



**REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

**BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE LA  
MÉDITERRANÉE ORIENTALE**

SEMINAR ON SCHOOL HEALTH EDUCATION

Kuwait, 14 - 20 March 1966

EM/SEM.SCH.HLTH.EDUC./4

10 February 1966

ENGLISH ONLY

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR

School health education can only become meaningful if it is transformed into the pattern of behaviour of the child during his school days and afterwards, accepting health as a value and as an asset. The ultimate aim of school health education, therefore, is not only the acquisition of some knowledge of nature of disease, morphology of the causative agent and personal hygiene but also the acceptance of health behaviour as part of everyday life. In the endeavour to reach this aim, the following three factors without which no sound health education programme can be found are equally important:

- a. well established school health services for the students and school personnel;
- b. healthful school environment, physical, social and mental;
- c. organized health instruction.

The need for giving attention to school health services in general and school health education in particular becomes paramount in this Region when one realizes the number of students attending schools.

The growing attention given by people to education together with regulations concerning compulsory education has resulted in a rather large population of the people in this Region attending institutions of

learning. According to the UN estimates in the academic year 1960-1961, there were almost 17 million people in this Region attending primary or higher schools taught by over half a million teachers in more than 95,000 training institutions. One cannot over-emphasize the value of health education for such a large group of student population, many of whom are in their formative years of life. The following table explains the above point:

Number of Schools, Teaching Staff and School Enrolment

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Academic year 1960-1961

Total population: 206,972,000

Type of Institution	Number	Number of Teaching Staff	Enrolment
Primary School	83,223	344,871	13,163,450
Secondary School	10,588	108,201	2,853,065
Technical School	784	14,044	210,647
Teacher Training	286	3,583	59,837
Higher Institutes	484	10,323	395,356
Special	203	1,499	16,386
Total	95,578	482,521	16,698,741
Unspecified	20	21,574	
Grand Total	95,598	504,095	16,698,741

This attention to education is a very encouraging phenomenon in this Region. It is also challenging for the health staff, denoting the need for stressing health and health education as part of this training. This challenge becomes a joint function both of education and health authorities. The need for active cooperation between education and health authorities in matters dealing with school health and school health education had been conceived by this Regional Office from the beginning. The Sixth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting (1956) in its Technical Discussion on health education gave due emphasis to the need for this active cooperation, and the responsibility for health education in schools was placed with both education and health authorities.

In these discussions "special emphasis was placed on the value and need for promoting closer cooperation between teachers, parents, school health personnel and community resources<sup>1</sup>".

The Seminar on Health Education of the Public in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, which was held in Teheran from 28 October to 9 November 1958, also pinpointed this collaboration.

The following suggestions emerged from the discussions on the subject of school health education:

- "1. During their basic training, student teachers should receive simple and practical instruction on the basic facts regarding the promotion and protection of their own and the schoolchild's health, and on the cause and prevention of local public health problems.
2. The cooperation of the education authorities should be sought so that health education can be continued and expanded in the secondary schools<sup>2</sup>".

---

<sup>1</sup> Document EM/RC6/Tech.Disc./19 page 8 - 11

<sup>2</sup> Final Report on the Seminar on Health Education of the Public in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, Teheran, Iran, 28 October to 9 November 1958, page 37

Following the above Technical Discussion and the Seminar, the Regional Office in its contacts with the governments has continuously stressed the need for this joint effort. In fact, prior to the planning for the present Seminar, governments were requested to organize national seminars on school health education, with the involvement of the departments concerned in the ministries of health and of education. It is very gratifying to note that in the majority of countries in this Region, such seminars have already been held and some decisions implemented.

Based on these considerations, the following objectives were selected for the present Seminar:

- a. reviewing the status of health education activities as part of the school health services carried out in primary and secondary schools of the countries of this Region;
- b. discussing the health education needs of school children, taking into account the facilities and the provisions;
- c. sharing experience of the means of developing better health education activities and training in schools;
- d. studying the curriculum development in schools and the significant role of health education, qualitatively and quantitatively, in this curriculum;
- e. studying the health education aspect in the curriculum of teacher training institutions.

