ABSTRACT

India today is confronting a strange paradox of being home to millions of undernourished as well as to a growing number of overweight / obese people. The search for solutions to tackle these problems had often pointed at nutrition communication as one of the necessary conditions. Given the labyrinth of nutritional problems, diverse approaches are in use and they are expected to serve varied purposes, including awareness creation, capacity building, policy advocacy, behaviour and social change. Nutritional concerns are now being integrated into various developmental policies at different levels of governance. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations are also putting in considerable efforts in taking the message of nutrition to the community. This thesis attempts a critical examination of various nutrition communication approaches in two broad contexts – among adolescents in the pedagogical settings of educational institutions, and in the larger ‘community’ setting.

The methodological innovation attempted in the thesis by bringing together a number of case studies helped explore how content is determined by approach and how the approach is in turn influenced by the context.

It concludes that no single approach will be continuously effective or suitable for resolving all problems of malnutrition. Hardly any approach is adequately positioned to capture the complexities of the context as the choice of
approach is often determined not by its normative value but by various internal and external institutional factors.

For nutrition communication to be successful, multiple levels of communication from diverse perspectives need to be simultaneously activated, with a dialogical engagement among the scholars and practitioners operating at the different communicative levels. Communication should be a fundamental component of all nutrition programmes with adequate budget and appropriate evaluation mechanism incorporated right at the planning stage. Communicators should go beyond their institutional factors as well as individual beliefs to choose approaches from a synthesis of models and practices in order to harness from varied communication theories and experiences from practice.