

8. The impact of the program

Introduction

The impact of community-based programs is always difficult to evaluate. This is true in particular, as programs are not targeted to treat a narrow range of symptoms, or on other isolated and easily quantifiable phenomena. Programs are based on the assumption is that they will have broad impact within a large context.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the programme are children. Unfortunately, it is not easy to measure the impact on children¹. It is also a question of money. In a similar psychosocial programme for teachers run by UNICEF in Bosnia during the war, it was found that the costs of a reliable and scientifically correct evaluation would be higher than the costs of the program itself.

Also, research-like activities may raise suspicion in local people involved in the programs. In many countries affected by armed conflicts and other disasters, foreign researchers came and literally exploited the situation for research purposes, but not for the benefit of the affected people. I often heard statements from local people like: *'We do not want to be research material!'*

Quantitative research can also introduce other problems causing which may cause unease. For example, if before starting the program you evaluate the knowledge and know-how of teachers through a questionnaire so that comparisons of the increase of knowledge, know-how and capacities acquired through the program may be calculated, you can create unease in teachers. Sometimes, this can even create resistance to the program as a whole.

In general, the qualitative methodology is much more useful than the quantitative one. But, it would be a mistake to claim that figures are unimportant. They are especially important for some donors, and other decision makers. Figures are an indicator of the realisation of the principle *'include a critical mass of entities (teachers, schools, services, volunteers, etc.) in the program'*, which is one condition of producing an impact on the community at large.

In the psychosocial program presented here, we suggest using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation.

We also suggest inviting an external evaluator because the psychosocial program for teachers is expensive. It usually triggers new activities for which funds are needed, and donors wonder whether past and future activities are really worthwhile and deserve funding. The opinion of an external evaluator can be a convincing document.

Measurement methods for the impact of the training on the teachers

The satisfaction of the participants in the training courses and the impact of activities can be measured by:

1. questionnaires for teachers completed at the end of each module,
2. observation of the active involvement of the teachers during the training,
3. self-evaluation by the participants of their knowledge on specific topics before and after the seminar,
4. group discussions of teachers and trainers,
5. group reports of teachers on implemented activities in their schools.²

Questionnaires and evaluation sheets for teachers completed at the end of each module enable the quantitative evaluation of their individual satisfaction with lectures, group discussion, role-play and the organisation of the seminar. Table 4 is an example evaluation sheet. The data collected with these questionnaires consistently show that teachers especially appreciate group discussions, because these discussions give them an opportunity for exchanging experiences and to learn from each other. Teachers are also asked to evaluate the usefulness and applicability in their every day professional activities with children of: ideas, information, and models of good practice, which were gathered during the seminars. Of special interest are the open questions in which teachers express their

personal experience of seminars and gave suggestions. The data show that the teachers experience the seminars as both empowering and motivating.

The impact of the training on the personal life of the teachers can be assessed through a questionnaire. See Box 4. as an example.

Observations on the active involvement of the teachers. Observations clearly show that the teachers participate very actively. They seem to appreciate the opportunity for exchanging their working experience and learning from each other. Table 5. gives an example of a form for this measurement.

The data acquired through this method in Bosnia and Kosovo show that the knowledge of the teachers concerning the main topics of

Table 4. Evaluation sheet for teachers

<i>Grade your evaluation of the importance of the following aspects: (1 = least, 5 = most)</i>					
	1	2	3	4	5
Lectures					
Group work					
Organisation					
Social life					
The role of trainers in group work					
Were the presented topics interesting for you?					
How useful will this be for your everyday practice?					
Your dissatisfaction and criticism:					
What did you like most, and what was most useful for your work in the classroom?					
Other comments and suggestions:					

Box 4. Example of questionnaire on the impact of the program on the personal life of teachers

We kindly ask you to reflect on how the program that you have attended influenced you personally and within your personal relationships?

Please answer briefly the following questions:

1. Have you noticed any changes of an emotional nature, motivation, or energy in your professional work after your participation in the seminars? If so, what kind of changes?
2. What changes have you noticed in your family, life and personal relationships?
3. What sort of changes have you noticed in other areas of your private life (for example: relaxation, socialising?)?
4. What sort of changes have you noticed in your emotional life and mood (for example: security, self -confidence, optimism, etc.)?

the program increased by more than 20%, even though the acquirement of factual knowledge is not the main aim of the program.

Group discussions of teachers and trainers. Data from these discussions show that the teachers feel empowered and stimulated in the sense that they felt that they had more energy for coping with their job, as well with their own difficulties in life situations. They experience the program as meaningful as well as a kind of social reward for their work. Teachers included in the program, as a rule, live in very difficult life circumstances. Although the program does not improve their material situation, it does have an impact on their moral strength and self-esteem. See Box 5. for some quotes from these group discussions.

Group reports of teachers on implemented activities in their schools. From the systemic reporting of teachers on implemented activities it can be assessed how and to what extent they were able to put into practice: gained knowledge, transfer gathered information to other

teachers in their schools through informal channels and within the framework of formal meetings of teachers, by distributing leaflets and books on treated topics, etc.

Teachers should be asked particularly about using acquired knowledge in working with parents. Usually the amount of reported activities involving parents is significantly smaller than the reported activities involving children. The most frequent tangible innovation is the introduction of voluntary work in schools.

