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Report On Role Of Communication
In Child/Family Welfare

By

Yadunandan K C
REPORT ON

ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN CHILD/FAMILY WELFARE

—BY PROF. YADUNANDAN K.C.

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished fellow-delegates;

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you here, taking part in this seminar and I feel it a special privilege to get this opportunity to present this paper on the role of communication in the child/family welfare activities, especially in the context of what we are doing in our country, Nepal and I would like to thank the organisers of this seminar for giving me this opportunity.

Communication is a great contributing factor to national development. If the proposition that one is a product of all that he has experienced holds good in the case of the growth of a child, it is extremely important that the child be given exposure, and that also effectively, to the right values the country in which the child lives determines as consonant with the ideals of that nation. These values need to be made a kind of habit or a way of life with the child forming essentially in him desirable behaviours and attitudes for the nation as a whole as well as in the context of the relation of the nation to the rest of the world. The superbly important role of communication comes in here in the process of getting across to the child these values that are held necessary by the establishment in the country.

Child mind works in a most subtle way. A child lives in his own world of imagination with a highly sensitive plasticity of mind. A child pays attention to what interests him and what is within his experience. Though the nature of a child is biologically more or less the same all over the world his interests and experiences are determined and are set by the kind of environment he finds himself in. Therefore though, a general pattern of forming communication bridges with all children can be envisaged, situations might demand use of different techniques of communication from country to country or from village to village or even from child to child. Ineffective or say, defective communication is worse than no communication, because it
fails to deliver the intended message, contrary even, produce a negative effect upon a child. Good communication consists in bringing about the right impact, that is to say, it is not just unidirectional or like a one-way traffic in its effect, on the contrary, it will succeed in getting the right response from the child in terms of change in his behaviours, attitudes or skills.

In Nepal, the structure or the pattern of communication in so far as getting across to the child's mind, is concerned are in a very preliminary stage. Technological progress is still in its infancy in our country. Television which is one of the most powerful media of communication in most countries of the world is a far cry in our country. So a child spends most of his time in the presence of his parents and other members in his family. This factor makes it all the more important in a less developed country like ours to explore effective means of communication for educating the mothers and other adult members of the family who are responsible for the upbringing of their children. In a country like Nepal which has such geophysical and climatic variations besides ethnic cultural, linguistic and other differences and where more than 93% of the people live in rural areas, the range of experience gained by children and the scope of widening their experiences is bound to differ from one place to another; consequently communication poses a big national problem in the context of mobilising the people towards the welfare of children, and for that matter, the cause of national development in general.

Children account for 40% of the total population in Nepal which has an annual birth rate of 2.5%. Infant mortality is around 200 per thousand. Though, juvenile delinquency is not a critical problem here as in some other countries, because of the poverty and the rural nature of the country, the education, health and general well-being of the children are a subject of great national concern. Nepal, in its own small way, has been doing what it can to promote the welfare of the children and the family they belong to. The children have been provided opportunities with the cooperation of all and by mobilizing the local resources on a nation-wide basis.

Nearly a hundred years ago the government of Nepal established two orphanages—one for children below 6 years of age and the other for children from 6 to 16 years of age. With a view to conducting child/family welfare activities in an institutionalized and a
better organized manner, Nepal Children’s Organization was established in 1964 under the Chairmanship of Her Majesty the Queen (the present Queen Mother). And also Family Welfare Organization was established for child/family welfare. The Nepal Children’s Organization has also set up a network of Mandir or Children’s Centre on the basis of one each of the 75 districts of the country and it has been running pre-school programmes in each of these centres. It has also been distributing nutritious food through 120 distribution centres to primary school children, preschool children and infants besides conducting various programmes for making the people aware of the importance of and the method of preparing nutritious diet for children and nursing mothers. It is also running child health clinics and child welfare projects in different parts of the country.

The Nepal Children’s Organization in collaboration with child/family welfare organization and family planning Association has been providing the following services for the welfare of children.

- orphanages and vocational training centres for orphans.
- pre-school class, which is also a training centre for the teachers working in each child centre.
- schools for the deaf and dumb children.
- publication of magazines, booklets, stories, comics, etc for the children.
- day-care centers for working mothers.
- educational and recreational programmes for school children.
- running libraries for children.

Nepal Children’s Organization is receiving financial, technical and material assistance from His Majesty’s Government of Nepal as well as from other international agencies like UNICEF, WFP, GCP, USC, UCEP, and so on.
In all these welfare activities, various means of mass media have been adopted; as for examples radio broadcasting, books, booklets and posters, films and slides, notice-boards and writings, dramas, puppet-shows and tableaux demonstrations, use of calendars and so on. Health assistants and information officers are posted at different points who help the local people with modern ways of tackling their problems.

However, we are still faced with tremendous problems in forming communication links with children and parents all over the country. The very limited experience of people living in remote rural areas often belies the expectations made by even sincere workers in their actions. Once a graffito on a wall in a village in Nepal showed a sickly-looking woman who was advised to adopt family planning measures in order to regain her health. But the local people misunderstanding the message in the picture imagined that family planning measures would break down the health of a woman as shown in the picture. The picture was effaced as when it found that the misunderstanding or the communication gap led to a fall in the local women adopting contraceptive measures. This stray example points out how great a role communication plays in making any development programme a success. Hence it is very important that effective communication measures be constantly explored and tried out.

I would very much have liked to dwell on this subject at greater length but, for having to be brief, I would like to conclude this paper here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, everybody.
WORKING GROUPS ACTIVITIES

Charge to Working Groups

Dr. Edith H. GROTBERG

There will be two concurrent working groups. One will use the materials on early stimulation to adapt for media use and the other will use the materials on breast feeding to adapt for media use. These two working groups will stay together, and for the work sessions of today focus on the identified materials. For Thursday, the one group will use the materials on accidents and the other will use the materials on immunization.

The groups are to identify the central concepts in the materials and clarify them. Then the groups should discuss how these concepts are best communicated to the four audiences (academicians, practitioners, policy makers, and media), and describe how the information can be shared among the receivers. Your group leaders will help in these activities. When there is clarification and agreement, then the groups or individuals or subgroups can begin to develop media script.

The experiences in the working groups will be reported to the entire workshop at Plenary Sessions and the scripts will be shared as available. The proceedings of the Seminar will contain reports of each working group with a description of the process, the problems and the products.