

Unit 9: Current Trends in Education

INTRODUCTION

Life styles and expectations of respective local communities, societies, nations, and the international community keep on changing. These changes affect trends in education.

Hence new areas of special concern in education keep on emerging and currently examples of these include gender issues in education and training, the impact of HIV/AIDS, the prominence of knowledge about human rights, environmental education and population education.

As an inspector of schools, you should be aware and conversant with emergent issues and the latest trends in education.

The aim of this unit is to enable you to become aware of major current trends and emergent areas of special concern in education.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify current trends in education which cut across educational activities
- become sensitive to emergent trends and issues
- describe the nature and impact of gender issues on educational activities in the local community
- devise training programmes related to gender sensitisation
- gain basic information about the nature and effects of HIV/AIDS on education and training
- devise inservice training programmes on HIV/AIDS education
- show awareness of the importance of respecting human rights
- provide counselling and guidance related to the promotion of human rights
- state basic methods of conserving the environment
- promote environmental education.

GENDER ISSUES

Gender issues have begun to receive a lot of attention in developing countries. These issues have had a significant impact on educational programmes. It is a fact that there are serious gender imbalances in educational attainments between males and females in many countries in Africa, and gender stereotyping is common.

Activity 9a

List and describe the reasons why gender issues are currently considered as a major area of concern in education and training.

COMMENT

The following are some of the possible reasons why gender issues have become a source of concern:

- Gender imbalances in educational attainment and unequal access to educational provision between males and females.
- Significant differences between male and female pupils in terms of school dropout rates, especially in developing countries.
- Too few members of one gender occupying important positions.
- Existence of excessive gender stereotyping and discrimination, for instance in terms of occupations.
- Need for both males and females to contribute towards development.

Activity 9b

List the causes of serious imbalances in school attendance between male and female pupils in your region.

COMMENT

The following are some of the factors that can contribute to differences in school attendance between male and female pupils:

- Cultural and traditional beliefs about expected roles of boys and girls.
- Social factors e.g. home chores meant for boys and girls
- Institutional factors e.g. the distances to schools and payment of school fees.
- Personal factors e.g. self-images of individual boys and girls

Activity 9c

List home activities in your local community (such as ploughing and baby-sitting) which are considered as:

- (a) mainly for boys
- (b) mainly for girls

How do these activities and traditions affect school attendance?

COMMENT

Depending on the nature of the particular community, there are some home-based activities which are considered male-oriented, while some are female-oriented (such as baby-sitting).

Activity 9d

There are some aspects of the school curriculum that may be gender-biased. Give examples of gender-bias in the curriculum. Suggest ways of removing gender bias in the school curriculum.

COMMENT

The following are some of the aspects worth considering, in order to reduce gender bias in the curriculum:

- Provide equal opportunities to both boys and girls to take subjects related to their abilities and interests.
- Avoid unnecessary gender-stereotyping in curricular activities.
- Promote gender-neutral language and illustrations in teaching and learning materials.
- Needs of both males and females should be fairly represented.

Activity 9e

Mention the priority policies and strategies meant to address gender issues in education which you feel your government should put in place.

COMMENT

The following could be some of the policies and strategies which a government could put in place, in relation to educational gender issues.

- Promoting gender balance in the education system.
- Eliminating gender-biased factors that hinder access to education.
- Ensuring that the school curricula are gender-neutral.
- Providing gender-sensitization programmes.
- Removing practices that are gender discriminatory.

An inspector of schools could participate in gender sensitization programmes by performing the following:

- Interpreting and enforcing policies on gender.
- Distributing gender-sensitization information documents.
- Conducting gender-related training sessions.
- Ensuring that gender issues are fused into school activities.

HIV AND AIDS

The acronyms HIV and AIDS mean the following:

- HIV is Human Immune Deficiency Virus
- AIDS is Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

Activity 9f

List and describe reasons why there should be a drastic campaign to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS.

Since HIV/AIDS is incurable and fatal, effective HIV/AIDS education programmes should exist.

The following are basic facts about HIV /AIDS:

- The virus called HIV lives in the blood of an infected person.
- The HIV damages the immune system of a body, making the body easily attacked by diseases. This inevitably develops into the severe illness called AIDS.
- The virus is transmitted through blood and other body fluids. It is often transmitted through sexual intercourse and transfusion of infected blood.
- There is no known cure for AIDS.

Activity 9g

List ways in which people can avoid HIV/AIDS infection.