Some teachers use their group reports to mention more general matters, such as an increase in their sensitivity and their capacity to recognise traumatised or other emotionally hurt children. Also mentioned were: an enlargement of their repertory of helping interventions, a stronger motivation for providing to both children and their parents, a better understanding and more appropriate approaches to children with fear in school and school phobia, a better recognition of emotional disorders of children in general (especially of the anxious

Table 5. Example of self – evaluation questionnaire for teachers addressing acquired knowledge

<i>Dear participants,</i>					
<i>We would appreciate if you would grade on a scale from 1-5 your acquired knowledge of the topics listed, and presented in the seminar.</i>					
<i>Use the first line to inform us about your knowledge before the seminar, and the second about your knowledge after the seminar.</i>					
1. The protective role of the school and teachers for the psychosocial well-being of children					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
2. Psychosocial climate of the school					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
3. Group work					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
4. Communication in the classroom					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
5. Peer relationships- bullying					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
6. Stress of teachers					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
7. Burn out and its prevention					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
8. Education for pro-social behaviour					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
9. Voluntary work in school and community					
Before the seminar	1	2	3	4	5
After the seminar	1	2	3	4	5

and depressive type), and more fruitful contacts with parents. Other results of the program mentioned by teachers are: the introduction of more interactive teaching methods, increased cooperation with other schools, and more involvement of their schools in community activities. The multitude of small but important changes in attitudes, behaviour and functioning of teachers stemming from a better insight in psychological and psychosocial processes, and from an exchange of experience with their colleagues however, are difficult to measure.

The results of all measurements can be

summed up in a table, see Table 6. for an example.

¹ An interesting methodology for measuring the effect of community oriented psychosocial programs for children is discussed by Bragin (2005).

² One could also use a *goal attainment scale* based on the learning wishes formulated by each individual participant on the first day of the training.

See: <http://www.ed.psu.edu/paliteracycorps/forms/gasprocedures.htm>

Box 5. Bosnian teachers on the seminars organised by Foundation ‘Together’

‘We are so glad that you invited us to this seminar, we already felt that everybody forgot us.’

‘This is the first time that primary school teachers, especially those teaching the first 4 grades, and those working in rural schools are invited to the psychosocial seminars. We really need this kind of support. We work in very poor conditions, with mostly refugee children, in refugee camps. Parents do not cooperate with us and we are blamed for everything.’

‘We are fed up with seminars on school reforms, seminars which are very technical, seminars in which we are not considered as human beings, and seminars where our needs or needs of our pupils are not important.’

‘We like the lectures in the seminar. They are brief, concise; and deal with the topics we really need in our everyday work with children.’

‘It is so good to meet so many teachers, to exchange our experience, and to speak directly to the medical professionals.’

‘I like the session where we talked about teachers’ burdens, stress at work, and burn-out prevention.’

‘The social component of the program is excellent.’

‘This seminar gave us new energy and motivation; we feel a lot more capable now to help our pupils.’

‘This is the first time I listen to the lectures on the topics, which are usually not treated as important in our work and most of the time ignored by teachers, like for example Specific Learning Difficulties, or school phobia, or chronically ill children.’

Table 6. Effectiveness of the program in Kosovo

Activity	Purpose	Indicator of effectiveness	Instruments used	Results of measurements	What was learned for the future of the project
1. Training of trainers	1.1 Trainers are able to provide good lectures and run plenary discussions	Satisfaction and positive evaluation of teachers - participants	Questionnaires for teachers	Average 4,8 points (maximum 5)	Lectures should be short. The language should be familiar to teachers
	1.2 Trainers learned interactive methods	Trainers learned interactive methods of group work.	Questionnaire for teachers	Average 4,9 points (maximum 5)	Group discussion is the most valuable part of the program.
2. Seminars for teachers	2.1 Better recognition of signs of trauma related problems (and other emotional and psychosocial and learning disorders)	Level of group discussion, group reporting on posters; reported individual cases by teachers; self – evaluation questionnaires	Self – evaluation questionnaire, knowledge on special fields	Measure increase in knowledge (about 20%)	Teachers already had certain knowledge and capacity to recognise trauma, which is understandable as they are familiar with traumatic experiences; but their knowledge could be substantially increased
	2.2 Teachers offer psychosocial assistance to children	Reported cases in group work	Observations Listening Number of reported cases	Various figures 20 - 40	The mutual exchange of practical approaches of help for children is an excellent method of learning and generating new ideas
2.3	Creating a safe, protective and motivating psychosocial climate of the classroom	Reports on concrete changes, small innovations introduced by teachers in their classroom	Narrative reports in group work (registered by group leader) Open question in the evaluative questionnaire for teacher.	Number of innovations Descriptions	The program can generate gradual changes. Teachers need support in school for such changes to occur
2.4	Better communication and cooperation with parents	Less conflict situations with parents Higher participation of parents in school	Cases reported by teachers Narrative reports in group work (registered by group leader) Open question in the evaluative questionnaire for teacher.	Number of improved cooperation Description	This effect is the least present.
2.5	Empowering teachers to overcome traumas and cope with adversities	Grades given by teachers on topics of professional burdens, stress and prevention of burn out. Intensity and quality of group discussions on the topic.	Self – evaluation questionnaire, knowledge on special fields	Average grade for the mentioned topics- 4,8	For empowerment of teachers it is crucial importance to discuss their own problems and coping mechanisms
2.6	Involving volunteers as helpers to children	Number of children helped by volunteers	Description and assessment of activities	About 200 children helped by volunteers.	Schools are ready to introduce voluntary work. Secondary school students and upper class primary school children can be good helpers (learning, befriending, providing psychosocial support) to younger children.
		Number of volunteers' working hours Number of mentors Number of mentors' working hours	Figures.	Teachers' report - observed improvement in children.	
2.7	Developing voluntary work with primary school children	Number of children, as volunteers Number of volunteers' working hours Number of volunteers Number of mentors' working hours	Description and assessment of activities Figures.	About 326 young volunteers active in their school or in their community	There is a great readiness for schools to develop voluntary work with their students. In order to maintain the introduced activities teachers / mentors also need support.