

APPRAISAL, SYNTHESIS

Title: A Manual for Lower Secondary HFLE Teachers

Type of document: Material for teachers

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Summary

This manual is intended to assist upper primary and lower secondary school teachers in the delivery of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum particularly in the area of Human Sexuality. In an effort to make teachers more comfortable with material and so to improve their levels of competency in the area of the curriculum regarding Human Sexuality, the Ministry of Education has embarked on a number of initiatives. This manual on Human Sexuality is one such initiative. When adopted by teachers, it will better prepare them to deal with student's concerns and to confidently engage in dialogue with students. The manual offers teachers a programme of structured experiences that aims to support them in the delivery of this very important component of the HFLE curriculum. It also seeks to provide students with a better understanding and appreciation of their maleness and femaleness – what is to be a boy or a girl, a man or a woman.

This manual is comprised of four units and a final section:

- Unit 1 provides a framework in which the teacher can develop his/her expertise in the implementation of HFLE programme and in particular Human Sexuality which is a very sensitive area of the curriculum.
- Unit 2, 3 and 4 serve as a teaching programme and concentrate on three aspects/area of human sexuality: 2: Reproductive Health, 3: Sexual Responsibility and 4: Gender and Stereotypes.
- The final section contains a bibliography and an appendix. Generally it provides sample materials and other resources on which the teacher can draw for the implementation of the programme.

Strengths:

1) Material development and inclusion in the prescribed curriculum

- The document was developed by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica with support of the Organization of American States (OAS). Therefore, it has an official endorsement and was designed to serve the implementation of the HFLE curriculum that includes HIV & AIDS education.

- The document was developed based on a study on the status of HFLE in Dominica revealing that a significant number of teachers at both the primary and lower secondary levels are reluctant to teach those sections of the curriculum which relate to Human Sexuality. It is indeed relevant and a good initiative to create an additional manual to focus specifically on how to teach Human Sexuality in order to help teacher to feel more confident and comfortable to speak about these sensitive issues in classrooms.

- However, the document doesn't mention if it has been developed taking account of parents and community concerns and if they were involved in the development of the material.

2) Time frame and assessment

- The document provides the basic elements to plan a lesson correctly and in a realistic period and in an allocated time.

- The document includes means to assess learners after completing each lesson which is a very good aspect. Indeed, it provides an evaluation chart to be used by the teacher to record the level of participation of the group, with a rating scale. However, it would have been useful to include means to assess learners before the program and allocate some time before each lesson to evaluate what students already know about the subject. Having a assessment before and after completing the lesson help teachers to compare students' improvements and how they perceived the lesson. By doing so, it is indeed easier to correctly measure students' progresses, changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes with respect to the area of Human Sexuality of the HFLE curriculum.

3) Goal, objectives and target group

- Each area on human sexuality : Unit 2 – Reproductive Health, Unit 3 – Sexual Responsibility, Unit 4 – Gender and Stereotypes, includes lessons plans and activities as well as worksheets for reinforcement of concepts being discussed, and is prefaced by an overview that provides a succinct account of the content.

- Material is designed for the precise target group of teachers from upper primary and lower secondary in Dominica. The content is generally appropriate in view of the age of students targeted by the curriculum (11-14 years old) their literacy level, socio-cultural context of Dominica and the probable status regarding sexual experience of the students. Moreover, it provides tips to help teachers to handle sensitive questions correctly in order not to create an unease atmosphere.
- The objectives mentioned in the material are “SMART”. They are specific: each lesson begins with a clear list of skills, knowledge and attitudes that students would practice during the lesson in order to be able to apply them in every day life situations. They are measurable in the sense that each lesson ends with a test to evaluate student’s understanding of the lesson. They are also achievable, relevant and time-bound because objectives are realistic considering the time allocated for the lessons which try to equip young people with skills that will enable them to cope with the many challenges of life.

