

Review Article

Developing Curriculum for Capacitating Counsellors of the Child Protection Unit: An Indian Experience

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Abstract

The Indian Government has many programmes towards the child development and all these programmes been brought under the umbrella of Integrated Child Protection Scheme since 2010. In India, Karnataka state is pioneer in implementing this scheme through establishing Karnataka State Integrated Child Protection Society (KSICPS), they have appointed 560 child protection personnel's like protection officer, counsellors, social workers, community outreach workers and house parents at the district head quarters to meet the psychosocial needs of children in difficult circumstances. The KSICPS requested Department of Psychiatric Social Work and Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry to develop a curriculum for building the skills of counsellors for enhancing the psycho social care for children. After reviewing various programmes and course curriculum, the authors has proposed a curriculum for training, same been fielding tested and finalized for circulation in the form of a capsule for other states to implement the similar programmes. All the sessions adopted participatory methodology, aimed at enhancing their existing skills. Handbook containing reading materials for all the sessions was prepared and circulated. The counsellors found that training was very much helpful, and assured that they would implement the psychosocial care for children in their district headquarters.

Keywords: Capacity building; Child protection; Counselling

Introduction

India is home to almost 19% of the world's children. More than one third of the country's population, around 440 million, are below 18 years [1]. It is estimated that around 170 million; 40 per cent of India's children are vulnerable and living in difficult circumstances [2], needing care and protection. 'Child Protection' is about protecting children from and against any perceived and real danger or risk to their life, their personhood and childhood. Protection is thus not only about reducing their vulnerability to any kind of harm and protecting them from the harmful situations. It is also about ensuring that no child falls out of the social security and safety net and receive necessary care, protection and support so as to bring them back into the safety net (ICPS 2010) as a matter of right.

The International forums have recognized these children as 'children in difficult circumstances', characterized by their specific social, economic and geo-political situations. In addition to provide a safe environment for these children, it is imperative to ensure that all other children also remain protected. Child protection is integrally linked to every other right of the child. Failure to ensure children's right to protection adversely affects all other rights of the child [3]. The government of India through amending the Juvenile Justice Act (Care and Protection) of 2000 in the 2006 and 2010 have made mandate for the government to ensure care and protection to children in difficult circumstances through initiating Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) throughout the country with establishing societies in each state to implement and monitor child protection programmes in all the districts.

The Integrated Child Protection Scheme is expected to significantly contribute to the realization of Government/State responsibility for creating a system that will efficiently and effectively protect children based on cardinal principles of "protection of child rights" and "best interest of the child". Hence, the ICPS objectives are: to contribute to the improvements in the wellbeing of children in difficult circumstances, as well as to the reduction of vulnerabilities to situations and actions that lead to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and separation of children. These will be achieved by: (i) improved access to and quality of child protection services; (ii) raised public awareness about the reality of child rights, situation and protection in India; (iii) clearly articulated responsibilities and enforced accountability for child protection (iv) established and functioning structures at all government levels for delivery of statutory and support services to children in difficult circumstances; (v) introduced and operational evidence based monitoring and evaluation.

Government of Karnataka had been the pioneering in implementing the ICPS programme with the support of the UNICEF. The Karnataka State Plan of Action for children has evolved strategies of child protection and incorporated in the planning and implementation of all government programmes related to children. As part of the plan the Department of Women and Child Development has appointed the 560 field functionaries like protection officers- institutional and non-institutional, counsellors, social workers, house parents for implementing the ICPS programme. The Karnataka State Integrated Child Protection Society (KSICPS) in the recruitment process, understood the felt need of counsellors the need

Table 1: Describe the socio demographic details of the counsellors attending the counselling training programme.

