Installing Child-Friendly Systems

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Introduction:

Children are the only cohort blessed with a wide social capital filled with support and services. Many stakeholders, by default adults, get involved to groom the child with a blend of pride, affection and care. Power and control are exercised with good intentions to groom the child. There is already an established friendliness index with the dimensions of protection, provision and participation of a child. How far the efforts get to synchronize to evolve a sustainable child-friendly system (CFS) need exploration.

Challenges of CFS:

Ensuring a child-friendly system (CFS) is a challenging mission. All stakeholders should work together to uphold the wellbeing of the child. There should be lots of information management supporting to establish a child-friendly system irrespective of the social context: family, school, neighbourhood or community. The awareness and willingness of stakeholders to protect children is though overwhelming, the incidence and prevalence rate of abuses is still irksome. A research was initiated to find out the views of different stakeholders in relation to one another to establish a child-friendly system.

Ensuring child-friendliness:

It is a dynamic process where all stakes must equip constantly to keep up with the pace of the changing situations. It has to be internalised by all of them to uphold the wellbeing of the child.

To achieve this goal both intra- and inter-stakeholders co-operation is needed. Change in stake perhaps change the systems and these changes have to be carefully manoeuvred, captured and recorded in such a manner that the system remains child-friendly no matter which school, family or community is involved. There is enough evidence to accept the fact that the mindset of parents, teachers and community players are changing to perform from a child-centric platform. What needs to be explored is whether stakeholders are conscious, convinced and consistent to perform for ensuring a child friendly system. To pursue this goal both the internal and external governance play a crucial role as shown in figure 1 to keep the stakeholders intact.
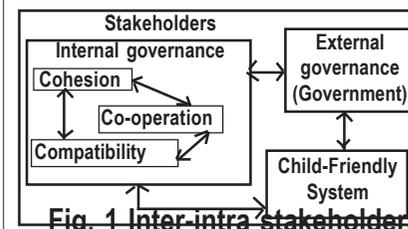

Fig. 1 Inter-intra stakeholders' governance and communication

Concept:

This authors hold a view that *child-friendliness,* a natural phenomenon, revolves around the 3-Cs of *Cohesiveness, Compatibility* and *Cooperation* amongst the stakeholders with proper governance ensuring efficient child-friendly systems. Figure 1 explains authors' line of thinking. Explanation of the key terminologies are as follows:

Definitions:

Cohesiveness is a relative term, where the "task commitment" and "interpersonal attraction" amongst the stakeholders needs nurturing and strengthening. To arrive at cohesion the stakeholders, for the benefit of the children, should exhibit a spirit of unity, agree on the defined goals, and complement each other to fulfill the needs of all stakes. The stakes representing family, school, community and polity are structurally interdependent. The institutions perform their role-relationships, but need nourishment to ensure better status for the children.

Compatibility:

Compatibility is a state where all stakeholders are able to exist and function together, without conflict to achieve the common goal of sustaining the status of children in a democratic manner. Internal governance matters here to ensure efficient operation by all stakes within their boundaries as well as to remain aligned with key stakes. All stakeholders should have a conviction that bonding harmonically is a stimulus to withstand pressure during conflicting situations. To ensure efficiency each stake has to develop and seek the support of governing tools.

Cooperation:

It is a natural social process where different stakes come together to attain the common goal of adopting children friendly approaches. Here the stakes should work cohesively; proactively identify and bust conflicting situations; and

stand together to empower children. As there are multiple stakes, each one will bring in personal agendum with good intentions and all these be synthesized to attain the goal.

Here the external governing structure will help to progress and sustain effectively to pursue the goals.

3 C's of CFS:

Thus, child-friendly system is a function of 3-Cs: Cohesiveness, Compatibility and Cooperation among the stakeholders, guarded with both internal and external governance. Each one has to watch the functions and mal-functions of themselves in terms of their attributes along with the external measures of control. The benchmark of friendliness with reference to children has to be looked multidimensional. This is a unique attempt to capture the spontaneous perceptions of multiple stakes in ensuring friendliness quotient from within rather than due to demonstration effect.

Data source and social setting:

A combination of primary and predominantly secondary data sources is used. The secondary sources of information vary from the training reports, facilitator's notes, site visit notes, workshop participants'

feedback sheets, email communiqué, children's cartoon copies to the case studies from evaluation reports. The primary sources are one-to-one dialogue, e-interviews, discussion on social network sites and notes of focused group interactions.

