

APPRAISAL : SYNTHESIS

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Abstract

Life Skills, Health & Family Life and Citizenship Education, Curriculum Guide for Grade 9, Draft is a guide edited by the Ministry of Education of Guyana in collaboration with UNICEF in 2003. It is a draft document designed to support the teaching and learning of this critical area of the curriculum. This document can serve as a focal point for departmental and regional sub-committee meetings, where methodologies and strategies for both teaching and assessing are discussed. It has a direct focus on an integrated approach to curriculum delivery, in which the teacher is not unduly restricted by the subject content. The list of references should provide teachers with the relevant background for curriculum. The material is divided into 3 units: 1) coping with changes; 2) the new me; 3) launching out. Each unit is also divided into 5 core topics: education, family, health, human rights, human sexuality.

Note

These documents are part of a set of manuals that provide teachers with an integrated and consistent approach to the application of values education, and develop a Life Skills, Health and Family Life Education, Guidance and Citizenship curriculum using the five themes of: Education, Family, Health, Human Right and Human Sexuality.

Strengths

1) This curriculum was reviewed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, joint HRE programme and UNICEF to develop a Life Skills, health and Family Life and Citizenship curriculum using the following five themes : Education, Family, Health, Human Rights and Human Sexuality and to support the teaching and learning of this area of the curriculum.

2) HIV & AIDS education is integrated into the official curriculum at unit 3 "Launching out" under the topic: "Preventing sexually transmitted Infection HIV & AIDS". This theme addresses the following content: differentiate between facts and myths; actions and consequence

risk assessment; ways of transmission of STIs and HIV & AIDS; symptoms and treatment of STIs and HIV & AIDS; ways of preventing STIs and HIV & AIDS.

3) The material promotes the creation of a safe environment to deliver life skills education and promote active participation by both students and teachers. These guides have a direct focus on an integrated approach to curriculum delivery, in which the teacher is not unduly restricted by the subject content.

4) The document can provide an interesting starting point to develop strategies and methods to develop complete curriculum. Each unit provides learning objectives, teaching methods, materials and evaluation which are very helpful for teachers and lessons preparation. Indeed, each theme presents relevant learning objectives tabs (life skills: able to..., knowledge: awareness that..., understanding: understand that..., attitude: demonstrate...) which enumerate goals briefly. As different learning objectives were identified, teachers can choose the areas of integration to deliver the skill.

5) The material does not include means to assess learners before the programme but contains ideas of evaluation after completing the programme. Teachers have to check if learners can accomplish several tasks or understand new behaviours, skills, knowledge or attitudes. For example, one evaluation consists of taking action to eliminate discrimination at schools and another is to discuss openly interpersonal relationships at home.

6) The manual covers a wide range of topics organized under several themes: "coping with changes, the new me, launching out" and refers to sexual and reproductive health. In particular, it deals with mental, psychological, social and emotional health. The document help learners to recognize and identify peer pressure on social and emotional health. The material emphasizes the importance of stress and anger management. The document shows how to deal with stress and anger and how learners should address positive responses to stressful situations and control her/his anger. Two lessons are dedicated to suicide and its prevention.

7) The curriculum addresses the following topics: promoting human rights and overcoming stigma and discrimination with the theme "equality of opportunity" and "countering racism". The document shows that minority groups, indigenous people or PLHIV have equal rights as all citizens. Learners have to make an objective assessment of persons regardless of differences in terms of gender, sexuality, religion, disability, opinion, nationality and health status. The materials emphasizes the fact that despite differences in colour, texture of hair, ancestral

origins, culture, religion, lifestyle and political persuasion, the people that make up the Guyanese nation are all equally Guyanese. The material also deals with the freedom of expression.

8) One lesson is dedicated to conflict resolution and problem-solving. The aim of this lesson is the aptitude to display empathy and tolerance in problem/conflict solving situations in particular concerning family planning and relationships at home.

Weaknesses / aspects to be improved

1) There is no specific allocation of time and no formal assessment of learning outcome. So it would become easy to ignore and neglect the subject, especially when curricula are already over crowded.

Suggestions for improvement

→The process of evaluation should be more elaborated for example integrating different assessment tools (close-ended questions, analysis, role play or simulations, learner projects...) It is very important to give feedback to learners and other teachers about learner's progress in order to be able to improve the efficacy of their work.