4) Basic information for protecting and promoting health

- Overall clear, accurate and up to date information is provided on sexual and reproductive health, in particular regarding teenage pregnancy or sexual abuse. Unit 2 is dedicated to reproductive health and provides four relevant lesson plans. However, the document only focuses on scientific and theoretical aspect of reproductive health which is an explanation of basic facts about the male and female (reproductive organs, puberty development and menstrual cycle).
- Regarding HIV & AIDS in particular, the document provides a questionnaire asking what are STDs ? what is AIDS ?, have you ever come in contact with anyone with STD’s or AIDS ? what practices can be taken to prevent STD’s and AIDS ?, how can someone contract STD’s and AIDS?, how do you feel about people with AIDS? How do you treat them?, Do you think that people with AIDS and STD’s should be isolated?, what is your opinion about sex?, do you think AIDS is wide spread in your community and in Dominica ?, do you think the Ministry of Health is doing enough to educate people and lessen the spread of AIDS and STD’s ? what can you do to ensure that the spread of these diseases are limited ? By doing so, it invites students to discuss and may open a debate on : what HIV and AIDS are, the ways of transmission of HIV, the ways of protection from HIV, care and support to people affected by HIV or AIDS, the impact of HIV and AIDS on health, on relations with others and on daily life, how and why stigma and discrimination can have negative effects, the fact that HIV and AIDS can affect everyone, strategies and examples to combat and avoid stigma, discrimination and prejudices, the importance of empathy and ways to show empathy or how to respond to stigmatization, discrimination and prejudice. These aspects are very important to develop when a teacher try to help students to acquire a basic knowledge of protecting and promoting health. However, the answers are not provided so it implies that the

teacher it supposed to have a good knowledge on the subject or should use another material as reference.

5) Me, my emotions and my relations with others

- Each lesson deals with one topic and several skills to develop. It is designed to provide various relevant life skills, such as decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, negotiations skills or refusal skills, within the framework of HFLE. The document overall tries to enable learners to adopt protective behaviors for their health and well-being and show respect for themselves and others. Amongst other peer pressure and how to provide help and support are well addressed. "Peer pressure" is the main theme of a whole lesson. It defines friendship, discuss peer pressure (advantages and disadvantages), differentiate a good and a bad friend and demonstrate ways of dealing with peer pressure. The main goal of this lesson is to develop skills like decision making and problem solving. Finally, the document provides an activity named "help me", which tries to build students' empathy and make them able to help, support and counsel one of their friends who would complain about constant violence at home.

6) Relations between men and women (gender issues)

- The Unit 4 of the manual is entirely devoted to gender and stereotypes. It explores the inherent difference between men and women and socially determined characteristics. It encourages teachers first to be aware of their own personal gender biases and, second, to promote a non-gender bias environment in their classrooms. The Unit 4 seeks to sensitize teachers to some of the stereotypes of society so that they may assist boys and girls to cope successfully with situations that surround them. It contains topics, which can be developed into specific lessons for various levels within the classroom. Some of the lessons are organized to provide skills that will enable students to relate in a positive way with others, especially if they did not learn those skills at home. The document is one of the

7) Promoting human rights and overcoming stigma and discrimination

- The issue of coercion and abuse is addressed and challenged. A lesson plan aims to define the term abuse and sexual abuse, identify examples of behavior that can be categorized as sexual abuse and discuss effects of sexual abuse on individuals.

- The issue of discrimination and stigma is addressed, in particular sexual discrimination. It explains that it means assigning roles to sexes because of traditions and beliefs. It

condemns any gender stereotypes and encourages both male and female to do things they enjoy and find satisfaction in doing.

8) Teaching methods & strategies and teacher guidance

- Most of strategies suggested in the manual are participatory and often involve group work. The material correctly states that group work provides support to individual members as well as opportunity for exchanging ideas and getting feed-back. Indeed, it can be one of the teacher's most effective resources in helping students develop self-confidence and the ability to work cooperatively. Therefore, the document encourages the use of participatory methods and suggests techniques that would create the context for students to explore their experiences and express their own feelings and values, such as: buzz session/brainstorm, case study, the project approach, open ended techniques, simulations or role playing.

- Detailed and clear instructions are provided to teacher for each lesson on learning goal and objectives, target group (age), time and material required to complete the lesson, how to facilitate specific activities and background knowledge of the students.

9) Layout and packaging

The document is very simple with no particular design. The font is readable with an appropriate use of space. Size and weight of material are reasonable. The paper is in a standard quality so the material should be quite durable, easy and economical to reproduce.

Weakness/aspects to be improved:

1) Basic information for protecting and promoting health

- Even if HIV & AIDS is addressed, some important areas of the subject are not developed.

→ *Suggestions for improvement:*

It would have been useful to addresses to explain "Abstinence-Behaviour faithful-Condom use" approach in particular with older students (13-14 years old). The document should also provide information on ARV treatment and its social, physical and psychological impact on the person living with HIV and her/his entourage. Finally,

students should know some places to go to find help, care, support and counselling regarding their sexual health.

- The document suggest an activity on STDs to illustrate the lesson on “sexual abuse”

→ *Suggestions for improvement:*

It is not very relevant to introduce the subject of STD’s as an activity, and the only one, for the topic “sexual abuse”. STD’s and sexual abuse are two crucial and different issues that should be addressed individually. Linking sexual abuse and STD’s can be confusing. It may induce students to the wrong belief that these diseases can be contracted through violent and unwanted sexual intercourse. In reality, STD’s are not only transmitted through sexual abuse and “bad persons”. STDs, including HIV & AIDS can touch anybody and can also be contracted with a consenting partner that they are in love with. Finally, when speaking about sexual abuse, it is important to discuss the consequence not in terms of STDs transmission or pregnancy only, but also to explore psychological and emotional pains that will follow and indicate places to find help, support and counselling.