Sl No	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age of the counsellors 23- 30 years 30 years and above	82 36	68.3 31.7
2	Sex of the counsellors Male Female	12 108	10 90
3	Educational qualification Master degree in social work Master degree in Psychology Master degree in Home science	72 47 1	62.5 39.2 0.8
4	Past experience of working with children Present Absent	74 26	61 39
5	Work experience No experience in development sector	13 107	11 89

Table 2: Describes the broad areas of training programme for the counselors.

Day 1	Understanding children in India, Child development, children in difficult circumstances
Day 2	Legislations governing children in India and its uses while counselling children
Day 3	Counselling children in difficult circumstances
Day 4	Group and family counselling for children in difficult circumstances
Day 5	Role of ICPS in protecting the rights of children

for capacity building and training of the child protection personnel's appointed in the district headquarters, for enhancing the quality of care for children in difficult circumstances. The child protection team in the district is expected to protect children from exploitation and safeguard their rights, provide conducive environment for the child's normal development and enhance the quality of care for children in difficult circumstances in the district. In order to discharge quality care for children in difficult circumstances, the society felt the need for enhancing the skills of the counsellors so that they can implement uniform/similar psychosocial care activities for children in difficult circumstances.

Need for Capacity Building of Child Protection Personnel

Enhancement of capacities of all functionaries including, administrators and service providers, at all levels working under the ICPS is one of the objectives of the strategy plan of KSICPS. Often children express their problems through their behaviours, which is perceived as problem behaviour, children express their feelings for their survival, protection, and general development. Rather than labelling child as 'problem child', there is a need for understand the 'child in the situation', behaviour need to be understood, help the child in experiencing the sense of safety and security. If children are heard through counselling process, it becomes an effective way of dealing with psychosocial and emotional problems of children in difficult circumstances. Counselling is an important intervention method to address psycho social issues among children in difficult circumstances, same been recognized and given importance in the capacity building training programme. Thus, counselling has become an integral part of the child protection.

Karnataka State Integrated Child Protection Society had requested the Department of Psychiatric Social Work (PSW), and Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) for developing a curriculum for training child protection functionaries. The curriculum focused to enhance counselling skills and psychosocial mediums of care for the child protection functionaries to work effectively with the children in their respective districts. The Department of PSW and CAP in collaboration with KSICPS of the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka, had organized capacity building activities through 14 training programmes for the various

child protection personnel working in the district headquarters. The present paper describes the process involved in developing the curriculum for training for the counsellors and the process involved in field testing the training programme and modifying based on the feedback received from the trainees.

Process Involved In Developing Curriculum

The aim of the present paper is to develop a curriculum for capacity building of the counsellors working with the child protection unit. Four faculties from the Department PSW, and one faculty from the Department of CAP with 3 decades experience of working with children, involved in training pre doctoral and doctoral students and have conducted several capacity building workshops. The Doctoral Research Scholar of the Department of PSW was also part of the team in developing curriculum for training the child protection personnel.

The team felt that that the central task of the trainer is to support the course members learning which Lynton and [4] describes it has "learning takes place within the individual as a result of a co-influence of diverse, intertwining and occasionally opposing influences ... the function of the trainer is to entice this mysterious process to develop within the participants....".

The team reviewed the curriculums of the training programmes conducted by the Department of Women and Child development, and also reviewed the MSW specialization paper on family and child welfare (MSW Syllabus of University of Pune, Thiruvalluvar University, Dibrugarh University, university of Calcutta) and three international syllabus (Website: <http://www.unbc.ca/social-work> school of social work, university of Michigan, Berkely social welfare syllabus UC Berkely school of Social Welfare) on the family and child welfare paper. The team also had discussions with the KSICPS state functionaries to understand the need for training the child protection personnel.

It was decided that the curriculum should aim at recognizing the already existing skills among the professionals and should be designed in such a way the existing skills should be used and fine tune their skills. The team felt that the training should be able to provide opportunities for learning about the process and practice of helping skills while working with children in difficult circumstances. The team had four meetings to discuss the curriculum including the

Table 3: Describes the details of the Topics covered with the methodology used and content of each session.

