Chapter 6

Action Research in Schools and the Community for the promotion of a high-level quality of life for children.

Empowering children, teachers, parents, and the surrounding community in a joint venture

Workshop 1: Preparing the Promoters.

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Objectives: This first workshop presents techniques that can be used by teachers, as community facilitators, during the introductory meeting aiming to recruit promoters (children, parents, and other members of the community) who will be actively involved as a core group in the PAR project. Promoters will be familiarized with the right's-based approach for CQL and will collaboratively identify causes and effects of key issues or decisions that need to be made. Its particular aim is for participants to identify, sensitize and empower "promoters" within and around the school community. Participants will be able to:

- Identify the root causes of the problems hindering CQL, nested within school and the broader community.
- Analyze the situation created by the immediate causes.
- Prioritize and plan actions to resolve the problems identified in the process.

Facilitators

Teachers

Target Group/Audience/Participants

Promoters

Duration: 3 hours

Materials:

- ✓ Pictures depicting children rights.
- ✓ Computer and projector
- ✓ Post-it notes/ paper sheets.
- ✓ Flip charts
- ✓ Whiteboard
- ✓ Two tree diagrams

Methodology-Process

Activity 1: Ice breaker

1. Everyone gets in a circle. The facilitator starts saying "My name is (….) and I like (object that starts with the same letter as their first name)." Then the next person says the same thing with their name, then repeating the person before. This goes on, with the last person repeating everyone.

2. The icebreaker is followed by a brief self-introduction of the participants (i.e full name, capacity, reason for participating to the PAR, expectations).

3. The facilitator then presents the outline of the five session and informs participants about the aim of the PAR and their role in the process.

Activity 2: Picture stories

1. The teacher/facilitator prepares a collation pictures that portray various aspects of CQL. Pictures could represent CQL in terms of access to health, education, security and the right to play. Pictures should be selected to reflect the particular context where the workshop is taking place.

2. Participants discuss each picture to identify and rank the problems/issues, propose solutions and illustrate possible consequences. The facilitator could use prompt questions like: "What do you see in this picture?", "What does the scene say to you?", What is quality of life for children?" "Is this picture relevant to children's quality of life? Why?", "Do all children have equal rights? "Do all children have equal opportunities", "What do we mean when we say that children have the right to play?"

3. The group should direct the sequence of the pictures and rearrange them to indicate priority. Temporary removal and reintroduction of one or more of the pictures can help determine its importance and encourage discussion.

4. The final composition can be recorded with a photograph or drawing. It is expected that by the end of this activity participants will reach to a working definition of CQL.

Activity 3: Social Norms

1. Participants identify normal daily activities for a child in their locality by adding labels, pictures or symbols of these around a picture of a child.

2. Each activity is discussed in groups. Participants need to determine the contribution of each activity towards CQL. A whole class discussion is followed to reach a conclusion.

3. Participants, in groups, consider the daily life of a child belonging to a particular socially deprived or excluded group i.e., disable, immigrant, LGBT. The picture is replaced with that of the child of the particular group, and participants in each group draw lines of different colours from the picture to each activity, to show whether they think that the child has equal opportunities, as any other child, to participate. Participants consider the barriers that children of these categories face by adding labels on each line explaining why certain activities cannot be undertaken.

4. The facilitator displays a large diagram showing concentric circles, labelled from the center outwards as Individual, Family, School, Community, Wider Society etc. The group moves their labels into the relevant circle of the diagram, to show the origin of the barrier to participation.

5. By the end of this activity, participants will acknowledge possible barriers hindering CQL, bearing in mind equal participation rights of all children.

Activity 4: Problem Tree

1. The facilitator uses a picture of a tree. The picture is labelled as "Barriers hindering CQL".

2. The barriers for CQL, determined in activity 2, are labelled and drawn as the roots of the tree. Participants discuss the various different causes of the problem and add additional root causes. It may help to use sticky notes, since these can be moved around to distinguish between immediate causes and deeper root causes. The facilitator keeps asking "What causes that?" until the final root cause is identified. Particular emphasis is placed on issues related to school (i.e. homework, workload, compensative pedagogies) and family life (i.e., quality time, active listening, cooperation) and are within the participants' control.

3. Next, the effects of the problems-barriers are drawn as branches of the tree. The diagram should identify links between issues by joining branches together. The facilitator tries to find out what people know about each root cause and each effect of the problem.

4. Using a new diagram, each problem, cause and effect can be simply reworded into an objective that will tackle the issue. For example, 'lack of free time becomes 'improve time management'. In this way, the Problem Tree is converted into an equivalent 'Opportunity Tree' or 'Objectives Tree' – showing a strategy for tackling the issues. These objectives than provide a basis for the project definition, turning objectives into achievable actions.

5. The discussion is then channeled towards finding solutions that can work, taking into consideration the levels that participants can control.

6. By the end of this activity, participants will identify areas that can be controlled or influenced towards promoting CQL.

Activity 5: Conclusion

1. The facilitator summarizes the session using the brain storming technique. The following prompt questions can be used: "What is CQL?", "What are barriers hindering CQL for all children?" "How can we tackle these problems?". Responses are recorded on the flipchart/whiteboard.

2. The facilitator informs participants that in the following session they will be mapping the community in order to find potential allies. To this end, it is expected by each of them to come prepared with recommendations of possible community stakeholders that can help towards promoting CQL.