

The Project on Developing School-based Nutritional Education in China

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Nutrition is one of the important factors to improve children health and development. China is a large developing country. She has more than 200 millions of school students, accounting for about one-sixth of 1.3 billion of Chinese total population. Nutritional Status among children in China is quite differences from areas ,such as between city and rural areas ,the eastern and western areas. The results from the National Survey in China in 1992 and 1995 showed Children had lower intake amount of calcium, some Vitamins and lacked good quality protein foods. Meanwhile a phenomenon of malnutrition and overweight was occurred simultaneously, one side, there was still higher rate of light malnutrition in many rural areas; on the other side, a certain numbers of overweight children were found in some big cities. These results reflected children in China are facing direct and potential threatens from unbalance food and also suggested significance in developing nutrition education.

Our project objectives:

- To develop school-based nutritional education through Child to Child approach;
- To improve effectively students' knowledge, attitudes and diet behaviors related nutrition as well as their awareness of participating and taking action in promoting individual and group nutrition health.

Our project is built on the philosophy that children have power to participate in health; that children can spread knowledge, teach skills, work together with young children, peers, and adults to share the information and responsibility, make decisions, and improve good nutrition status for their individual, family and community.

Methodology

The project lasted more than one year. Two cities respectively in Shanxi Province and Zhejiang Province, which located in the north and south part of China, were chosen as the study site. There were nine primary schools in the two cities that participated in the study, six of them were as interventional schools ,three ones as the control. In every interventional school, we choose one experiment class and ten dissemination classes, the former was directly implemented regular education subject by the instructors trained, the latter only got the messages disseminated by the students of experiment class instead of nutritional courses. Totally 3622 students were covered during this project.

Preparation and getting started

- Need analysis: Having used qualitative and quantitative methods, the target group including students, teachers, and their parents in pilot schools were investigated to assess their needs of nutritional knowledge, attitude towards food consumption, behaviors relate to diet habits and participating in health education activities.
- Developing nutrition education manual: Based on the need analysis, a set of self-written

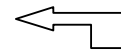
manual for the course of Child to Child nutritional education including text book for students and teaching material for teachers was compiled. Six modules were included in the manual which blended nutritional knowledge with practices both in and after class, namely:

- ① Know your dietary habits
- ② The nutrition what I need When I'm growing up
- ③ What should I eat every day
- ④ Food sanitation and individual health
- ⑤ Nutrition balance and disease prevention
- ⑥ Nutritional choice when doing shopping

- Selecting and training core teachers: A working team was first organized in each pilot school, which mainly made up the principal, head teacher of Young Pioneers, classroom teachers, teacher for subjects of health education, art lesson and so on. The classroom teachers of the experimental class were trained to provide the nutrition education course.

Implement

- First step---learning and thinking: The instructor trained discussed relevant nutrition topics with the students at experimental class through different participant teaching methods like brain-storm, games, role-play, mapping and telling stories, taught students to learn basic nutrition knowledge and think over the nutritional issues occurred in themselves and surroundings.



**Participatory learning
in classroom**

- Second step---Communication: Encouraged students communicate their ideas and information learnt at class with their parents and other students through some small survey, visiting after school, further find and plan which nutrition problems should be solved and how to do.
- Third step---Action: Through different kinds of activities, such as drama, broadcast, poster, exhibition, students spread the nutrition knowledge in school and families, which supported by the working team of school. What students have done through their actions is to have increased individual awareness of nutrition and health, improved diet habits in themselves and participated in nutrition education promotion in school and family.



- **Forth step---Evaluation:** Using individual review, group discussion and questionnaire, assessed the impact of students' learning and action.

Findings

- The results of the project indicated that the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of students not only from the experimental classes but also the dissemination ones have all improved significantly, which means children developed their capacity to promote nutrition health.
- The project emphasize children's role. During the study, the students at experiment class both acted as the learner and the educator that make student had a strong sense of responsibility, which droved them to undertake more tasks in promoting health and nutrition and also testified the study philosophy that children have power to participate in health.

Benefits

- Breaking the limitation of manpower resources. In our project, although there were only about 300 students who were provided with regular nutrition course by teachers/instructors directly, they became the main body of spreading the nutrition information and knowledge inside of school. As the result, more than 2000 students of dissemination classes finally obtained benefits. The study showed the less investment and higher beneficial result.
- Expanding the time and space of the existing nutrition education course in China. As the National Guidelines for School Health Education issued by Chinese Ministry of Education in 1992, there was just one lesson (about forty minutes) for health education course every two weeks, totally 6 to 7 lessons in a term in primary school, that means time used for nutrition education is limited. However, our project developed many activities through Child to Child approach and made the nutrition education outreach to students' ordinary life, and provided students more opportunities to learn and practice nutrition knowledge after curricular.

Conclusion

The project explored Child to Child approach to develop nutrition education in primary school in China, which also provided meaning suggestions in more fields related school health education in the future.