Training topics	Methodology	Description
Status of children in India	Interactive lecture method	Statistics about status of children in India –rationale for child protection
Juvenile Justice (care and protection) Act	Interactive lecture method with case illustrations and group discussion	JJ Act and its application in the process of child protection, Role of CWC, Role of JJB, legal measures, provisions, limitations
Legislations for children in India- special focus on care and protection	Case discussion, Group activity.	Other legal aspects related to children like, UNCRC, POSCO, Child Marriage Act, Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, Legal aid services
Concept of child Development and its relevance to counselling	Interactive lecture method, Group discussion and pictures and video demonstration	Process of normal child development, Areas of child development, theories of child development, understanding developmental needs of children
Psycho social needs and issues of children	Brain storming, Group Discussion and experience from the field	Understanding psycho social needs of children in difficult circumstances during developmental stages- Infancy, early childhood, childhood, adolescence. Difficulties in availing needs and process of providing needs
Mental Health problems among children	Group Discussion and case vignettes	Common mental health problems among children- developmental problems, emotional problems, Behavioural problems, psychiatric problems and other problems, common problems seen in institutions and community
Psycho social care for children in difficult circumstances	Demonstration, Group activity, lecture method	Children in difficult circumstances – types, Understanding the concept of psycho social care, need for psycho social care, Use of different mediums to work with children- play, drawing, writing, painting, clay, family portrait, emotions pictures card, story cards etc
Counselling skills- counselling children with mental health issues/ counselling children in difficult circumstances	Case Vignettes Role Plays	Concept of counselling, need for counselling children, principles of counselling, skills and techniques of counselling, process of counselling, psycho social assessment and psycho social intervention through counselling, ethics in counselling Counselling children with mental health issues
Institutional and non institutional care for children	Brain storming, Interactive Lecture method, Group discussion,	Concept of institutional and non institutional care for children, need for institutional care, rationale for non institutional care, types of non institutional care, legal provisions and procedures for institutional and non institutional care, role of Child protection personnel in the process of institutional and non institutional care.
Behavioural Interventions	Lecture method, Group discussion and Role Plays	Concept of behavioural interventions, Understanding need for behavioural interventions, Basic behavioural principles, different behavioural strategies to address behavioural issues among children.
Family interventions	Case vignettes Group Discussion Role play	Need for family interventions/ family counselling, concept of family counselling in reintegration, foster care, adoption, sponsorship, after care programme Family Assessment and Strategies for family interventions, Family welfare services/ programmes, Parenting skills, challenges in family interventions, Dealing with rejection from family for reintegration
Approaches to child protection	Lecture method Group discussion	Understanding concept of child protection, Child protection mechanism in India, protection of children within the institution and in community, working with different stakeholders in child protection, use of technology in the process of child protection,
Group interventions	Lecture method Role play Demonstration of group sessions	Concept of group interventions, need for group interventions with children, principles of group interventions, skills for facilitator to carry out group interventions, methodologies for group interventions, structure of group session
Preventive and promotive mental health activities with children	Lecture method Individual activity Group Activity Brain storming Story session	Concept of preventive and promotive mental health activities – Introduction of concept of Life skills, Need for Life skills activities for children and adolescents, Structure of Life skill education programme, Experiential learning in Life skills education, Methodologies used in imparting Life skill Education, Application of Life skills education to work with children in difficult circumstances
Documentation	Group discussion, interactive lecture method	Importance of documentation in counselling Guidelines for documenting counselling process.

methodologies to be followed for each session. The draft curriculum was shared with the KSICPS team. The KSICPS team also suggested including some of the areas related to legislations, functioning of ICPS, roles and responsibilities of child protection personnel. The consensus was reached and decided to field test the draft curriculum for the capacity building and counselling skill training programme. Feedbacks from the participants were taken with regard to the content and the methodologies adopted based on the feedback, some methodologies, areas of field observation and timing of the session were changed to improvise the curriculum.

