

APPRAISAL : SYNTHESIS

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Abstract

Life Skills, Health & Family Life and Citizenship Education, Curriculum Guide for Grade 5, Draft is a guide edited by the Ministry of Education of Guyana in collaboration with UNICEF in 2003. The goal of this document is 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.

Note

These documents are part of a set of manuals designed to provide teachers with an integrated and consistent approach to the application of values education, and to 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. This Infusion Guide has to be used jointly with Life Skills, Health & Family Life and Citizenship Education, Curriculum Guide, Grade 5, Draft.

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 five themes: Education, Family, Health, Human Rights and Human Sexuality. The aim of this Life Skills, Health & Family Life Education, Guidance and Citizenship curriculum is to provide teachers with an integrated and consistent approach to the application of values education.

2) The documents 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.

3) The materials promote 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 documents focus on the personal development of the learners as a person. Coping with emotions is one of the important topics developed in the materials. The documents help learners recognize the different feelings they experience according to the situation, to control them and to accept others' feelings. Through the learning of this knowledge, learners will be able to use new skills in everyday life, to adjust their attitudes, to adopt values and to translate all those into respectful and protective behaviours. In particular, stress and anger are well explained. The documents show how to deal with stress and anger and how learners should address positive responses to stressful situations and control her/his anger.

5) Under the theme "Human Rights", the documents promote the following topic: respecting cultures and religious values. The key message of this lesson is that individuals must be respected regardless of their beliefs and that freedom of thought, conscience and religion are the rights of an individual as written in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. Lack of respect for the human rights contributes to the spread of discrimination and ignorance. In this sense, the documents highlight the fact that poverty is a denial of rights and has negative effects on people's life.

6) The documents emphasize the importance of good practices for healthy attitudes and behaviours. The documents explain why nutrition has an important part to play in learners' rate of growth. People have different growth rates physically, intellectually, sexually and emotionally and learners should accept the differences for the stages of growth of their body when compared with peers.

7) The materials deal with substance use and abuse and drug addiction. It focuses on drugs use and abuse, the effect of controlled substances when used if it is not prescribed, effect of illegal drugs and its implications for society and presents briefly the most popular drugs (marijuana, heroin and cocaine). Concerning HIV & AIDS, injecting drug use presents an important risk when needles or syringes are shared, as blood is a vector of transmission.

Weaknesses / aspects to be improved

1) HIV & AIDS education is not integrated into the official curriculum. These manuals refer to health, sexual and reproductive health but not to HIV and AIDS education.

Suggestions for improvement

→Children and young people represent the window of opportunity. It is worth doing everything to prevent new infections. Children and young people who go to school are in contact with friends who are not in school, thus information and skills can be exchanged between peers and generations among families and communities. It is important that HIV & AIDS education starts at an early age in primary school and be sustained throughout secondary school because it is easier to adopt new values and behaviours than to change them once they are acquired. If we teach children very early to know and respect their feelings and their body, as well as others, they will be more likely to adopt protective behaviours. By receiving quality HIV & AIDS and reproductive health education which are gender-sensitive, young people are more likely to adopt low risk sexual practices.

The material should provide the tools to support the learning to identify myths and misconceptions related to STIs, HIV & AIDS, sexual and reproductive health and rights and to analyse common community practices and beliefs. This will help to challenge beliefs and practices that have a negative impact, and strengthen those that have a positive impact on sexual and reproductive health and the prevention of HIV. A balance should be found between what are crucial skills and knowledge for young people living in a world with HIV and what is acceptable to the community.

School programs addressing sexual health and sexuality do not encourage early sexual initiation nor increase sexual activity. Comprehensive and clear information has been proven crucial to helping learners to adopt protective behaviours.

2) As different life skills were identified, the teachers can choose in which subjects (in the four core subjects: language arts, mathematics, social studies, science) to deliver the skill.

Suggestions for improvement

→It would be useful to add more details on the integration of life skills education into the four core subjects and to explain how teachers have to proceed to integrate life skills into mathematics for example. There are seven steps an educator can follow to select the most appropriate set of teaching-learning methods given a particular learning objective : 1) consider school grade and age; 2) define objectives/expected learning outcomes; determine available time; 3) select possible teaching-learning methods; 4) select and prepare instruction material or any material necessary for the session; 5) specify activities and assignments necessary to achieve the learning outcomes; 7) define pre- and post-test assessment tools according to the assessment objectives.

3) There is no time allocation defined. The material does not include means to assess learners before the programme but contains ideas of evaluation after completing the programme. If there is no specific allocation of time and no formal assessment of learning outcome, it would become easy to ignore and neglect the subject, especially when curricula are already over crowded.

Suggestions for improvement

→Teachers have to check if learners can accomplish several tasks or understand new behaviours, skills, knowledge or attitudes. The process 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. For the preparation 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.

It would be interesting to develop an outcomes-based curriculum (i.e. to specify outcomes that learners are expected to achieve in specific subjects or areas by the end of a specific stage of schooling).

4) The content of these materials does not address gender issues.

Suggestions for improvement

→A learner has to acquire knowledge and understanding on the differences between man and woman, 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.

5) The manuals sometimes lack of cohesion

Suggestions for improvement

→ It would be useful to define at the beginning of the manuals the following concepts : “Life skills, Health & family life, and citizenship” and to explain why the authors choose to develop certain skills and knowledge.

Internal consistency

Topics are not always covered in a logical sequence. It is 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.