Children related workshops and dialogues are one of the planned activities of the Institute. In the past 3 years there were about 50 such occasions fostering interaction with 750 plus adult representatives and 1000 plus children. With regard to participants' profile, it radiates heterogeneity in terms of age, sex, education, institutions, structure and stakeholder-ship. While remained homogeneous in terms of occupation of working for children where in teachers, parents, community organisations, policy makers, experts were involved in discussions and interfaced with inter and intra stakes as well as with children. The representatives were predominantly from south India though 20 percent of them represented other parts of the country.

Analysis and findings:

The analysis focused only on the responses from the four key institutions of family, school,

community representatives and the government. The views of hostels and bridge schools are along with schools while the views from shelter homes presented under community. With the Content-Analysis Technique inferences are drawn. The manifest content of the responses were culled out. With regard to perception towards government, latent content serve the purpose to draw inferences. The information obtained from the children helps to validate the impressions of the adults.

The steps to analyse:

To begin with, a list of recorded words, sentences and phrases from all sources were prepared. Second, from this list all those items depicting positive and 'friendliness' were culled out. Third, to avoid duplication similar ones were pooled, and considered as one attribute. For example, provisions of food, enrolling in schools, ensure basic security needs all together was fulfilling role obligations of family. Fourth, the attributes plotted in a matrix helps to check for duplication, to code and rank. Items that scored above 70% (from 40 records) was shortlisted. The range of scores was from 40% to 100%. Fifth, the data transferred

to a Venn diagram enabled us to visualize stakewise commonalities and exclusiveness.

Finally, the most repeated got filtered for further discussion.

The perceptions of each stake, basing on the conceptual definitions, were clustered under 3-C's. Considering the voluminous work in looking at each other's perspective, here only the expressions of the family, school and community vis-à-vis one another; and the perception of all stakes towards government is considered for this discussion.

All the listed items are the expected and accepted functions of the stakes. The items after coding, ranked to identify the specific-expected-role performance of each stake from the eyes of other players. The perceptions of all stakes were codified, tabulated and analyzed. Top 37 items fulfilled our criteria of 70 percent. Top ranked items in the eyes of each stakes were finalised as priority ones of the stakes. Thus, the tables given below represent role of all stakes in ensuring 3-Cs clustered with each one's independent role as expected by others.

Child-friendliness:

The following tables present the

findings of our analysis with reference to 3-Cs. The tables show the roles of family (F), School (S), Community (C) and Government (G) through the self-explanatory items.

Table: 1. Cohesiveness among the Stakeholders to ensure Child- Friendly Systems
 # Expected functions ensuring Child-friendliness
F Family - From the eyes of School and Community
F1 Perform the role-responsibilities as a parent in fulfilling child's basic needs
F2 Provide opportunity to explore, express and experience childhood
F3 Build reference groups to update information on child concerns.
S School - From the eyes of Community and Family
S1 Ensure child friendly pedagogies like joyful learning methods
S2 Pursue peer circles to avail peer counselling
S3 Enable children to access information in right form, tone and requirement.
S4 Practice the norm of "no partiality - no comparison"
S5 Ensure teach-taught fitness through proper recruitment and training.

C Community - From the eyes of Family and School
C1 Create awareness on child abuse incidences to community members and motivate to fight, and report incidences.
C2 Community Based Organisations should work for prevention of cultural erosion.
C3 Weave safety net for the children
G Government - From the eyes of family, School & Community
G1 Ensure honesty while drafting child-centric plans
G2 Use IT for transparent and quick flow of communication.
G3 Incorporate changes in accordance to international codes.

The role fulfilment of different stakes is hypothesised to ensure a child friendly system. Expectations of each stake towards the others just ensures the commitment to fulfil one's own task as well as foster attraction amongst stakes to attain a common goal. Thus, the points listed above attributes to a cohesive approach by the stakes in ensuring a friendly system for the children as each one knows what one has to perform and where the responsibility lies primarily.

