

ABSTRACT

To Assess the Level of Preparedness of Teachers to Address and Teach Health and Sexuality Issues Including HIV/AIDS Prevention in the Classroom.

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Purpose: The education sector has not been spared the effects of the AIDS epidemic. It affects not only the enrollment of students at schools, but also depletes the human resources, namely teachers. Teachers have been known to have the greatest impact on the lives of the children they come into contact with. Therefore, they need to be adequately trained so that they can pass on information that is both accurate and relevant to HIV/AIDS, with a view of influencing positive behavioral changes. This thesis seeks to assess the level of teacher preparedness to address and teach issues of HIV/AIDS and sexuality.

Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted at two teacher training colleges in Jamaica of teachers in their final year (3rd) of studies. Data were collected quantitatively by means of self administered questionnaires and qualitatively by

key informant interviews with stake holders. The instrument sought to collect information on knowledge of HIV/AIDS issues, sexuality, confidentiality, teachers' perception of preparedness, and attitudes in relation to HIV/AIDS and sexuality. Teachers following the guidance and counseling specialization were sampled separately to those who were in other disciplines. This was done with a view to look for background differences in their level of preparedness.

Results: Fifteen percent of respondents felt that children who are HIV positive should not attend school; whilst 59% reported that they would feel uncomfortable teaching a child who was HIV positive. Although teachers felt competent to teach HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections issues (96% of guidance and counseling students, 87% of non guidance and counseling), they felt uncomfortable in doing so (61% of guidance and counseling, and 64% of non guidance and counseling). Forty eight percent of respondents felt their course of study was inadequate to prepare them to deal with HIV issues at school.

Conclusions: The results show that teachers are inadequately prepared to teach sexuality and reproductive health issues. A review of the relevant curriculum is implicated.

Key Words: Leo Casimir; HIV/AIDS and sexuality issues; level of teacher preparation.