On the international level valuable cooperation exists between WHO and other UN agencies. For example, there have been a number of joint meetings with UNESCO in various regions and also at WHO Headquarters in Geneva. WHO Technical Report Series No. 193, dealing with teachers preparation in health education, is the outcome of one of these joint efforts. The recent joint project however was the preparation of a document, "Planning Health Education in Schools" by Professor C.E. Turner, WHO/UNESCO Consultant. It is envisaged that the results of this active cooperation between these two agencies will be published in form of a

book, which will be distributed during the Seminar. Cooperation with UNICEF in the field of school health education has also been very encouraging. The document prepared on the Teachers Preparation in Health Education<sup>1</sup> provides an example. Furthermore, UNICEF offered four fellowships for participation in this Seminar. Cooperation also exists between WHO and FAO, especially in the field of nutrition education. The same holds true for other UN specialized agencies and various other international agencies.

This, obviously, is not an exhaustive account of the amount of cooperation between WHO and other UN agencies and other international bodies interested in the field of school health education. Such an account would itself be a voluminous document.

The technical discussions for the Fifteenth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting were held in Addis Ababa in September 1965, and the following resolution was made<sup>2</sup>:

"The Regional Committee,

Having studied with interest the document on School Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, presented by the Regional Director;

Considering that school health services are among the major needs of this Region;

Noting the development of various activities in school health services and school health education in a number of countries of this Region for promotion of these services,

1. EXPRESSES its satisfaction with the studies made by the World Health Organization in a few countries of the Region;

---

<sup>1</sup> Kamel, W.H., & Senbaty, M.M., (1966) Teachers Preparation in Health Education - An Experiment in the United Arab Republic

(EM.SEM.SCH.HLTH.EDUC./7)

<sup>2</sup>

EM/RC15/R.6

2. ENDORSES the recommendations made in the document under review;
3. RECOMMENDS that the governments give high priority to school health services including:
  - a. health services for children, and other students in various stages of their education;
  - b. health services for school personnel;
  - c. health of the school environment;
  - d. school health education;
  - e. teachers' preparation in health education;
  - f. mental health of school children;
  - g. inclusion of public health into the curricula of the schools.
4. RECOMMENDS medical colleges and schools to give special attention to school health and health education;
5. REQUESTS the Regional Director to make further surveys on school health services and health education and to provide assistance to the governments, as required, in school health services and school health education in order to develop and promote the health of the school children".

School health education in the countries of the Region

Since every participant is requested to give a brief statement on health education activities in his own country and since the document on school health prepared for the Fifteenth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting in 1965 gives some salient facts on the status of school health education services in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, no details on the specific activities of school health education in the Region would be described here. A summary will be prepared after presentation by each participant. It should be stated, however, that school health education is being given some degree of importance in all the countries of this Region but not in all cases the importance it deserves.

Some of the shortcomings are recognized by the government as revealed in the government reports, upon which the above-mentioned document was prepared, and in many instances efforts are being made to over-ride such shortcomings. It is very pleasant to note the trend in organizing or planning active cooperation between ministries of health and of education, and as with other ministries such as youth, guidance etc.. in the field of school health education. During the last year in at least eight countries of the Region seminars have been organized between the two ministries of health and education, bringing together the medical and educational authorities to discuss and share experiences on promotion of school health services and school health education. In these seminars emphasis has been given to school health education, as part of school health services on the one hand and of the total community and national health on the other, thus making school health education not a separate entity but part of a wider sphere. Attention has occasionally been given to making the school a community centre, bringing in parents and other citizens to the school for discussions and decisions on improvement of the health of the community. Also attention to provision of recreation facilities and health education in physical education programmes is increasing.

Obviously the more attention given to the school as a dynamic centre of change and improvement in the community for the present and future, the more effective will be the school health education activities and that is a major aim of the present Seminar.