

CERM-ESA Master's Programme

Knowledge and Kowner Structures in Relation to Reproductive and Sexual Health in School Curricula of Kenya and South Africa

Introduction

One of the primary challenges when it comes to youth and Reproductive and Sexual Health (RSH) education has been identified as a lack of an effective curriculum (UNESCO, 2009). There is need therefore, to put Knowledge as an object centre-stage in thinking about education so as to effectively respond to the complex needs of adolescents.

The study sought to examine the RSH knowledge and kowner structures as recontextualised in the school curricula of Kenya and South Africa, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the ways the curriculum specialized RSH knowledge

Study questions

The following questions guided the study:

- How is knowledge related to Reproductive and Sexual Health legitimated in the Kenyan and South African school curricula?
- How are knowers related to Reproductive and Sexual Health legitimated in the Kenyan and South African school curricula?

Methodology

The study was carried out as a multi-site case study: two sites - Kenya and South Africa; each curriculum as the two cases. Data sources were the relevant curriculum policy documents. The study employed Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) Specialisation dimension to analyse the basis of legitimation of RSH concepts.

Findings

Knowledge-kowner structures

Kenya School Curriculum: Science and Biology Syllabi

The data analysed revealed legitimation of specialist knowledge in Science and Biology syllabi. For example, KIE (2002 p. 75) stated that, "*The learner should be able to: explain fertilization in human beings; concepts of Fertilization; Foetal development; zygote; embryo; foetus*". This was analysed as revealing emphasis of content knowledge as the basis of achievement and the acquisition of kowner dispositions is downplayed.

South Africa School Curriculum: Natural Sciences and Life Sciences CAPS

The legitimacy of RSH concepts in Natural Sciences and Life Sciences was revealed as placing emphasis on the learner acquiring specialist knowledge. For example, in DBE (2011, p. 10) the following RSH concepts were presented: "*...reproductive system:... health issues include infertility, foetal alcohol syndrome, STDs*". The suggested activity for the learner is "*producing a poster advocating healthy life style choices*"

Hence, the knowledge-kowner structures of Biology and Science syllabi as well as Natural Sciences and Life Sciences revealed stronger epistemic relations described as exhibiting a knowledge code.

Recommendations

The knowledge in the two curricula needs to be further improved and expanded for learners to continue acquiring the right knowledge while developing positive attitudes, values and dispositions necessary for an individual to avoid engaging in risky sexual behaviour.

Conclusion

Emphasis on learners acquiring specialist knowledge, regarded as 'powerful knowledge' and developing fundamental personal dispositions, attitudes and values with regard to RSH play a significant role in empowering learners with an intellectual ability to handle life challenges necessary in avoiding risks associated with sexuality.



Ezekiel K. Chemwor

Teacher

Supervisors: Dr E. Lombard, Dr E. Scheckle and Dr L. Momanyi

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