The capacity building training programme aimed at building the skills of the counsellors to develop Individual care Plan using the psychosocial mediums of care. The 120 counsellors appointed were post graduates in social work/ psychology/ home science with the work experience of 0 months to maximum of 6 years. The present capacity building focused on enhancing their skills in addressing unique needs of children in difficult circumstances. Participatory

methodologies were used in the training sessions. Experts from the field acted as resource persons to facilitate the sessions (Table 1).

The above table depicted indicates that nearly 70% of them were aged below 30 years and 90% of them were females for the post of Counsellors. All the counsellors had post-graduation either in social work, psychology or in home science. Most counsellors (61%) of them had past experience of working with children. All most 90% of the counsellors had experiences of working in the development sectors. It was only 9% of the counsellors had joined immediately after their completion of their studies.

The training programme been designed for 5 days covering the broad areas as given in the below table and the session used participatory methodology with more scope for participation from the trainees aiming at fine tuning the already existing skills. The training also demonstrated some of the mediums of psychosocial care which can be used as a means for communication and building

rapport from the child. The five days training programme includes following broad areas (Table 2 & 3).

It was observed the changes in understanding, in commitment, in statement or in the behaviour not because of the trainers influence but because of the reflections and the opportunities been provided by the training. The reflection diaries provide following sample statements:

Mrs X, Said that 'in the training, they were able to understand the reasons for the behavioural problems in children, rather than blaming them for their behaviours, they felt the need for understanding them, referring for adequate mental health interventions'

Mr F said that 'they were not able to understand why children do not cooperate, even though they wanted to do good for them. The training helped them to understand that, why should children believe in them, when they have not seen protected environment? They are correct in their behaviour, as they have experienced many unfaithful relationships and experiences surrounded them'

Ms Y said that 'the training helped us in relating the theoretical knowledge what we learned in our MSW and the practice made more sense and made us realise the need for improving my helping skills'

Ms S said that 'we realised the importance of the medium, its use in getting to know about the child, the materials can be created with local resources, which would be in few hundreds, not necessary for us to look for funds from the department.

Discussion

Training and capacity building programme for the staff has increased greatly over the past few decades, mainly because of lack of trained professionals to work in the field and also due to lacuna in the current education system. More so in the development sector as the lab for training and practicing skills would be on the people and in the community [5-7]. KSICPS recognized the need for training the newly recruited counsellors of Integrated Child Protection Scheme, and approached Department of Psychiatric Social Work and Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry was approached for developing the curriculum of counselling training for the counsellors. The Departments are well established and has good experiences of conducting such short term training programmes and workshops for the professionals including lay people [8,9].

The training programme begins addressing the concern expressed by counsellors: chronic poverty, suffering of children in difficult circumstances and been sought for changing the mind-set of the child and expect to change in the behaviour and attitude overnight [10]. The counsellors were thought about the need to concentrate on normal child development and to deal with the complex issues of children in difficult circumstances, the counsellors need to have strong convention, commitment and skilful in helping children, focus towards experiencing normal development, similar views been shared in the manual developed by [11] on Training Handbook on Psychosocial Counselling for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances A trainer's Guide. The training programme started with unfolding the misconceptions related counselling and facilitated for developing strong convention and belief in understanding the worth of affected individual in resolving their own problems if supported [12].

As awareness been increasing among people, incidence of neglect of child rights, child abuses been more so reported in media [13,14], these children bio psychosocial needs to be attended at the earliest, developing country like India, is not in a position of providing required mental health professionals to address the problems of these children. There is an urgent need for disseminating helping skills for the professionals dealing with the bio psychosocial needs of children in difficult circumstances, authors have made an attempt in developing such curriculum for addressing the training needs of personnel's working with children, so that they can enhance quality of psychosocial care, [15] while training banking personnel also expressed that training as an effective tool in human resource management.

