Addictive substances: textbook approaches from 16 countries

2009. 5 p.

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Periodical title:
Journal of Biological Education, 44 (1)

Description:
Schools have been identified as one of the appropriate settings for addiction prevention since this is the place where pupils may come into contact with drugs for the first time and experiment with them, with the possibility of becoming addicted. To be effective, school-based drug education must be firmly based on knowledge of oneself and knowledge of the effects of various addictive substances. Biology education is then an essential part of school-based drug education. The aim of this work was to compare the approach taken towards addictive substances in textbooks within 16 countries involved in the European project BIOHEADCITIZEN. We used a specific part of the project grid for substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and other drugs) and focussed on three major indicators: physical effects, psychological effects and social effects. Generally, in all 16 countries, the educative approaches taken in their textbooks include the three dimensions. Textbooks mainly employ text rather than visual images, and some countries’ textbooks have only text. Moroccan and Mozambican textbooks do not mention tobacco and other drugs, respectively. The comparative analyses highlighted that the Finnish textbook is the most comprehensive; the only one, in the study, to have a specific Health Education teaching module.

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