



SEMINAR ON SCHOOL HEALTH EDUCATION

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SCHOOL HEALTH EDUCATION: JOINT COOPERATION BETWEEN
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

AN APPROACH IN ETHIOPIA

by

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The early establishment of schools prior to the establishment of health centres initially resulted in the Ministry of Education taking all the responsibilities of administering public health services for school children. It has been only in the last decade, especially following the establishment of health centres in the rural areas that the Ministry of Public Health began to share the responsibilities of a school health programme.

In implementing a functional programme of school health, the Ministry of Public Health follows certain policies handling school health programmes. The general policy calls for complete cooperation with the school authorities in all health activities within the schools.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Health are cognizant of the fact that cooperation between the two will expedite matters and avoid duplication and wastage of time and effort. Now that goals are realized, the two Ministries have established a smoother relationship than ever before.

Among the activities participated in by both Ministries are:-

National Level:

The two Ministries have engaged in the production of school health materials such as pamphlets and booklets.

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The Ministry of Public Health assists the Ministry of Education in the training programme and certification of school dressers. It also participates in the summer workshops of school dressers.

The Ministry of Public Health reviews and edits the health educational materials produced by the Ministry of Education.

The two Ministries cooperate in the development of the school curriculum to include health subjects to be correlated in other subjects as much as possible.

The Ministry of Public Health believes that if health is to be included in the elementary school curriculum, it is imperative that teachers get some courses in health education while in training and during their in-service training. It has assisted the Ministry of Education in conducting summer workshops all over the Empire.

At the Provincial Level:

At the provincial level, the provincial medical officer and the school authorities work together to safeguard the health of the school population.

The provincial medical officer visits schools when necessary and the provincial staff assists school dressers in vaccinating the school children

Sanitarians make regular sanitation inspection of the schools, give advice, and help to improve the sanitary conditions

Arrangements are also made with the school master for the medical staff to teach health courses in the schools.

At the Local Level:

The joint efforts of the two Ministries are clearly seen at the local level.

Great care is being taken by the health centre staff to coordinate their school health with the existing programme being carried out by the school dresser in order to avoid duplication and wastage of time and effort.

An attempt is made to establish a referral system with school dresser in which very sick students are referred to the health centre staff home visitation treatment at the health centre if necessary. In this way the health centre staff will be able to assist the school authorities in maintaining the best possible health for their students, both in the school and in the community.

The sixty-one health centres throughout the Empire are situated in towns or villages where school or schools already existed and are giving health services to the school children as one of the regular health activities of the health centre. The staff members of a health centre consist of the health officer, two community nurses and two sanitarians.

The success of school health programme depends greatly on the attitude of the health workers of the centre and the cooperation between the school-masters, teachers and the school dressers. The health workers usually spend at least one afternoon per week for school health programme and the following health services are conducted in the schools by the health centres.

Usually the health workers make arrangements with the school master so that certain hours may be allocated from different classes to enable the health worker to give health teachings as one part of their regular class. These health teachings are a part of the health centre's health education programme and most of them are in the lecture type on subjects as personal hygiene, communicable diseases particularly for their transmission and prevention, importance of sanitation and vaccination, etc. In some schools, the health workers have organized special clubs for girls of the high grades to teach them the Maternal and Child Health subjects. However, this needs continual efforts and the subjects should be selected carefully to meet the needs of those particular areas and grades of students.

This is one of the most important part of the school health programme. Smallpox vaccination is conducted among the school children regularly and in case of epidemic in the town or nearby areas, a special vaccination programme is carried out. Tuberculosis tests and B.C.G. vaccinations are also becoming one of the regular health programme in the school.

Because of the limited availability of staff and time in the health centres, at present, physical examinations are carried out only among the first and last years of students in order to find out their defects for correction during their school year and to give them proper advice before they leave the school. Of course, if the time permits, the health workers also examine other classes of student during the year.

Trachoma is very common among school children in the country. Therefore, the health workers have been paying special attention and efforts to control the trachoma in the schools. This programme needs very much help and cooperation from school teachers, particularly during the treatment stage which needs uninterrupted efforts.

The health workers, particularly the sanitarians make regular sanitation inspections of the school and give advice and help on the improvement of safety water-supply and latrine facilities of the school children. Special attention has also been paid in the development of the handwashing and bathing or shower facilities in the school

The health workers also supervise the preparation and distribution of UNICEF milk supply.

Future Plans:

In the long run both the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health contemplate on modifying their efforts in vitalizing the school health programme. This would be done by establishing a committee whose responsibilities would be:

1. To formulate plans and policies to serve guidelines of realistic cooperative school health programme.
2. To establish minimum standards for well coordinated service.
3. To coordinate the activities of the various agencies involved in school health programme at all levels.
4. To pull together the resources (personnel, finance, etc.) available to the betterment of school health programme.
5. To avoid duplication and misunderstanding between the two Ministries and other agencies involved in school health programme.