COMMENT

Some ways of preventing HIV/AIDS infection:

- Avoiding casual sex.
- Using condoms.
- Screening blood meant for transfusion

Activity 9h

What effects have HIV/AIDS had on educational programmes in your country?

COMMENT

The following are the typical effects and impact of HIV/AIDS on education:

- Psycho-social problems caused among pupils who are orphaned.
- Unhealthy pupils do not learn well at school.
- HIV/AIDS education has to be infused into the curriculum or into educational activities.

Activity 9i

Identify and discuss the roles which you as an inspector of schools should play in the HIV/AIDS education programmes.

COMMENT

An inspector can play roles like the following in HIV/AIDS education:

- Acquiring and distributing written documents related to the prevention of HIV/AIDS.
- Organising training sessions on HIV/AIDS education
- Facilitating the inclusion of HIV/AIDS education in the school curriculum.
- Serving as a counsellor on HIV/AIDS issues.

Activity 9j

List the main strategies which the Ministry of Education in your country should employ in order to educate people about HIV/AIDS.

COMMENT

The following are the possible strategies related to HIV/AIDS which the Ministry of Education can employ:

- Formulation of an HIV/AIDS education policy.
- Enforcement of the integration of topics on HIV/AIDS into the school curriculum
- Provision of counselling services related to HIV/AIDS in educational institutions
- Working closely with health authorities on HIV/AIDS prevention measures.
- Promotion of health education and responsible behaviour among pupils and teachers.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Publicity concerning the violation of human rights is leading to the issue receiving more attention nowadays than before, and has begun to have an impact on education and training. Certain groups of people, including teachers and pupils, want their rights to be recognised, while at the same time there is the need to have responsible citizens.

Activity 9k

List the major aspects of human rights that should be recognised and promoted.

COMMENT

The following are examples of human rights:

- Respect for the existence and needs of each individual.
- Recognition of the rights of special members of the community e.g. the rights of the child, and women's rights.
- Fairness and equal opportunities.
- Sensitivity to community expectations, including civic and moral values.
- Democratic values.
- Freedom of association.
- Recognition of multi-culturalism.
- Elimination of discrimination on account of gender, race or creed.
- Education for peace and understanding.
- The right to live and let live.

Activity 9l

List some of the rights of the following:

- (a) a pupil
- (b) a teacher
- (c) an inspector of schools
- (d) girl children

The rights of the pupil, the teacher and the inspector of schools are dependent on the local prevailing regulations and customs.

Activity 9m

What roles should you, as an inspector of schools, play in issues related to human rights in schools?

COMMENT

The inspector of schools may take some of the following actions related to human rights in schools:

- Encourage heads of schools to be aware of rules and regulations related to the treatment of pupils, teachers and members of the community.
- Discourage offensive behaviour particularly among teaching staff and pupils.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

World-wide, governments of most countries are giving increasing attention to environmental issues.

Education about local and global aspects of the environment is becoming a major educational topic.

Activity 9n

Why is environmental education receiving emphasis nowadays?
What are the particular environmental issues of concern to you?

COMMENT

Environmental education has become necessary because of the following facts:

- Resources are dwindling, including wildlife and natural vegetation.
- There is a growing danger of pollution of the environment.
- Sensitization programmes related to environment conservation have been inadequate.

Activity 9o

Write down aspects of the natural environment which need preservation or conservation in your country.

The following are examples of natural resources that need preserving:

- Wildlife
- Vegetation
- Clean air and water
- Minerals
- Soil

Activity 9p

- What are endangered species?
- List the major types of pollution.

Endangered species are living animals and plants which need protection because they are in danger of becoming too few or extinct.

The following are examples of common types of pollution:

- Air pollution
- Water pollution
- Noise pollution

Activity 9q

Find out on your own the meanings of the following terms which have an effect on climate: the greenhouse effect and the ozone layer.

List human activities which can contribute to the depletion of the ozone layer.

COMMENT

The greenhouse effect is the process during which the warmth from the sun is trapped in the lower atmosphere of the earth, due to the increase in the amount of gases that destroy the ozone layer such as CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons).

The ozone layer which is the layer in the upper atmosphere that consists of ozone (a form of unstable oxygen which is not useful) absorbs most of the sun's ultra-violet radiation, thus protecting the earth from the damage that ultra-violet rays can cause. The ozone layer has been damaged by human use of such products as aerosol sprays and refrigerator coolants.

