

Incorporating Hygiene & Sanitation issues in School Curriculum at different levels of Education

Neha Jain*, Pallavi Dubey*

Abstract

Sanitation and hygiene is the core of life; importance of which is being neglected especially when it comes to disabled people and feminine gender. Our honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi initiated for Swacch Bharat Abhiyan in order to introduce cleanliness to the core of the country to eradicate the root problem of sanitation facility. Although integration of the needs of disabled people is felt neglected in this programme, which should have been necessarily introduced. To change the current hygiene behavior perspectives and continue better hygiene practices in the future, it is important to make people aware to sanitation related issues from initial level that is from school level to university level. This idea to organise school curriculum is the integration of relevant *sustainable* water, hygiene and *sanitation* topics into school education in order to increase pupil's knowledge, change attitudes and encourage action. Bringing water and *sanitation* issues into the school curriculum provides a means of encouraging young people to understand not only the wider water and *sanitation* concepts, but also the effects of their own behaviour on water, its quality and eco systems. The development of the life-skills approach for performing daily basic activities is the part of the existing curriculum for disabled students. Some current issues like designing of sanitary for disabled, overcoming the barriers to accessible sanitation, provision of cost disabled & friendly toilets for disabled and appropriate practical measures/strategies of sanitation for disabled lives in both rural and urban areas should also be included in curriculum for the great benefit to the inclusion of the neglected section of the society. It can be done by introducing these topics in various school subjects such as English, social studies, moral and social sciences, environmental science, home science. This paper throws light on the need for including the sanitation related topics in school and university curriculum. The successful implementation of these subjects and its benefits for disabled students and nation will also be discussed.

Keywords: Disabled; Implementing Curriculum; Sanitation Related Issues; Life Skill Education for Disabled.

Introduction

The fact that most human beings dread death makes environmental health and sanitation important to every individual. This recognition must have influenced the use of idioms such as "prevention is better than cure," "health is wealth," 'cleanliness is next to Godliness.' Environmental

health and sanitation could therefore be said to be phenomena that help to promote a better life (Okonkwo, 2000). Education can help to equip the next generation with knowledge and attitudes that promote the wise use of water and appropriate hygiene behaviour. Studies on introducing water use reduction behaviour show that the most efficient way to affect adult behaviour is through educating children at school. School education can provide an entry point to the community as a whole. Knowledge will provide the basis and motivation for behavioural changes or action. Children can positively influence the practices among their family members suited to supporting the acceptance and effectiveness of other instruments.

Author's Affiliation: Assistant Professor, Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Dayalbagh, Agra.

Reprint's Request: Neha Jain, W/O Mr. Amit Garg, 9, Brij Dham Phase II (Near Ess-Ess Convent School), Kamla Nagar, Agra - 282005 U.P.
E-mail: neha.jain870@gmail.com

Bringing Attention Towards Curriculum Design for Including Sanitation and Hygiene Issues

It is important that hygiene education is incorporated in the school curriculum. Opinions differ as to whether it needs to become a subject in its own right, or whether it should be part of a wider syllabus of health education, home economics, natural science or civic education. It is not necessary to create a slot exclusively for hygiene education, since it would be most effective when integrated into various parts of the curriculum, such as natural science and civic education. The most important point seems to be that a discussion takes place about whether or not hygiene education should be part of the curriculum, and if it should be graded and examined. UNICEF could be a partner in this discussion. In most cases teaching aids will have to be developed or adapted. Bringing water and sanitation issues into the school curriculum provides a means of encouraging young people to understand not only the wider water and sanitation concepts, but also the effects of their own behaviour on water, its quality, and eco systems. Schools may be better locations in which to enforce certain behaviors in children than the home. Schools can also provide an arena where sanitation can be shown at its best, and certain positive hygienic behaviors (hand washing with soap before eating and after going to the toilet) can become an engrained habit at a young age.

Personnel Involved in Needs Assessment

A needs assessment at national level should include the departments involved, namely, education, health and public works, as well as international organizations and NGOs. Preferably a participatory needs assessment should be carried out, whereby all partners get a chance to voice their opinions and to share their expertise. If important potential actors in the field of sanitation are not involved national support activities will not be optimal and it may even lead to actors negatively influencing development. For example, if teachers are not involved they may negatively influence school sanitation activities. The basic professional training of school teachers should include education related to sanitation and hygiene and to a participatory way of working. Teachers already in service have to get the opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and skills in this respect. Regular interdisciplinary workshops involving school teachers, health workers, planners, etc., can contribute significantly to the necessary cooperation and coordination of activities.

Hardware & Software Approach in Sanitation

School sanitation and hygiene education (SSHE) therefore refers to the combination of hardware and software components that are necessary to produce a healthy school environment and to develop or support safe hygiene behaviours. The hardware components include drinking water, hand washing and excreta disposal, plus solid waste disposal facilities in and around the school compound. The software components are the activities that promote conditions at school and practices of school staff and children that help to prevent water and sanitation-related diseases and parasites (UNICEF and IRC, 1998).

