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The Use Of Media In The Parent Education Programme

By

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PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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The paper gives an overview of the Parent Education Programme which is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Community Development, Singapore. It focuses on the Programme's use of various media in meeting its objectives.
MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SINGAPORE

The Use of the Media in the Parent Education Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Parent Education Programme (PEP) was implemented by the Ministry of Community Development in 1984. The Programme stems from the recognition that a stable family is important for the well-being of the individual, society and the nation; and that effective parenting is an essential component of stable and satisfying family life.

1.2 Concept and Objective

1.2.1 Parent Education Programme is a preventive and developmental programme. This Programme is designed to support parents in their challenging task of bringing up their children by providing information and skills on parenting. The Programme focuses mainly on the positive aspects of parenting. It is based on the assumption that all parents want to do their best for their children but sometimes need a helping hand in various aspects of parenting. This approach also encourages parents to see participation in the Parent Education Programme as a means of building up their confidence and abilities.

1.3 Organisation

1.3.1 A Co-ordinating Committee comprising representatives from relevant Government Ministries such as the Health and Education Ministries and other relevant organisations, oversees the directions and activities of PEP.

1.4 Target

1.4.1 The Programme is targetted at parents of children below 18 years old, and would-be-parents.

2. STRATEGIES

2.1 The main strategies adopted by the programme are:

- encouraging the integration of Parent Education in the programmes of various organisations such as civic and welfare organisations, employers, unions, etc as part of their programmes.
using mass media to disseminate information and messages on parenting.

organising Parent Education talks/forums at various venues throughout the year.

designating a week as "Family Week" to reinforce the concept of positive family life.

2.2 The "Family Week" is the annual highlight of the PEP. During the week, messages on positive parenting and family living are intensified through the media and various organisations are involved in conducting educational programmes for parents and fun activities for the family.

3. THE USE OF MASS MEDIA IN PEP

3.1 The Programme relies on two types of mass media efforts. One is direct programme funding for advertisements and programme activities featured in the mass media. The other is sponsored publicity and media support.

3.2 The main mass media used by the Programme are television, radio, press and dissemination of information materials.

(a) Television

Filmlets on aspects of parenting and family life are broadcast over TV during the month which Family Week is held. Over a 3-year period, the Programme has produced 11 filmlets to convey specific messages on parenting. The duration of the filmlets ranges from 15 to 60 seconds. They deal with issues of communication; appreciation of children's efforts; role-modeling; giving children time and attention, parental responsibility towards children, etc. The filmlets are produced mainly in English with some translated into Chinese and Malay.

(b) Radio

Messages, talks, publicity on Family Week and PEP activities and programmes on family life and parenting are also aired by the radio and Rediffusion. The use of the
radio and Rediffusion has helped to bring greater awareness of the PEP and to reach out to the public.

The activities conducted over radio so far included a sponsored weekly half hour programme, entitled "For the Family". This was aired over 13 weeks and featured talks/ interviews on issues of concern to parents and families, songs and audience quiz and news on family events. A Jingle encouraging family togetherness was also played on air to reinforce the programme.

(c) Press

The press helps to carry articles on parenting, child and adolescent development and family issues contributed by resource persons of the Programme. These are released usually around Family Week period. Other press supports come from the usual news coverage of activities and related feature articles.

(d) Public Education Materials

Educational pamphlets, posters and exhibits are also developed for the Programme. Educational pamphlets are used for distribution to parents who attend Parent Education activities or by social service and community organisations. These pamphlets cover topics such as effective parenting; communicating and relating with children; developing the self esteem, child's potential, and creative abilities of children; and other issues.

Posters and exhibits are used to convey positive messages, and information on parenting, family life and child/adolescent development issues. Posters are put up at community centres, workplaces, community and social service agencies and schools. Exhibits are put up in various venues in connection with other Parent Education activities.

3.2 The use of mass media is one of the most effective strategies for public education. However, the extent of its usage and the types and combination of the various mass media to be explored, are sometimes limited by budgetary constraints of the Programme.
4. THE USE OF FACE TO FACE MEDIA IN PEP

4.1 Much of the year-long Parent Education activities take place in face to face sessions with small and large groups of parents. Talks, forums, seminars or workshops are conducted by various resource persons for the general public or for specific target groups at various venues.

4.2 In organising such group sessions, the Programme involves various types of organisations to reach out to specific groups of parents. The Ministry organises such sessions jointly with other organisations, and/or encourages organisations to hold activities with some supportive back-up from the Ministry. So far, social and welfare agencies, grassroots, community and civic organisations, schools, companies, unions, language and cultural groups, public libraries, Maternal & Child Health Clinics have been involved in organising educational programmes for parents.

5. SUMMARY

5.1 The Parent Education Programme being a public education effort needs to make use of mass media and face to face sessions in small and large groups to reach out to the public. While mass media has the advantage of reaching out efficiently to large numbers of parents, the face to face sessions have the advantage of fine tuning to the concerns of any particular target group. The latter allows a two-way communication between resource persons/facilitator and parents.