

“Setting up of a Child Friendly Classroom in the Kandy Model School”

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Batch 3

Summary of the project

Years of experience in the field of education and our training on Child Rights, Classroom and School Management, helped us to broaden our perception of the classroom process. During our project, we tried to bring a new approach, the CRC concepts and principles, to the traditional teaching-learning process. The aim of our Project was to “Set up a Child Friendly Classroom in the Kandy Model school” in line with the CRC principles.

The Project was executed in two stages: Pre-Test and Pilot Project. The first stage was based on a list of selected CRC articles and a checklist. This part of the project consisted in the investigation of the Child Rights’ status in three different schools. Data collection was carried out through interviews from a sample of 5 grade 10 students from each school and the observation of the premises. The analysis of data revealed different levels of accomplishment in the three schools, regarding Provision, Protection and Participation. Thus the Pilot Project was planned and implemented in the Grade 5 C Classroom from the Kandy Model School. Our goal was to deliver a Child Friendly Classroom with the training of pupils, teachers and parents and the provision of the necessary facilities.

A follow-up test to evaluate the impact of the project was conducted after its implementation. Based on the encouraging outcome obtained from the test, we are now ready to proceed to the next stage and implement the CRC approach to make the Kandy Model School “A Child Friendly School.”

Impact on the personal and professional levels

Somudu Nilaweera

After returning from Honduras, I have continued to work as a project coordinator at the Centre for the Study of Human Rights. I have been assigned a new project on E-Diploma to be designed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and funded by the Asian Development Bank. I am hoping to launch this Online Distance Learning diploma in March 2008 and to target young dropouts who are unable to get a conventional university education.

Due to my new assignment we hired a new person to be in charge of research and publication and I handed over my job as the editor of the Newsletter, my final edition was published in December 2007. During this period I had the chance to travel to Hyderabad (India) to receive a training program on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and I am now handling programs for the Armed Forces and the Police.

Jagath Polgaspitiya

Over 22 years of professional experience, I have been involved in the education of children as an English teacher and a teacher educator. I looked at their growing up, purely out of love and sympathy, as an adult and as a responsible government servant. I was entrusted to provide children with education that was in line with the accepted codes and norms characterized by the traditional Sri Lankan culture; I never realized that my tasks could be performed from a Child rights' perspective. Thus the best thing that could have happened to me was to see the child's world from a CRC point of view.

In achieving this paradigmatic shift in my personal philosophy I benefited immensely from the study sessions in Lund; the field visits; the interacting with the mentoring staff, in particular Dr. Flinck; the visit to Honduras; the CRC literature and my involvement in the project. I am indeed very satisfied with this change because it is very rewarding to discover that I still have and I will always have a child in me.

This enabled me to make a presentation on "My Experience on CRC: Sweden vs. Sri Lanka and Honduras" and disseminate it among English teacher trainees and academic staff at the Mahaweli National College of Education in Polgolla, creating an interesting debate among the people who attended.

In 2007 I left my job as an English teacher and joined the National Institute of Business Management as an English Consultant; nevertheless, I continue to teach learners from all age groups and I travel everyday between Colombo and Kandy and I remain in contact with the Kandy Model School. I moved to Colombo because it is easier to pursue a higher education there.

S.M.M.G Abeyrathne

At a personal level, the training program was a very beneficial experience because I learned an invaluable number of new things during the interactions with the academic staff and through my readings on CRC literature. This has brought a new dimension to my family life and it has become a living experience for everyone in our home. My two children keep me balanced and show me the child's point of view of things; I am determined to cooperate with every member of my family and to continue working to obtain more of the positive results in the future.

As the Principal of the Kandy Model School, I have had the great opportunity to see the CRC put into practice in an environment where children conduct their daily lives. I experienced the effects of the CRC Society forum in Primary and Secondary Schools, I saw children's behaviour becoming more responsible as a response to the minimization of corporal punishment; the school administration

became more relaxed and their work was more satisfactory. In sum, the school became a space to implement CRC good practices and it has become a true model for other schools in the region. I am optimistic that we will spread this message to even more schools in the future.

Impact on the organizational level

The Kandy Model School began to experience CRC practices following the setting up of the CRC Society, which has turned out to be a children's forum where they can discuss the issues that concern them. They have realized that their views and ideas are also considered in the school administration, and that they are considered as stakeholders in the system.

Some of the benefits experienced in the school are:

- Parents have organized themselves to provide a free morning meal for all children.
- Construction of new buildings with more space for classrooms.
- Better learning facilities to improve the quality of learning.
- Increase in the number of the teaching staff and facilities.
- Enhanced parents' cooperation in all school activities, as informed actors with new and positive attitudes.
- CRC training and education of teachers has resulted in a new and positive attitude and better awareness.
- Growing popularity of the school as a place where children can live their childhood in full.
- The unprecedented demand for admission to all levels in the school, especially to Grade 1, from parents from nearby areas.
- The school [Upper School] has been mentioned at the provincial and national levels as a revived school, the CRC implementation in school practices has added much of the impulse to this growing popularity and its success story.

Impact on the country level

The Principal, Mr. S.M.M.G. Abeyrathne, has become one of the most valuable resource people at most training sessions for school principals at both provincial and national levels. His presentations on the "Success Story: The story of the Kandy Model School" are permanently filled with the success of the CRC practices as a new dimension added to the school. This has enabled us to take the success story of our pioneer efforts at the Kandy Model to other schools in the region and at the country level with a deep sense of pride.