- The document doesn’t provide information about drug or alcohol use.

→ *Suggestions for improvement:*

Students aged 11 -14 years are entering into a critical period of their life which is adolescence. During this period, temptations and pressures emanated by peers, media and society in general are common. Teenagers face a lot of new situations so they need to acquire the skills to make healthy and responsible decisions. Drug is a major issue to teach for students of that age. Therefore, students should beneficiate from overall clear and comprehensive information on the different drugs and their main effects, the reason why some children and young people take drugs, the main physical, psychical and social consequences of drug use. The document should discuss how alcohol, drugs or other substances use can affect communication and lead to vulnerability and dangerous sexual behaviour. It should warns students against alcohol abuse and using drugs that can inhibit clear thinking and decision-making skills, make talking and listening more difficult, make it harder to assess potentially dangerous situations, increase aggressions (such as rape) and risk of HIV transmission, and decrease motor function so that it may be difficult to express correctly their opinions and wills. The issue of drug and substance abuses could be explored within the topics of “peer pressure” or “healthy behaviors” or “friendship” for example.

2) Relations between men and women (gender issues)

Even if the topic “gender issues” is addressed, some aspects related to girls’ and women’s vulnerability to HIV & AIDS are to explored. The material doesn’t deal with gender in relation to HIV & AIDS.

→ *Suggestions for improvement:*

The manual doesn’t exposes and explains the biological, social, cultural, economical and political factors making girls and women more vulnerable to HIV & AIDS. Today, in the Caribbean, but also everywhere in the world, we speak about “feminization” of the epidemic because girls and women tend to be more vulnerable to HIV infection. In the world, slightly more than half of all people living with HIV are women and girls and this number is still increasing. Gender roles and power relationships influence the course and impact on the HIV & AIDS epidemic. Achieving gender equity is crucial in the response to HIV & AIDS. Therefore, the document should clearly promote equity between boys and girls, men and women, challenge stereotypes of gender-based cultural practice and encourage women empowerment in all spheres of life. In spite of that, amongst all HFLE material we appraised, it is one of the best documented on gender issue (à verifier en fonction appraisals Tamara !)

3) Promoting human rights and overcoming stigma and discrimination

The issue of Human Rights is not addressed in the material.

→ *Suggestions for improvement:*

Human Rights are, per se, closely linked to life skills education in general. Indeed, overcoming discrimination and stigma, respect for others and ourselves, gender equalities etc are central to both. Therefore, provide information on Human Rights will strengthen the teaching by letting students realize that they beneficiate some universal and juridical rights and duties. In particular, the right to physical integrity should be explained. Some key elements should be treated: the fact that each person, man or woman, child or adult, rich or poor, everywhere in the world, has rights and duties inherent to their status of human being. Students need to know they have the right to be treated with respect and to complain if they feel their rights are infringed in accordance with the children’s rights and universal human rights.

4) Teaching methods & strategies and teacher guidance

The document is not a curriculum. It seems to be a resource manual which provides some lesson plan related to the most sensitive HFLE theme which is Human Sexuality. It is indeed very useful and relevant to develop such a complementary document to help

teacher feel more comfortable and confident to teach the subject. However, the material is not sufficiently complete and documented and is probably not meant to be used alone.

→ *Suggestions for improvement:*

Teachers couldn't refer to a lesson plan alone to make their courses unless that they have a very good knowledge on the subject. Even though, it should mention which references documents should be use jointly. Moreover, as it represents a practical supports to help teachers to deal with sexual health issues, it could have explored some other issues. Indeed, important aspects of sexual health that might be difficult to teach for teachers are not part of the lesson plans. In fact, the document deals with Sexual Health in a very scientific and theoretical way. To develop life skills, it is important for students to realize that the content of the lesson can affect them in the real life. The lesson should let them wonder critically on how they would react and use things they learnt if some of the situations studied would happen in a real life situation. To summarize, the document would need to be completed and to be more practical.

Transferability/Adaptation of the manual

The material is adapted to Dominica society. Examples and language are appropriate in view or cultural and community context. It doesn't explore cultural issues and local norms particularly. In general, the HFLE curriculum was developed to fit the Caribbean region with its specificities and context. Therefore, this document should not be transferred as a whole to any other country without a good understanding of the HFLE program. However, some parts of the document can serve as good examples on how to address some sensitive issue related to SRH and provide examples of complete and relevant lessons plans.