CHAPTER 8

PROGRAMS EVOLVED AS A RESULT OF THE INTERVENTION

The initiation of the intervention study in Government Model Girls Higher Secondary School has paved way to a number of activities which were beyond the scope of the tools used for assessing the effectiveness of the intervention. This chapter aims to highlight the important activities which were initiated as an aftermath of the educational intervention.

Those events could be broadly categorized into:

1. Orientation programme for the principals of government and aided higher secondary schools and teacher
2. Adolescent education classes for students in various higher secondary schools in Thrissur district
3. Classes for the parents
4. Case referrals

Orientation Classes for Principals

The researcher was invited to address the higher secondary Principals meeting of the Thrissur educational district in which all the Government and aided school Principals were present.
During the session, the researcher could discuss with them the need for addressing the issue of adolescent sexuality and the importance of introducing such initiatives in the schools taking into consideration the present scenario. The learned forum could discuss the pros and cons of introducing sexuality education in schools.

Surprisingly, almost all the teachers unanimously agreed that it has to be included in the curriculum. Some of them came up with instances such as boy and girl spending time after school, engaging in sexual relationship, love affairs, instances of abuse, homosexual activities, series of incidences of pornographic video CD’s, books being caught from the students, outsiders using some of the boy students for sexual activities and the total lack of awareness regarding growing up and related anxieties. The major problems encountered by these teachers are that:

(1) There are no resource persons in their locality who could comfortably talk to the students about sex and sexuality even when they are ready to reschedule the classes.

(2) The schools do not have adequate funds to initiate such programs in school.

(3) In instances where their students need their interventions such counseling, advocacy, referral etc., they are unable to do that because they are not aware of any such agencies.

They all emphasized the need for training teachers to identify and help children in distress. Different opinions regarding the Adolescent Education Program module prepared by NACO and SCERT also came up for discussion. The researcher could clarify some of
the misconceptions regarding sex education such as “sex education will make the students curious regarding sex”, sex education will lead to value erosion etc. The researcher also provided them with a list of agencies which could be contacted for support such as the Family Counseling Centre sponsored by Central Social Welfare Board, Childline India Foundation, Thrissur, District Mental Health Programme, AIDS control and prevention projects in Thrissur District, details of the Family planning association of India, Kerala etc.

**Adolescent Education Classes**

The researcher was invited to take classes for adolescent students by the Principals of more than fifty of higher secondary schools in Thrissur Education District, in places like Kunnamkulam, Guruvayoor, Puranattukara, Mala, Varandarppilly, Irinjalakkuda, Pudukkadu, Kattilapoovam, Chalakkudy, Ammadam, and Ollur. Twenty one such sessions were conducted by the researcher in various schools. The counselors, of the Family Counselling Centre, Vimala College also were in the team.

The researcher mainly conducted one-day sessions on sexuality, essentially touching upon the physical and psychological changes related to growing up, sexuality in adolescence, self esteem and Body Image, issues related to sexual exploitation and how to handle it. The sessions were whole heartedly welcomed by the students after the initial fun and embarrassment over the sessions. Problems raised by them included strained interpersonal relationship with parents, critical and suspicious attitude of parents, sexuality related curiosities, issues related to romantic relationships and a host of questions
regarding growing up mostly misconceptions were clarified. One fact worth mentioning is that irrespective of the locale of the school, the doubts, issues and concerns were similar.

Classes for the parents

Researcher got an opportunity to address the parents in some of the schools where adolescent issues were addressed. Majority of the parents also came up with the suggestion that sex education classes need to be provided. But for them, providing sex education beyond topics like menstruation and importance of avoiding temptations was unimaginable. They wanted the schools to take up the initiative.