Right to Basic Facilities in Schools

School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) is a very attractive issue not only from the political but also from a social perspective. It is based on the premise that children have a right to basic facilities such as school toilets, safe drinking water, clean surroundings and information on hygiene. If these conditions are created, children come to school, enjoy learning, learn better and take back to their families concepts and practices on sanitation and hygiene. In this way, investment in education is more productive. Such conditions have an even greater positive outcome for girls who often stay away from or drop out of schools which do not have toilet facilities. Although it is necessary to include SSH in the curriculum of teacher training institutions, this is in many cases a long-term objective. Including SSH in the curriculum does not reach teachers who have already been trained. As long as SSH is not a regular part of the programme in teacher training institutions a short-term objective of training teachers in SSH could be established. This could, for instance, be in the form of one- or two-day orientations for teachers during the holidays.

Teacher Training and Support

In order to become effective promoters and implementors of SSH, teachers require a certain level of hygiene awareness and commitment. This includes: a working knowledge of the relation between water, sanitation, hygiene behaviour and health; awareness about their importance as a role model, resulting in proper hygiene behaviour; skills to work with students in a participatory way; commitment to bring about improvement in them, or to get third parties involved if necessary. Training of teachers is a key element for effective hygiene education. It should also include effective teaching methodologies, e.g. the use

of participatory techniques. For bringing about or facilitating improvements in the water and sanitation situation, teachers will need to know how and where to apply for assistance, how to mobilize community members, etc. Construction of toilets at the teacher's premises will help enhance the teacher's appreciation of sanitary facilities and at the same time be a motivating factor. Selection of teachers for training should be done carefully. Selection criteria include: the teacher can act as a role model and have good contacts in the community, the teacher has a genuine interest in SSH and the teacher can be allocated some time for taking SSH activities in the school a bit further. Care should also be taken that male as well as female teachers get involved in SSH. However, as we have seen earlier, teachers may not be able to put their knowledge and commitment to effective use if the curriculum does not allow for hygiene education, or if agencies do not respond to requests for assistance in the provision water and sanitation facilities. Training of teachers should therefore never be carried out in isolation, which also calls for interagency cooperation. The basic professional training of school teachers should include education related to sanitation and hygiene and to a participatory way of working. Teachers already in service have to get the opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and skills in this respect. Regular interdisciplinary workshops involving school teachers, health workers, planners, etc., can contribute significantly to the necessary cooperation and coordination of activities.

By Others Experiences

The curriculum naturally offers opportunities to teach about dirt and disease and what can practically be done to improve health through better sanitation and hygiene. Construction and use of appropriate child friendly sanitary facilities (hand washing stations, soap and toilets) can be especially effective in reducing the incidence of diarrhea. Imitation is one of the most successful forms of learning; hence young children will look to their older brothers and sisters or to older school friends to adopt new behaviors and life skills.

By School Curriculum

Another idea to organize a school curriculum is the integration of water and sanitation issues into regular school subjects like geography, history, biology etc.

In Science and biology teachers can use specific themes like diseases related to water supply and

sanitation to integrate water and sanitation issues into education. Water-related topics are great opportunities to integrate practical real-life situations rather than focussing on more abstract topics. By using a topic like water, pupils can practice skills such as researching issues, debating, studying the economics of decision making and developing marketing material. Some examples of such integration into regular school subjects are-

- Water and geography: Where does the water come from, from which streams, and where does it drain?
- Water and chemistry: How is the health of a waterway determined? What types of tests are typically performed?
- Water and language/art: Create a song or poem on a water issue.
- Water and mathematics: Calculate how much water a family uses at home.
- Water and History: Compare and contrast how the use of the river has been changed over the years.

By Field Experiences

Actual local projects can be used as learning classrooms for water management lessons, and visits to water infrastructures may broaden the learning process. Naturally, teachers (and principals) are the main actors to use this tool, because schools provide unique opportunities for awareness raising as they bring large groups of people together for learning purposes and usually have systems for production and dissemination of educational material. One way to organize a curriculum for education is to use themes. The content of the themes should vary according to the location and should be based on assessment of the attitudes, behaviours or diseases that are prevalent in that area. Possible content can be divided into four basic themes.

1. Water, sanitation and waste in school, homes and community - including the different types of water sources; the transport, handling and storage of drinking water and different types of waste existing within a community (such as human excreta and rubbish) and how these differ in terms of cleanliness and risks to health.
2. Personal and food hygiene in school, homes and community (including food vendors) - covering conditions and practices that are either positive or negative and the reasons, ways and means to change the latter.

3. Diseases related to water supply and sanitation that have an impact on someone's health—including information on the incidence and transmission, as well as the prevention, of diseases in the local environment.
4. Facilities for water, sanitation and hygiene within schools, households and the community. This category may cover topics such as the planning, construction, maintenance, management, monitoring and use of water supply, excreta disposal and other existing facilities.

Conclusion

Environmental Sanitation goes beyond occasional street sweeping and the clearing of dirty drainage systems, it embraces personal hygiene and purification for spiritual and health purposes, as well as the control of all the factors in man's physical environment which exercise or may exercise a deleterious effect on man's physical, mental or social well-being. The success of a school hygiene programme is therefore not determined only by the number of toilets constructed and the number of hand pumps installed or water connections built. Nor is the success of a programme determined simply by what children know. Knowledge that is not applied to hygiene behaviour in practice has no impact on health. The provision of safe water and sanitation facilities in schools is a first step towards a healthy physical learning environment benefiting both learning and health. However, the mere provision of facilities does not make them sustainable or produce the desired impact. It is the use of technical facilities and the related appropriate hygiene behaviours of people that provide health benefits. In schools, hygiene education aims to promote those practices that will help prevent water and sanitation-related diseases as well as promoting healthy behaviour in

the future generation of adults (Burgers, 2000).

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