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INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY IN A PLAY CENTRE

Guiding the development of children should be a co-operative endeavour, a two-way process between parents and teachers; play centre and home. Neither can work effectively without the understanding, support and assistance of the other. The parent and the teacher need to see the child as a whole in order to provide appropriate guidance. The quality of teacher-parent relationship during this period will have an influence upon the child throughout the formative years.



OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the need for play centre-home relationships;
- understand the scope and methods of parents involvement in a play centre;
- explain the importance of involvement of the community in a play centre;
- enumerate the role of Mahila Mandals in a play centre; and
- find support services.

30.1 PLAY CENTRE-HOME RELATIONS

The family has a significant role in the personality development of children. It sets the stage for the development of many important characteristics, both inside and outside the play centre. Parents are the first socializing agents for the child. Then comes the play centre/pre-school personnel. Therefore, the play centre and home



need to work efficiently and co-operatively with proper understanding of each other. The teacher cannot understand the child's interests, needs and motivation without an intimate knowledge of his/her home. Only when the teacher works with the parents, can s/he create a healthy and favourable environment in the play centre.

30.2 IMPORTANCE

The play centre-home relations help to create:

- a better understanding between parents and teachers assuming what children are like,
- a better understanding with regard to what a play centre is,
- opportunities for parents to meet other parents and learn from their experiences, and
- understanding of emerging techniques in child rearing and child training.

If these goals are achieved, the children will have a nourishing, rich and full life in the play centre and at home. The teacher is perhaps the best agent through whom new trends could be communicated to the parents.

30.3 HOW TO MAKE PLAY CENTRE-HOME RELATIONS EFFECTIVE

In order to make the play centre-home relations effective, a teacher should:

- understand the needs, feelings and expectations of each parent,
- focus her attention on what the parents want to know,
- cater to the needs of the parents regarding their children and achieve good co-operation from them,
- respect the parents for what they are,
- be comfortable, free and friendly with the parents,
- be willing to learn from parents,
- convey the fact that the teacher is interested in the welfare of the child and seek co-operation of the parents to do his/her duty more efficiently,
- avoid being defensive and thus, putting the parents at ease,
- show willingness to accept parents' suggestions,



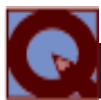
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- be a good listener and encourage the parents to communicate,
- avoid discussing about the child with the parents in child's presence,
- avoid drawing hasty conclusions and remarks,
- be positive and less critical of children,
- be impartial and not compare the child with other children, and
- avoid bossing and dominating the children.

In order to maintain sound and effective play centre-home relations, the teacher must aim towards creating positive relationship with parents.

Try it Yourself

Find out from a nearby play centre/play school teacher the efforts made to establish rapport with parents.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.1

1. Fill in the blanks:
 - (a)play the first and most significant role in the development of children.
 - b) New trends in educational system are best carried to parents through.....
 - c) The teacher should have attitude while dealing with children.
 - d) The teacher should the parents for what they are.
2. Answer the following in one word:
 - (i) Name the first socializing agent for the child.
 - (ii) Who can best understand the child?
 - (iii) Who can make a child express his/her feelings and skills?
 - (iv) Who should you send out when you want to discuss about the child with parents?

30.4 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The care-giver/teacher in a play centre often acts as a second parent. The relationship of care-givers with parents must be strong and based on mutual respect



and trust. The child brings parents and caregivers together towards a common interest.

Play centres should be an extension of the home and supplement the home. Hence, programmes for parents constitute an important aspect of the play centre. However efficient they may be, play centres cannot stimulate optimum development of children unless they work in close collaboration with parents.

Scope of Parental Involvement in a Play Centre

Parental involvement is a process of actualising the participation of parents, of helping parents discover their strengths, potentialities and talents and of using them beneficially.

Parental involvement enables:

1. reduction of financial burden on play centre budgets by supplementing paid personnel,
2. teachers to conduct more meaningful and individualized play activities through parental help, and
3. parents to learn and become better equipped to accomplish their role effectively.