Case referrals

A number of cases were referred to the researcher for counseling, some of which she took up and worked on. Other students were referred to other agencies. Students from Thrissur Corporation were referred to the Family Counseling Centre, Vimala College. Students from other areas were referred to the Departments of Psychiatry, S.H Hospital Chalakudy, St. Thomas Hospital, Pulloor, and Rajah Hospital Chavakkad. The researcher could realize that the lack of resources or rather the lack of information regarding resources for the schools when they need referrals is a major issue which needs to be addressed. There was no such agency which caters exclusively to the needs of adolescents in the district.
An interesting observation was that the schools from which referral came were the schools were either the principals or one of the teachers were interested in counseling. And the teachers have provided a **Counseling First Aid** before the referrals were made which motivated the students and parents to go for mental health interventions which are viewed with stigma in the state despite literacy.

Many a time counseling interventions were provided by the researcher over the phone. One such instance was that of a girl who called the researcher to know more about her cousin brother’s problem. The boy was 13 years old, backward in studies, had started to behave in odd manner, had anger out bursts, increased psychomotor activities, excessive talk and spending etc. and the boy was diagnosed as having bipolar affective disorder.

A brief summary of the three of the cases referred to the researcher is given below

**Case 1**

This particular case was referred to the researcher by a boy who had participated in the researcher’s class. His friend, the particular client, was a girl aged 16 coming from a low socio economic background and studying in 11th standard. The family was unaware of the intervention. The girl was supposedly in love with a guy who is working as a JCB driver who is shifted to her locality recently. Apparently the boy who referred her to the counselor had advised her regarding the transient nature of adolescent infatuations. During the sessions, the researcher could help the girl to gain an insight into her situation. She had strained relationship with her parents who were highly critical and very strict. This girl grew up thinking that she is no good at all and low self esteem. The sessions helped her to
gain confidence in herself. The relationship with the therapist, a significant other in her life itself helped her to improve her confidence.

**Case 2**

The client was a 16 year old girl who was referred to the researcher for counseling. The complaints presented by the girl were difficulty in concentrating and an extreme fear of examinations. The girl hailed from a lower middle class family and had educated and supportive parents. She had been reported to have good academic records in the past. During the sessions, the girl seemed anxious, depressed and guilty. Upon exploration, the researcher came to understand that the sexual dreams and fantasies which she has been having about one of her male friends for some time led to the development of extreme guilt, fear and anxiety. During the sessions the researcher could help her to understand the various aspects of growing up and emergence of sexual self and could reassure her of her behavior as quite natural and not ‘sinful’ as she thought. Within a few sessions, she was able to overcome her problems and resume her studies.

**Case: 3**

The most memorable case was that of a boy who was in love with his own school mate girl. He was a 17 year old boy studying in 12th standard and was very much in love with a girl who was studying in the same school (but was a one way affair) about which no one except his friends knew. Due to this, he started loosing marks in studies, started having temper outbursts for no reason which made his otherwise supporting and understanding parents perplexed and anxious. During the sessions with the boy, the researcher could
accredit his feelings as normal and beautiful yet clarified the need for concentrating in studies so that he will be in position to pursue his wish at a proper age in future if he is sure about his affection even then. The boy had low self esteem related to his looks. He felt that he is too lean, and dark for a girl to like him. These issues were also worked out and that helped him to improve in his studies and got more than 74 per cent marks for the exams. The boy wanted the researcher to read the letter he has written to this girl, a poetic and beautiful letter which depicts the world, the emotions and the intensity of devotion typical of adolescence. The letter had been given to the researcher for safe keeping till he returns after his complete his studies and starts a career.

The trust an adolescent boy or girl bestows upon the adults who they believe understand and like them which many a time put them in inescapable traps, like sexual exploitation, introduction to drugs, compromising situations, the list is long and varied.

The activities which have evolved as a an aftermath of the pedagogical interventions helped the researcher to overcome her prejudice that the teachers are not interested and biased when it came to these kind of programmes. It also brought to perspective the actual situation and the problems faced by the teachers in the implementation of such programs such as dearth of expertise and recourses.