



Committee: United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

Topic: Education: Important Pillar Towards
Health

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Background

The “United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization”, better known as UNESCO, was founded after the Second World War; with the principal objective of creating peace based on solidarity and cooperation.

Since then, UNESCO has been seeking to eradicate ignorance through science, education, and culture. For this reason, “patrimony” and “diversity” are two significant concepts, which lead this organization.

The association works to guaranty education for all people, promote cultural patrimonies and equality among cultures.

It manages programs to defend and promote the liberty of expression and exchange of knowledge and it helps countries to adopt international norms.

Nowadays, UNESCO plays an important role in the UN, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals, set for the year 2030. It also promotes the communication and understanding of cultures, with the target to confront different actual human problems.

The goal is to eradicate the ignorance and lack of education and information regarding health. Seeing to cover the need for good health cares and, considering the actions countries are taking to change or improve this and keep their society untamed by using education as a path for health.

UNESCO’s work now places a great emphasis on the role the schools have in promoting and teaching global education and all the health agendas.

A good education is the foundation of health and well-being. “Statistics from UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring Report show that the attainment of higher levels of education among mothers improves children’s nutrition and vaccination rates, while reducing preventable child deaths, maternal mortality and HIV.” (UNESCO, 2019). This education should promote and protect gender equality by safe contexts for them to learn and achieve everything learned and be informed.

Among the goals, UNESCO seeks the prevention and early testing of HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs); the promotion and awareness of HIV; strengthening puberty education and the prevention of early and unintended pregnancy.

The UNESCO strategy on education for Health and Well-being is to support and promote education sectors for better health. The organization is committed to beef up the relation between health and education.

For this, the implementation, improve and expand of comprehensive sexuality education is needed, this increases correct knowledge and promotes positive attitudes and values, which include respect for human rights, gender equality, and diversity. It also helps people to develop skills to make healthy, responsible and informed choices and to contribute to a safe and healthy environment filled with positive relationships.

Stigma, shame, and ignorance around diseases have significant health impacts on people’s health. So, knowledge is a prerequisite for healthy behaviors, still, many young people are poorly informed about diseases such as HIV, these people must be aware of the benefits of early initiation of the treatment.

UNESCO has also encountered the need to address sexual and reproductive health issues such as puberty and menstruation.

“Sexual and reproductive health has a direct impact on the education and future prospects of young people. For example, early and unintended pregnancy increases the risk of absenteeism, poor academic attainment and early drop out from school for girls and also has educational implications for young fathers.” (UNESCO, 2016)

UNESCO has also stated the awareness due to stigma and the lack of information that surrounds the understanding of changes that take place during puberty, which are also limited. In many countries, girls know about menstruation until they experience it, and because boys also lack accurate information about the topic, the result is often lack of empathy and harassment, leaving many girls disempowered and with negative and ambivalent feelings towards the menstruation.

“Persistent harmful socio-cultural norms, stigma, misconceptions and taboos around menstruation, continue to lead to exclusion and discrimination of women and girls”, said the independent human rights experts. (UN News, 2019)

Furthermore, the benefits provided by a good quality education can also be the reduction of discrimination, bullying and violence at school. Which can affect directly on different aspects, such as the mental health. Specially during adolescence, when children are more susceptible to the abuse of toxic substances, anxiety, depression, etc.

UNESCO has also presented its preoccupation towards vaccine hesitancy. "Vaccines help children and adults stay healthy by preventing potentially deadly diseases." (Dr. Princess Nothemba, 2018) Thanks to these, the world is closer than ever to eradicating polio.

Although there is clear evidence that vaccines are a safe and effective defense against deadly diseases and, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), immunization saves the lives of 2.5 million people annually, there are people who believe that vaccinations are unnecessary and ineffective. In fact, vaccine hesitancy was described by the WHO as one of the Ten threats to global health in 2019.

"Vaccine-preventable diseases such as polio can have serious and potentially life-threatening consequences, but the real infection at stake is misinformation and mistrust." (John Hewko, Caryl M. Stern, 2019 [UNICEF USA])

By eradicating this, UNESCO will be contributing to archiving the Sustainable Developments, such as the ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and ensuring healthy lives and the promotion of well-being.

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