice and parents conceptions that were not coherent with the policies, these were approval of non use of Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), teaching of 3R's i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic, negligible use of indigenous teaching aids and gender discrimination. It emerges that though policies, practices and conceptions of community lacks the harmony but still it seems that all three of them are working to lay foundation for children that may enable them to maximize their learning potential upon entering the primary school.