The training programmes for the staff, not only help them to recap their skills but also boost them towards its quality of care enhancing their practice. Training is generally regarded as a subset of Human Resource Development; it can also be understood as a structured learning experience. As defined by [16] 'training is a process that applies different methods to strengthen employee's knowledge and skill needed to perform their job effectively'. Other researchers have defined training with similar perspectives [17-19].

The curriculum was developed as a powerful agent that aim at enhancing capability of the counsellors in providing quality services, similar views been expressed by [20], wherein training was perceived as a powerful agent that brought about organizational expansion, development of capability and performance enhancing the programme. All the Training programmes been planned as workshops with more scope for participation from the trainees, aiming at improving specific skill of the counsellors. Training is short term activities with the aim of skill transfer and lot of scope for practicing their learning's in the form of role play. Their activities tend towards enhancing employees knowledge and skill for effective performance. The training sessions of the training programme were able to provide required knowledge and skills to work with children in difficult circumstances. The sessions included counselling related aspects such as Concept and theories of child development and its relevance to counselling, psycho social needs of children in difficult circumstances, mental health problems among children, counselling skills, group interventions, preventive and primitive mental health activities, psycho social care mediums, documentation; *Legal aspects- JJ Act* and other legislations related to protection of children; *Administrative aspects* about ICPS, child protection mechanism and role of counsellors, similar contents been seen in the Post-graduation syllabus with the specialization paper o Family and Child welfare of the Univeristy of Pune, Calcutta and Bharathiyar.

Training an important aspect of human resources development, helps in enhancing and initiating new activities for the welfare of the affected group, similar views been agreed by [21]. Both in private sector and public sectors, training and capacity building is very critical to the growth and development of the programmes [22] and more so for child centred programmes. For any training to be effective, organization need to examine the extent to which training are closely related to the programme strategy, it should aim at building on the skill, recognizing the already existing skills, similar approach been used by the training team, [23,24] also share similar views.

The reflection diary helped the team in understanding the day to day learning, helped them in meeting the training needs through changing methodologies suiting the group dynamics. Feedback from the participation at the end of each session and end of training programme on content of the topic, methodology adopted relevance to the practice in the field and suggestions to improvise the training. The day to day evaluation was carefully designed to utilize the three levels of training effectiveness; personal learning, suggestions for the trainers, and take home message for the trainee [25] also express similar views regarding the review and evaluation of the training programmes. The trainings aimed at increasingly emphasis on practice as most of the sessions had a participatory methodologies with lot of scope for participation from the training, and lot of handholding teaching techniques were used in training program. Moreover, the effectiveness of training program, in terms of its application in the role play, preparing the road map for next six months has been an important consideration as said by [26,27].

The authors through their telephone conversation and using their network have ensured that the counsellors have initiated individual and group interventions for children in their respective districts. Training effectiveness is measured on the extent to which psychosocial activities been initiated [28,29].

Training evaluation is also been viewed as field testing of the conceptualizing, designing, analyzing, developing and implementing an effective training program as said in [30]. Moreover, the 6 training day to day evaluation and over all evaluation has been advantage of identifying the area that needs further improvement and it also provides an insight on methods of improvement as reported by [31-34]. Often referred training evaluation as an 'evaluation of four different areas; reaction, learning, behavioural changes and return on investment, similar approach was used by the authors. Majority of the participants opined that the training programme was useful for them to enhance their knowledge and skills to work effectively with children in difficult circumstances. They expressed participatory methodology was very helpful for them to share their experience and enhance their skills.

The training programme for counsellors reflected that there is a need for continued education and training to equip professionals work effectively with the challenges in the process of implementation. Capacity building activities is very essential to update knowledge and skills. It should continue as booster sessions to continue handholding support and enhance their skills. There is a continuous need reviewing the training programme periodically, so that there would be mutual learning for the trainer and also for the trainee.

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