CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION TRAINING MODULE
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As the sample consisted of group of teacher trainees, the verbal and non-verbal situations from the classrooms teaching were used for Assertive Communication Training.

Assertive communication training module has been developed on the lines of Joyce and Weil (1985) primarily for direct, spontaneous expression of feelings in classroom and social situations as it can improve communication by decreasing anxiety. Anxiety further decreases our effectiveness in communication how we feel to other people. Our fear of retaliating or displeasing someone is likely to produce anxiety that inhibits directness leading to non-assertive behaviour. Since it is a very direct training method for helping pupil teachers to acquire communication skills that enabled them to express themselves comfortably and smoothly in situations that have previously made them feel anxious and inhibited and directly applied the general behaviour assumption that learned behaviour can be unlearned.

5.1. Objectives of Assertive Communication Training Module

This module is a powerful tool for facilitating behavioural change and for improving the self-concept or self-image. The main objectives of the module are to help the pupil teachers to:

- Increase the use of expression both of positive and negative feelings.
- Recognize one’s rights without violating that of others.
- Communicate effectively using verbal statements.
- Learn to listen while communicating.
- Communicate effectively using non-verbal statements.
• Deal effectively with difficult situations.
• Giving and receiving criticism and compliments.

Sections

In order to achieve the above objectives, the present module was developed which consisted of the following sections: -

1. Introducing Assertiveness
2. Recognizing one’s rights
3. Expression of both positive and negative feelings
4. Listening while communicating
5. Communicating effectively using verbal and non-verbal behaviours
6. Dealing effectively with difficult situations
7. Giving and receiving criticism and compliments

5.1.1. Introducing Assertiveness

Assertiveness - is to stand up for one’s rights while respecting the rights of others. e.g. one is behaving assertively when one expresses one’s thoughts and beliefs in direct honest way that do not violate another person’s integrity.

Unassertive person is weak passive, complaining and self-sacrificing. e.g. one is behaving non-assertively or passively when one fails to express honest feelings, thoughts and beliefs or expresses them in such an apologetic way that others can easily disregard them.

Aggressive person is self-centered, in considerate, hostile and arrogantly demanding. e.g. one is behaving aggressively when one expresses one’s thoughts, feelings and beliefs in a way that humiliate, degrade, belittle or overpower the other person.
5.1.2. Recognizing one’s rights

In order to be assertive, one has to recognize one’s rights. An assertive person stand up for one’s rights without violating that of others. Everyone has the right to assert one’s rights (Beels, Hopson & Scally, 2000).

Be the final judge of one’s feelings and accept them as legitimate,

Have one’s own opinions and convictions,

Protest unfair treatment or criticism,

Interrupt in order to ask for clarification,

Feel and express pain,

Ignore the advice of others,

Receive formal recognition for one’s work and achievements,

Be alone, even if others would prefer one’s company.

Do not take responsibility for someone else’s problem and say ‘no’.

One has to say ‘no’ - because sometimes requests and demands are unfair.

Assertive ways to say ‘no’

1. Simply say ‘no’ when declining because it has more power.
2. Repeat your statement until the other party accepts it.
3. Make sure your nonverbal gestures mirror your verbal messages.
4. If the person persists even after you have repeated your ‘no’ several times, use silence or change the topic of conversation.

For example:

Nidhi : ‘I have got to get away early and the teacher has given me this assignment. Will you finish it off for me? I think it will not
Shalu: ‘That is difficult for you, but I want to get away on time myself today.’

Nidhi: ‘But I have to meet someone. Are you doing anything else tonight?’

Shalu: ‘I really want to get away on time myself tonight.’

Nidhi: ‘Well, I was under the impression Shalu, that you would like to help out.’

Shalu: ‘Yes, I do like to help out, but tonight I want to get away on time.’

Three minutes later, Nidhi goes away to ask someone else.

5.1.3. Expression of both positive and negative feelings

Expressing both positive and negative feelings without undue anxiety is assertiveness. To express one’s feelings assertively one should:

1. “Start your sentences with “I” – this helps you to stay on target with the results you want.

2. Be as specific and clear as possible about what you want, you think and feel e.g. your class mate borrowed your notes and lost a couple of pages and you want to show your anguish by saying, “Last week when you borrowed my notes and lost a couple of pages, I was pretty mad. In fact I am still upset.”

3. Be direct. Deliver your message to the person for whom it is intended. If you want to tell Mohan something, tell Mohan, do not tell every one except Mohan.

4. Own your message: Acknowledge that your message comes from your frame of reference, your conception. You can acknowledge ownership with personalized statements such as, “I don’t like you to now the lawn” as compared to “You really should now the lawn, you know”.

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5.1.4. Listening while communicating

Conversation is an art through which people make others feel special; they have friends and followers to spare. The base of conversation is listening skill which can be learned, practiced and perfected by practicing the following:

1. Attend the individual by making eye contact, lean toward the individual, talk and gently nod the head to indicate understanding.
2. Make empathic responses to identify the underlying feelings of the words that the speaker is uttering.
3. Ask questions though wrong question asked can lead the conversation in a dead end e.g. “Why did you let that one go?” offer some type of blame. Good question might be “What made you let that one go?”
4. Observe silence when required because a good listener is comfortable with silence and do not jump in to fill it up with words which may mislead the conversation. Mastering the silence is an important achievement.

5.1.5. Communicating effectively using non-verbal behaviours

Even when you are silent you communicate a lot through your eyes, facial expression, posture, gestures and personal appearance like:

1. **Eye Contact** looking directly at another:: Use direct eye contact as it is assertive as it shows your interest in listening.

2. **Posture:** Use an erect and relaxed posture while standing and sitting as it communicates confidence, self-control, energy and an expectation that your be taken seriously.