The following are further examples of human activities that contribute to the depletion of the ozone layer:

- Use of leaded fuels which over-produce ozone-destroying chemicals.
- Excessive cutting down of trees
- Air pollution

Activity 9r

State the roles which you, as an inspector of schools should play in the promotion of environmental education in schools.

COMMENT

An inspector of schools can play the following major roles related to environmental education:

- Ensuring that environmental education is included in the school curriculum.
- Monitoring the delivery of environmental education.
- Promoting the conservation of environmental resources through the sensitization of relevant stakeholders and the community.
- Encouraging good attitudes and life styles that preserve the environment

TEENAGE PREGNANCIES

Teenage pregnancies among school girls have been on the increase, and a concern for both parents and education authorities in the SADC region for sometime now. You as inspectors will be expected to play a major role in sensitizing and advising the school committees and society at large about teenage pregnancies and how they affect the education system. In doing this, you will be expected to liaise very closely with the key stakeholders including headteachers, teachers, pupils, parents and education authorities.

Activity 9s

Identify the factors which have led to an increase in teenage pregnancies in your country.

COMMENT

Some of the factors to be considered are:

- early maturity
- girl child abuse by society
- societal taboos about sex education
- moral decay in society
- use of alcohol and drugs among children
- influences from foreign cultures
- peer pressure

Activity 9t

Identify and discuss the regulations and systems available in your country that control the rise in teenage pregnancies.

COMMENT

The list of regulations and systems may include the following:

- government regulations e.g. The Education Act
- school policies and rules
- moral teachings in society
- religion
- pressure groups e.g. HIV/AIDS and STDs

Activity 9u

The statistics from the headteachers in your area indicate that there is a high dropout rate of girls due to teenage pregnancies.

- (a) Suggest five strategies that can be used to address the problem
- (b) Organise a sensitization programme related to teenage pregnancy in your area.

COMMENT

Strategies may include the following:

- Development/strengthening existing policies to combat teenage pregnancies.
- Designing sensitization programmes to effectively combat teenage pregnancies and related problems
- Campaign to educate communities on the dangers of taboos and traditions that discourage open discussions on sex education.
- Involvement of pressure groups in sex education.

POPULATION EDUCATION

The high population growth rate in the world, especially in developing countries, has made it necessary for many countries to include population education in their curricula. As inspectors you may often be required to assist teachers in this new area of learning.

Education systems have equally suffered from population growth as it creates pressure on the limited resources and facilities. As an inspector and manager of human and physical resources in education you may be required to disseminate population awareness to school communities.

Activity 9v

Identify problems in schools in your area of inspection which are a direct result of population growth.

COMMENT

Problems caused by rapid population growth rate could be:

- congestion in classrooms
- shortage of books
- parents' inability to pay fees
- high dropout rate
- low morale amongst teachers

Activity 9w

Population growth is not the only issue under population education. Can you think of other issues relevant to your country which would fall under population education?

COMMENT

Some of the issues under population education could be:

- Urbanisation - migration of people to the towns and cities
- Birth control
- Dermography - population composition

SUMMARY

Due to the ever-emerging areas of special concern, trends in education keep on changing.

Gender issues, HIV/AIDS education, population education, human rights and environmental education are examples of relatively new issues in education which used not to get prominence many years ago. An inspector of schools should be aware of changing trends in the community which have an influence on education, and be able to:

- identify changing trends in education
- be sensitive to issues of change
- devise related sensitization and training programmes.

REFLECTION

Now that you have gone through this unit, please reflect on the role of inspectors in assessing and influencing change in relation to current trends in education in your country.

REFERENCES

- Burgess, R.G. (1993) *Implementing In-service Education and Training*, Falmer Press
- International Labour Organisation (1994) *Promoting Gender Equality in Employment in Lesotho - An Agenda for Action*
- Ketlhoilwe, M.J. (1997) *Environment Education Towards Definition*. A Paper Presented at a Workshop on Environmental Education for a Workshop on Environmental Education for Education Officers at Oasis Motel, March 1997, Botswana
- Ministry of Education, Zambia (1996) *Education our Future - National Policy on Education*
- O'Donoghue, Joan (1995) *Zimbabwe's AIDS Action Programme for Schools - Flashback and Hindsight*, UNICEF, Zimbabwe
- Palmer, J. and Neal, P. (1994) *The Handbook of Environmental Education*, Routledge
- University of Botswana (1997) *University of Botswana Environmental Education Project Newsletter of February, 1997*