Table: 2 Compatibility among the stakes to achieve child-friendly system
Expected Functions Assuring Association Among the Stakes
FS Family & School -From the eyes of Community
FS1 Exercise positive disciplining techniques to mould children
FS2 Institutionalise child protection policy
FS3 Hone skills of children to identify problems, make decisions and self govern
FS4 Use positive strokes like appreciation to boost the self esteem of the child
FS5 Act as a firewall to quarantine perpetrators
SC School & Community - From the eyes of family
SC1 Practice open communication to ensure transparency
SC2 Manage information suitably to draw decisions to ensure child safety
SC3 Invest to preserve culture by moral instructions and community celebrations
CF Community& Family - From the eyes of school
CF1 Sow the seed of inclusiveness right from childhood and make it a tradition

CF2 Build innovative safety gears to prevent abuses
CF3 Form and participate in committees to discuss on child friendly initiatives
G Government - From the eyes of family, community, school
G1 Invest on development of children matching international standards
G2 Ensure accountability in enforcement of laws against child perpetrators
G3 Provide affordable child centric amenities to all sections of the society

The voice of stakes towards one another ensures a sense of togetherness to pursue the larger goals. The key aspects like institutionalising the policies in institutions, empowering children, innovating safety gears as part of prevention, managing information flow among stakes, including all sections of the society including vulnerable ones and demanding accountability are the most sought roles by all the stakes. Fulfilling these will certainly ensure harmonious relationship among stakes to work towards common goal.

Table: 3 Cooperation among stakes to attain friendly system

Attributes agreed by all stakes to ensure child friendliness

FSC1 Nurture Creativity in child

FSC2 Expand social networking in a dense form

FSC3 Instil pro-activeness to abet deviance and waste of resources

FSC4 Ensure participation of all key stakes to draw plans focusing on children

FSC5 Upgrade the skills and knowledge of child, not by chance but by choice

FSC6 Invest on research and development on child related issues

FSC7 Practice non-violent communication - Listen child's voices

FSC8 Ensure efficient performance of roles and duties, and redefine suitably

FSC9 Involve children in policy designing, and educate them on child governance

FSC10 Involve government to ensure child support laws and plans.

Items listed above are commonalities of all stakes hypothesized to create child-friendly systems in place.

Consensus over a common goal by itself is an indication proving the process of cooperation. It is hypothesized that the stakes should have a sense of commitment; interpersonal attraction to work together and have one common goal. Governance matters here to perform in an organised fashion. It is obvious that the institutions of family, school and community wish to format the existing system to a child-friendly one. Each one has to take stock of their own to prepare a checklist; define in their own terminologies within the purview of one's own socio-economiccultural milieu; evolve one's own grading sheet to self-audit and measure their child-friendly quotient.

Child-friendly parameters:

To validate our discussion we attempted to trace the top listed child-friendly parameters in the eyes of children and they are as given below.

✳ 'Stop corporal punishment'

✳ 'Exhibit role modelling'

✳ 'Listen to our feelings'

✳ 'Be a Mentor'

✳ 'Invest and trust us'

✳ 'Allow us to be creative'

✳ 'Accept our uniqueness'

✳ 'Don't Bully'

✳ 'Don't compare but complement'

✳ 'Appreciate for achievements'

✳ 'Discipline us without 'mutilating our feelings'

All these points signify the importance of a systemic approach towards educating, parenting, governing, protecting and communicating.

Summary and conclusion:

Child-friendliness is something to do with one's own-intrinsic factorl. The external factors can be positive stimulation and referred as pressure groups. The three key role players: family, school and community have to watch out for fulfilling their role obligations and duties in a compatible, cohesive and cooperative mode to enhance efficiency of respective stakeholders, to install a child-friendly system in place. Original intention to explore the expectations of the stakeholders towards each other motivated authors to draw a conceptual framework for future research. The statements given by each stakeholder confirms our hypothesis that a systemic child-friendly intervention is a function of 3-Cs. Existence of 3-Cs by itself enables the stakeholders to realize, their role to sustain the provision, participation and protection of children.

The items presented under cooperation exhibit the need for a compatible and cohesive functioning of all stakes.

There is less scope for one to deviate. An open, honest and transparent system of communication in the system will enable free exchange of information and will strengthen internal measures.

The points listed across 3-Cs need to be pruned, validated and tested in different settings to identify the real child friendly perspective that the adult is dreaming for vis-à-vis the perceptions of children. Future research has to focus on validating these attributes as indices of child friendliness and empirically extablish the efficiency quotient of child-friendliness.

Ensuring child-friendly systems:

1. Realize first the need to work for child's wellbeing as a priority.
2. Internalise the gaps in one's own existing system.
3. Develop the protocol for plugging gaps in the process.
4. Coach and nurture the stakes in such a manner that they possibly move from within the framework from "No-governance to self-governance".
5. Review and revisit step 3 to have constant improvisation and innovation.