It would be interesting to develop an outcomes-based curriculum, to specify outcomes that learners are expected to achieve in specific subjects or areas by the end of a specific stage of schooling. In order to prepare the development of each lesson or unit and the assessment, teachers should follow this framework: develop learning objective/ outcome, assessment question, criteria (to determine and to know if the learner has acquired a certain level of knowledge, skills or adopted a specific attitude or behaviour) and possible assessment tools.

2) The integration of life skills education into the curriculum is too vague

Suggestions for improvement

→It would be useful to add more details on the integration of life skills education into the four core subjects.

3) The range of pedagogical activities proposed in the curriculum is not explained.

Suggestions for improvement

→It would be useful to explain why using one activity can lead to a certain result and using another one can lead to a different one. The teacher must plan adequate time to carry out the activity completely and have a clear understanding of the objectives of the activity before beginning. Therefore, it is very important to precise learning objectives and means necessary to develop a skill.

Participatory life skills education is considered the most appropriate teaching-learning method relevant to developing HIV & AIDS and sexual and reproductive health skills. Learning should be contextual, problem-based and social, i.e. there is feedback and interaction between learners and between learners and educators.

4) HIV & AIDS education is integrated into this curriculum. Nevertheless, the information is not precise or accurate enough. This curriculum does not deal with drugs, ARV treatment, VCT. It overlooks the question of protective attitudes and necessary behaviours to prevent the infection.

Suggestions for improvement

→When HIV and AIDS education programmes are effectively and efficiently implemented, they can lead to outcomes such as: delay of the onset of sexual activity, reduction in the number of sex partners, increase the use of condoms, increased uptake of VCT and reduction in vulnerability and high risk behaviours. Expected learning outcomes could be the following: to explain in basic terms what STIs, HIV & AIDS are and to identify ways to protect oneself from STI and HIV in order to define serologic status and describe the meaning of being "HIV positive" and some of the main consequences for a person; impacts on health, relationships, work.

5) HIV and AIDS education is not a central core in the manual and it is difficult to measure the objectives.

Suggestions for improvement

→HIV & AIDS education should be as important as life skills education. HIV and AIDS education is effective in reducing risk and fostering care and support for people with HIV within the community. Thanks to HIV & AIDS education, issues relating to gender equity as well as overcoming stigma and discrimination will be addressed and will facilitate changes in behaviour and values that will allow people to enhance their ability to protect themselves and better manage the impact of HIV & AIDS on individuals and communities. Implementing quality education and education on HIV and AIDS will contribute to the acquisition of life skills in schools and the realization of the objectives of EFA.

6) The material does not address vulnerability factors and the three components of the "Abstinence- Behaviour faithful- Condom use" approach are not explained. The Curriculum only promotes abstinence in particular with the theme "not ready for sex".

Suggestions for improvement

→Older learners should learn about safer sex, how to obtain and use condoms. Learners should also be able to understand that alcohol and drugs increase vulnerability, notably by affecting judgement and ability to make decisions. It is also very important to enable learners to share their experiences on the loss of a family or community member in order to discuss some of the practical and emotional impacts of losing someone you care for.

7) Even if notions of community acceptance and respect for people are explained, these notions require more precisions and in-depth knowledge.

Suggestions for improvement

→The curriculum should provide more information on these elements and on teaching-learning techniques. Teachers may feel they are overwhelmed and lost regarding the complexity of these topics.

8) The curriculum does not address gender issues.

Suggestions for improvement

→Nevertheless, a learner has to acquire knowledge and understanding on the differences between men and women, what is gender equity and what are the negative impacts of inequities between men and women on communities. A learner should also understand why achieving gender equity is crucial in the response to HIV and AIDS and how to behave in a manner which demonstrates an understanding of the importance of the equity

9) No reference is made to community and culture.

Suggestions for improvement

→This theme is very useful to enable learners to identify religious and cultural issues relating to sexuality, reproduction, HIV & AIDS and SRH; to explore and discuss local traditional religious and cultural norms regarding family, marriage and sexuality; to explore why some traditional, religious and cultural practices can contribute to the effective prevention of HIV and provide support to PLHIV.

Internal consistency

There should be an introduction. Topics are not always covered in a logical sequence. It is sometimes difficult to follow the progression in the topics and why this logical sequence was chosen.

Transferability issues and more suggestions for adapting the manual

The materials do not provide tools to identify and explore cultural issues relating to life skills, they are not related to community environment or to a social and cultural context. Therefore, transferability and adaptation are easy to realize.

The manuals should be more connected and linked to the Guyana context and should offer more references to local community and culture.