30.5 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: METHODS

- a) **Informal talk:** The teacher meets the parents when they come to leave the children in play centre in the morning or fetch them back in the afternoon. Through informal talks with parents, mutual relationship is established.
- b) **Parents' meeting:** Regular parents' meetings become a means of learning for parents both informally and formally to know the play centres' goals, activities and evaluation. Lectures, demonstration, dialogues and aids like films, cassettes, books, models, exhibits and puppetry can be used to educate the parents.
- c) **Social functions:** Accompanying for picnic or field trip with the children provides an opportunity for parents to get to know teachers and perhaps form friendship, network and support. Many mothers might willingly come and lend a helping hand to the teacher in managing the children. It is first hand experience for them to know how to channelise the curiosity and creativity of children at various stages. Festivals and games at the play centre can be planned in such a way that both the children and parents enjoy themselves.
- d) **Home visits:** One of the most important ways of collecting the required information is through home visits. The teacher makes an appointment with

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the parents and informs them that she would visit them at home. The teacher observes the home set up and tries to help the child suitably.

- e) **Parent education:** Parents may meet together and gain knowledge and skills through educational classes conducted once a month or once in two months at the play centre. These meetings/classes can be organised on the themes which parents prefer. Immunisation, oral rehydration therapy, stories for children, and toys from waste materials might benefit the parents.
- f) **Individual discussion:** Some parents may not like to talk about the problems of their children in a meeting, but may freely express their difficulties individually to the teacher alone. Such parents, if given an opportunity to discuss with the teacher, can help the teacher to understand the child better. The individual dialogue or discussion can either be planned or casual.

Not all parents want to be involved in the same way. Sensitivity to the uniqueness of individual parents and their needs are essential to promote parental contributions. When parents are involved in making decisions they feel responsible and will have greater commitment to the play centre.

With the help of a group of co-operative parents, the teacher can chalk out the parents' programme for the whole year and entrust appropriate tasks to them. At the end of the year, the teacher should review and see which of the parents' programmes were successful and which of them failed. This process might ensure better planning for involvement of parents in future.

Try it Yourself

1. Meet four sets of parents and elicit from them the issues they would like to discuss at their child's play centre. Record your findings.
2. Visit any two households and converse with the parents to know in what ways they would like to involve themselves in a play-centre.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.2**

1. Fill in the blanks:
 - a) The second parent for the child is
 - b) The teacher cannot understand a child without an intimate..... of his/her home.
 - c) facilitates a good deal of information about the child's life at home.



- d) Parent meeting should be held
- e) For effective play center-home relations the teacher must elicit..... involvement.

2. Name various methods of teacher parent-involvement.

30.6 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The community includes all the members in the families in the immediate neighbourhood, community workers and personnel working in various institutions. An understanding of the community to which the play centre caters is imperative on the part of the teacher. S/he should ask herself a few questions and discuss them with the families in the community.

- Are the children in the community healthy and well-nourished? What are the problems faced by them?
- What are the food habits of the families?
- What are their preferences? Do the mothers breast-feed their children? Do they discard the colostrum? When do they introduce semi-solid foods to the child? Do they eat green leafy vegetables and yellow fruits and give these to their children?
- Do the parents permit them to play?
- What kind of play facilities do the children have?
- Do they get their children immunized? If not, why?
- How do the families use preschool facilities?
- Is there a primary school in the community?
- How about the environmental sanitation in the community?
- What is the source of drinking water in the community? Is it safe? Does it lead to diarrhoea and other diseases?
- Are there any common diseases or epidemic in the area? What measures are taken to control them?
- Is there any developmental programme going on in the community?
- Who is the community leader and which are the associations functioning in a play centre?

If you look at the questions above once again you will realise that answers to these questions provides an understanding about the community which is so important for a teacher of play centre to have.



Try it Yourself

Visit a community which has a preschool and use the checklist drawn to find out its characteristics and resources. Record it in your record book.

30.7 OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Members of the community, mothers, older girls and boys may be involved in various aspects of running the play centre as listed below:

- Maintaining the play centre clean and safe.
- Developing a garden at the play centre.
- Ensuring safe drinking water supply for the play centre.
- Cooking and serving nutritious food.
- Gathering mothers and others for meetings and education classes.
- Involvement in the play centre through teaching songs, games, stories and dramatization etc.
- Organizing festivals at the play centre.
- Eliciting community's help in equipping the play centre adequately (e.g. fencing the play area).
- Assisting the teacher in any of her activities.
- Help in maintaining play equipment of the centre.