3. **Facial Expression:** Facial expressions reveal the types of emotions you feel so it is best to keep your facial expression as neutral as possible.

4. **Gestures:** Use gestures to support your message. So, keep your gestures relaxed, fluid and moderate.
5. **Personal Appearance**: The way you dress affects credibility so dress appropriate to the situation.

6. **Tone of Voice**: The voice affects the impact your words have on others. The most important of these are loudness and speed. Hence, make your statements sound like statements in order to strengthen your message.

### 5.1.6. Dealing effectively with difficult situations

When you are faced with a difficult situation you can gain more assertiveness by maintaining self-control as much calmness as you possibly can. The following tips are helpful to deal effectively with difficult situations:

1. **“Act as if”**: Act as if you are an assertive person who is able to express and achieve your desires every day. You will quickly see the results.

2. **Practice on small things**: If you feel you are unable to tackle the bigger issues in which you would like to feel more assertive, it is helpful to start small. When you find yourself having success in small things, you will feel more confident in being assertive in bigger and more important things.

3. **Don’t apologize for your opinions or desires**: One of the biggest things that keep people far from being assertive is guilt. Own your feelings and let them be what they are without feeling guilt. Remember your feelings are just as valid as those of everyone else.

4. **Review and reflect daily**: As you learn to be more assertive in your life, reflect on those situations throughout the day that called for assertiveness at the end of each day. Evaluate each situation and make a plan for next time as it will help you to be aware of what is causing you to shrink back or take a bold step forward.

For example, you have prepared notes putting extra efforts and your teacher tells you to lend those notes to one of your classmates whom you have already refused for the same. You say, “I have prepared these notes putting extra efforts
and hard work. I have already told him/her that I cannot lend these notes.” You are sticking to your words without giving justifications and politely convey your decision to your teacher.

5.1.7. Giving and receiving criticism and compliments

Most of us find it difficult to take criticism and it can be just as hard when you have to dish it out. Often this stems from our childhood experience of criticism guilt and fear of rejection. Even as adults, we still experience criticism as withdrawal of approval, affection and esteem, it hurts (Beels et al 2000). The best way to take valid criticism is to take it wholeheartedly and refuse to own an unfair criticism. For valid criticism one can say, “Yes, I am sorry, I was late.” And for unfair criticism one can say, “That is not generally true! I am very hard working.” Or “That’s not true. It’s unfair to take one instance when I generally work very hard.”

Same rules apply on compliments as well. If you feel that you deserve the praise being given through their compliment accept it gracefully and if not reject it straight away because it may be a flattery. Your teacher appreciates the assignment you have submitted and you say, “Thank you for the compliment. I have been working very hard on this assignment. I am glad you liked it.” Or you are wearing a new dress/suit. You like it a great deal and are pleased when your friend says that she liked the dress. You say, “Thanks I am glad you like it because I really do.”

5.2. Advantages of Assertive Communication Training Module

Assertive training module will help the pupil teachers in

1. Developing communication skill.
2. Allowing them to feel self-confident.
3. Increasing their self-esteem.
4. Helping them to gain the respect of others.

5. Improving their decision-making ability.

VALIDATION BY EXPERTS

A three tier approach was subjected to review and validate the Assertive Communication Training module. The above module was referred to the experts.

In the first orientation the rough draft and structure of the module was referred to the experts. It detailed the format of the module that were to be covered in the sequence.

Once the basic structure was outlined the section wise module was developed and referred to the experts for their validation and opinion.

The last round of validation was done after the actual creation of the module. The experts were shown the actual intervention by the researcher.

The Experts referred to changes in matter of content, its presentation and effectiveness.

5.3 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is the preliminary trial of research necessary for the preparation of a sound research plan. It is scaled down version of the main study to test the practicability and soundness of the procedure to be used.

The pilot study was conducted to test the effectiveness of Assertive Communication Training Module on teaching skills of pupil teachers.

Tool tryout – Assertive Communication Training Module

Assertiveness Communication Training Module developed on the lines of Joyce and Weil (1985) has been used on try out sample which consisted of 10 pupil teachers.
As the sample consisted of pupil teachers both verbal and non-verbal situations were used for assertiveness training.

In the sequence first of all the target behaviours which needed assertive communication training were identified.

**Setting priorities for situations and behaviours**

The frequent and acute situations and events were listed. The list included both situations and feelings that they had difficulty in expressing. The list provided the basis for the students and teacher to select the situations and feelings they were to concentrate on first.

**Enacting the situation**

The enactments were carried out through non-assertive and aggressive behaviours. These enactments were discussed and role playing was modified to make expressions adequate and socially acceptable. The enactments were repeated adding expressions of feelings. Students and investigator modeled for one another in several other enactments to express feelings in the situation.

**Re-enacting**

Further enactments undertaken helped the students practice new behaviours and observe assertive styles. This helped them to watch and provide feedback to be more effective. Finally the elements of clear expression of feelings and assertiveness were made explicit.

**Transfer to real life situations**

A try out of the expressive responses were carried out in the specific situations of day-to-day life followed by discussions. The subjects noted down the specific situations where they faced difficulty in dealing and tried out the learned responses. In the next session these situations and the responses with the results were discussed.

The Assertive Communication Training Programme was found effective in
enhancing the teaching skills, namely, Skill of Introducing Lesson, Skill of Fluency in Questioning, Skill of Explanation, Skill of Illustrating with Examples, Skill of Silence and Non-Verbal Cues, Skill of Reinforcement of try out samples of pupil teachers. This became the rationale of the detailed study reported ahead over here.
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LOC  Locus of Control
SE   Self Esteem
PT   Pupil Teachers