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STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING AND HARMONISING COLLABORATION SEXUALITY EDUCATION.

Introduction

Malawi as a nation desires that learners develop into responsible persons with sound minds and healthy bodies. In order to achieve this Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Malawi has put great emphasis on skills that would enable learners at all levels to cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Amongst these demands and challenges are problems that arise during puberty and adolescence as the youth are growing such as sexuality-transmitted infections (STIs) HIV and AIDS among other reproductive and sexual health problems, drug and substance abuse, rapid population growth abuse, teenage pregnancy, moral decadence, environmental degradation and unemployment.

Sexuality education is embedded in Life skills and sexual and reproductive health education which involves a dynamic teaching and learning process. The strength of Life skills and sexual and reproductive health education lies largely in the use of a variety of participatory methodologies to impart population and sexual and reproductive health knowledge. The methodologies which are child centred call for a holistic approach in dealing with health and social problems in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning and also to provide skills in handling issues in any other subject areas.

Harmonising sexuality education

The Life skills and sexual and reproductive health education syllabus attempts to equip learners at all levels (primary school, secondary school and tertiary e.g teacher training college) with the following skills: decision-making and problem solving, effective communication, stress and anxiety management, conflict resolution, morals and values, interpersonal relationship, planning and entrepreneurship, self-esteem and assertiveness, and good health habits. These are considered a set of skills that help mould character, attitudes, values and interests so that the individual develops a sound mind and healthy body.

Sexuality education is highly featured in the following topics:

SKILL	Topics in Primary school syllabus	Topics in Secondary school syllabus
Decision-making and problem solving	Drug and substance abuse. Boy girl relationship. Sexual relationships. STIs and HIV and AIDS.	Situations that require decision-making e.g sexual relationships. Consequences of decision making. The process of problem solving and decision making.
Effective communication	Misconceptions about drug and substance use and abuse, STIs, HIV and AIDS reproductive health and sexuality, relationships, access to services.	Forms of communication. Elements and processes of communications Communication skills. Situations requiring effective communication e.g child abuse, spouse abuse, courtship, adolescence. Barriers to effective communication.
Self esteem and assertiveness	Assertiveness in everyday life: Steps in being assertive; characteristics of assertiveness- saying no without feeling guilty-	Characteristics of assertive person, importance of assertiveness, resisting peer pressure, gender and assertiveness.

	saying no to sex and drugs. Importance of being assertive.	
Stress and anxiety management	Situations that lead to stress and anxiety: pressure from relationships; un planned pregnancy; physical and sexual harassment;	Situations that may lead to stress and anxiety: e.g harassment, rape/sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy. Effects of stress and anxiety: e.g prostitution. Coping with stress and anxiety: seeking counselling, medical attention. Preventing stress and anxiety: e.g positive living, VCT, assertiveness, acceptance of the situation.
Peaceful conflict resolution	Situations that lead to conflict: forced sex and forced marriages; poor relationship; teenage pregnancy; abortion; infecting one another with STIs and HIV and AIDS. Effects of conflict. Ways of resolving conflicts. Peaceful conflict resolution skills.	Situations leading to conflict e.g harassment, unfaithfulness. Ways of resolving conflicts peacefully. Effects of conflicts. Importance of peaceful conflict resolution.
Values clarification	Social and cultural values and the risk of contracting STIs, and HIV and AIDS; Sexual abuse/ incest. Consequences of sexual relationships with sugar daddies and mummies.	Values judgement: e.g social cultural values, moral dilemmas. Values clarification process: e.g forced choices, rational decisions
Interpersonal relationship	Factors that enhance good relationships-between opposite sex: honesty, love, respect sharing gender equalities. Roles and responsibilities in relationship: guidance and counselling in sexual relationships. Factors that destroy good relationship e.g sexual harassment demand for sexual intercourse.	Situations that require interpersonal relationship skills: choice of friends, courtship, guidance and counselling. Factors that enhance good interpersonal relationship. Factors that destroy good interpersonal relationships.
Practising good health habits	Formation of good health habits: e.g cleaning genitals properly. STIs and HIV and AIDS prevention: Factors that influence the youth to have sexual relationships. Signs and symptoms of AIDS; HIV modes of transmission. Factors that promote the spread of STIs and HIV and AIDS e.g	Formation of good health habits: e.g avoiding unprotected sex. Factors that influence the spread of STIs and HIV and AIDS: e.g misconception about STIs and HIV and AIDS. Consequences of contracting STIs and HIV and AIDS e.g bareness, still birth, impotence, ectopic pregnancy. Coping with STIs and HIV and AIDS:

	having multiple sexual partners, unprotected sexual intercourse etc. Common STIs e.g syphilis, gonorrhoea, chancroid.	seeking voluntary counselling and testing, living positively, seeking early medical attention, care and support.
Good health habits	Ways of preventing the spread of STIs and HIV	Prevention of STIs and HIV and AIDS: sexual health education; abstinence; using condoms; avoiding multiple sexual partners, not sharing underpants, razor blades.