In fact, the members of the community can be involved in every activity of the play centre.

30.8 COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

The community may also be involved in contributing resources to the play centre as given below:

- a) Supply of food materials, like grains and pulses. These may be procured at the time of harvesting.
- b) Local vegetables, especially green leafy and yellow vegetables.
- c) Local fruits.
- d) Equipment for play centre like old tyres, wooden beams etc.
- e) Waste material from household or from artisans e.g., empty plastic boxes, cartons, beads, old toys, pieces of cloth, wool, old newspapers, magazines, pieces of wood, potter's clay and so on.

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- f) Cash donations: Remember to keep a record of any cash received as well as its use carefully.

Community involvement can be assessed in terms of active involvement of individuals, local leaders, institutions and organisations in providing support for establishing and running a play centre. The local community's involvement will be a function of the contribution made by them in the form of land, building, food, fuel, labour, material and cash for the establishment of the play centre.

The progressive involvement of the community would be reflected in increased mobilization and utilization of local resources, enhanced contribution and participation by the individuals and beneficiaries.

30.9 ROLE OF MAHILA MANDALS IN RUNNING A PLAY CENTRE

Mahila Mandals are registered local women organisations. They can play vital role in running a play centre by:

- Enthusing parents to support play centre; motivating them to enroll their children; collecting aids and play materials for the play centre.
- Holding meetings regularly.
- Creating awareness in their community regarding the importance of a play centre for young children.
- Promoting community participation for the successful running of a play centre.

30.10 SUPPORT SERVICES

An important factor in organising a play centre is social support. The term support services refer to the nature and extent of the social networks to which a person has access. Anyone who has extensive social support has several people to depend on for encouragement, advice and help.

The organisations that help in establishing a play centre are:

- Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi.
- Indian Council for Child Welfare, New Delhi.
- Directorates of Social Welfare in different states.

These organizations sponsor play centres/ creches/ preschools for the needy groups of children.



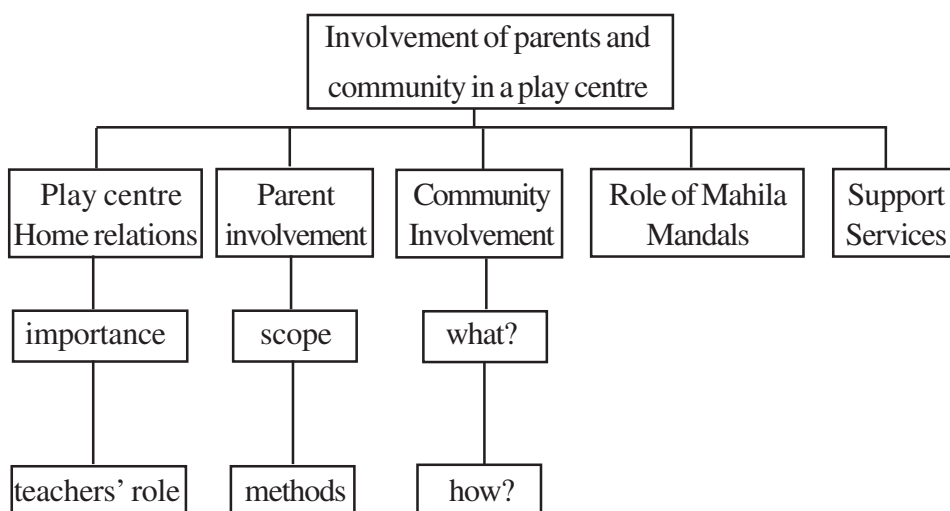
INTEXT QUESTION 30.3

1. Fill in the blanks:
 - a) Parents may assist the..... at the play centre.
 - b) Involvement of the community is reflected in the extent of to local resources.
 - c)and.....can be provided by the community during harvesting.
 - d)is a registered local women's organisation.
2. State True or False:
 - a) Social support is not an important protective factor in organizing a play centre. True/False
 - b) Mahila Mandals can be very effective in promoting community participation. True/False
 - c) Developing garden at the play centre can be totally an effort of the community. True/False
 - d) Old tyres, wooden beams can be provided to the play centre by the community. True/False

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