

Problems in current school-based reproductive health education program

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This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in Western Province to make an assessment of current Reproductive Health Education Program [RHEP]. Its objectives were to describe problems associated with current process of curriculum formulation, to describe adequacy of current RHEP, to describe difficulties faced by teachers and extent of teaching, to describe students' problems in learning Reproductive Health [RH] contents, and to describe parents' opinions on RHEP. This included in-depth interviews with 6 personnel involved in curriculum development, assessment of current RHEP contents by eight medical professionals, 3 self-administered questionnaires administered to 112 teachers, 390 students, and 200 parents selected through multi-stage stratified sampling. In-depth interviews with those involved in curriculum development revealed that over 40% of them were not adequately aware of the past trends, achievements, and problems associated with RHEP and therefore had not taken them in to account in curriculum formulation. Fifty percent of them lacked awareness on social variables that affect attitudes and behaviour of adolescents and were also not aware of the objectives of current RHEP. Six of the medical professionals were of opinion that its age-appropriateness was unsatisfactory and all agreed that entire RH module does not have capacity to impart RH related knowledge to students that enables them to make informed decisions. Sixty percent of teachers taught reproductive anatomy to students by themselves and 35% directed students for self-learning. Reproductive physiology was taught by 45%, changes during puberty 50%, stages of and changes in conception, antenatal period and childbirth by 80%, sexual exploitation by 29%, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases by 40% [but never of its prevention], myths associated with menarche and menstruation by 85% [none on other myths related to RH components], unsafe social and sexual practices by 0%-34%. Over 90 percent of teachers stated socio-cultural factors, poor discipline of the students, inadequate skills and knowledge of teachers, and limited access to RH information make RH teaching difficult. Over 90% of students stated hesitancy of teachers and lack of reading material as a problem. Only 84% of parents were aware of the current RHEP. Over 90% of them favoured RHEP and stressed the need to conform to cultural background.