In tertiary education (Teacher training college) sexuality and sexual relationship is taught in the following areas:

Skill	Topics covered in TTCs.
Sexuality and sexual relationship	Growing up: functions of sexual body parts, physical changes associated with adolescence in girls and boys, how changes render adolescents vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.
	Sexual relationships: sexual partners (heterosexual and homosexual), social and peer pressure, beliefs and misconceptions about sex, factors influencing sex, reasons for sexual relationships, consequences of sexual relationships, sexual relationships and culture.
	Sexuality and HIV and AIDS: meaning of sex and sexuality, factors influencing sexuality, effects of sexuality on behaviour.
	Gender inequity and HIV and AIDS: meaning of gender equity, gender inequity and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, biological characteristics gender roles, cultural practices, circles of sexuality, sexual health and hygiene, self-image and adapting to change (physiological, psychological social, etc.)
	Gender and the impact of HIV and AIDS.

Strategies for strengthening and harmonising collaboration sexuality education

Other strategies for strengthening and harmonising collaboration sexuality education are the set up of AIDS TOTO clubs and WHY WAIT clubs for learners and Teachers Living Positively (TLIPO) Association for teachers in schools and HIV and AIDS work place committee for both teachers and support staff in education institutions. Core topic for discussion is centred on sexuality education and HIV and AIDS prevention and management.

Effective teaching of population and sexual health education in education institutions is guided by the Ministry of Education strategic plan on HIV and AIDS Response in the education sector; life skills, sexual and reproductive health education for HIV and AIDS for primary schools, secondary schools and teacher training colleges.

Alignment of the plan to National Education Sector Plan is a sign of the harmonisation. The drawing up of the HIV and AIDS Strategy demonstrates the commitment of the education sector to the fight

against HIV and AIDS and partnership between government, private sector and development partners including civil society in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Above all, the plan is aligned to the key policy document in the sector.

The National Education Sector Plan outlines three priority areas which are rightly aligned to the five intervention areas alongside the NESP thematic areas and strategies in four respective sub sectors: basic education; secondary education; teacher education and development; and technical and vocational training.

The overall goal in all the respective sub sectors is to increase provision of relevant information on HIV and AIDS and the Skills for preventing further transmission to learners, educators and support staff in all education institutions. This entails that the various sub sectors should be able to achieve and meet the priority areas stipulated in the National Education Sector Plan thus equity and access, quality and relevance, governance and management through enhancement of the five respective programme areas (prevention and behaviour change; treatment, care and support; mitigation: social-economical and psychosocial; governance and management-management of response and advocacy; and monitoring and evaluation.

Structures for monitoring and strengthening the programme.

Monitoring and Evaluation is tracked by the crosscutting Technical working group. Crosscutting issues includes school health, nutrition, HIV and AIDS, Gender, special needs education, and education in emergency. Members of technical working group are from various ministries because of their expertise such health, agriculture, water and sanitation, youth development and sports, development partners, local NGOs, faith based organisation and private sector. Their expertise is used to strengthen and harmonise collaboration sexuality education at all levels (national, district and school level). All levels are led by the ministry of education because of the schools. Other key stakeholders are the implementers, donors and resource persons.

Conclusion

In conclusion, 2006, MIE report states that parents, guardians and community leaders felt that the introduction of Life skills, sexual and reproductive health for HIV and AIDS education in schools by the Ministry of Education was a good move and hoped that the schools will continue teaching it for many years to come. Many parents did not think it was necessary for them to get involved in the teaching of LSE in the schools. They did not think the teachers wanted them to and even if they invited them, they would not be able to discuss such things with their own children.

On February, 2009 Malawi National Examination Board issued Board circular no. 2025 informed the public that beginning 2010 Life skills, sexual and reproductive health be examined separately at all levels (Primary and secondary schools). This is a great sign for harmonisation and mainstreaming.