Chapter 4  Life skills-based hygiene education

This chapter has been adapted from the booklet produced by IRC and UNICEF: *Life skills-based hygiene education*. The document can be downloaded free of charge.7 This chapter starts with principles of skills-based education and looks at how skills-based education works in WASH in Schools.

4.1  Principles of life skills-based hygiene education

For WASH in Schools to succeed, all students and school staff must practise proper hygiene and sanitation behaviours. Therefore, wherever possible, hygienic and sanitation practices must be built into the school curriculum as a permanent feature. Education is the key.

Life skills-based education gives room for children to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills together, which they can use in daily life. It also gives children the opportunity to clarify uncertainties, to try out new knowledge and skills, to be creative and to learn from each other. In life skills-based education, the role of the teacher is different than in traditional education. Table 4.1 summarizes the didactic differences between traditional education and life skills-based education. Life skills-based hygiene education promotes

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7 URL: http://www.irc.nl/page/10453 [provides the abstract and link to the full text document: Life skills-based hygiene education]
safe hygiene behaviours that help prevent diseases, particularly those related to water and sanitation (see also box 4.1). It is the combination of child-friendly learning experiences that aim to develop knowledge and, especially, attitudes and skills.

Table 4.1 Didactic differences between traditional education and the life-skills approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional education</th>
<th>Life skills-based education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on academic knowledge and memorizing and reproducing received information.</td>
<td>Emphasis on learning new skills, attitudes and applying them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher uses one-way teaching, during which the teacher speaks and the students listen.</td>
<td>Students learn from both the teacher and from each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children remain seated in rows and the teacher sits facing the class.</td>
<td>Seating arrangements are flexible and the teachers move around the class, sometimes working with an individual or group or the whole class, depending on the activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is mostly through written text (textbooks and taking notes).</td>
<td>Besides written text, teachers make use of participatory and interactive activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lesson content might not be adjusted to local conditions.</td>
<td>The content of the lesson is adapted to real life situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teaching and learning methods in life skills-based hygiene education are meant to be child-friendly, interactive and participatory. The methods should give children the opportunity to explore and acquire hygiene-promoting knowledge, attitudes and values and to practise skills that help them to avoid risky, unhealthy situations and to adopt healthier life styles. Teaching and learning methods are determined by the learning objectives and the desired behavioural outcomes. They are chosen in such a way that they are appropriate for influencing specific behaviours and knowledge.

The content of life skills-based hygiene education consists of a balance of knowledge, attitudes and skills. This should enable a person to make positive decisions and take actions to promote and protect both their own health and that of others (Greene & Simons-Morton 1984; UNICEF et al. 2003).
While this life skills-based education focuses on hygiene, water and sanitation, the life skills developed may also be applied to other issues in life. Examples relevant for WASH in Schools include the development of attitudes of respect for the opposite sex, pride in own culture and skills for cooperating constructively with others.

Themes
One way to organise a curriculum for life skills-based hygiene education is to use themes. The content of the themes should vary according to the location and should be based on assessment of the diseases, attitudes, and behaviours that are prevalent in that area. Possible content can be divided into four basic themes:
Life skills-based hygiene education

1. **Water, sanitation and waste** in school, homes and community—including the different types of water sources; the transport, handling and storage of drinking water; and different types of waste existing within a community (such as human excreta and rubbish) and how these differ in terms of cleanliness and risks to health.

2. **Personal and food hygiene** in school, homes and community (including food vendors)—covering conditions and practices that are either positive or negative and the reasons, ways and means to change the latter.

3. **Diseases related to water supply and sanitation** that have an impact on someone’s health—including information on the incidence and transmission, as well as the prevention, of diseases in the local environment.

4. **Facilities for water, sanitation and hygiene** within schools, households and the community. This category may cover topics such as the planning, construction, maintenance, management, monitoring and use of water supply, excreta disposal and other existing facilities.

Other important concepts such as gender, equity, and helping other children in the family are cross-cutting and can appear in many of the topics. Examples of how this can be done are presented in Box 4.2.
When developing life skills-based materials and lesson plans, one should consider a balance of the three elements of knowledge, attitudes and skills. Therefore, it is necessary to determine what aspects of each element should be addressed for each theme. At the end of this chapter, two examples are shown of programme content for life skills-based hygiene education.

### 4.2 Child-friendly learning and teaching methods

For effective child-centered life-skills hygiene education, the methods that are used should be activity based and joyful for children. The methods used should not only give the children the opportunity to learn by doing and experiencing but also the opportunity to learn at their own pace and in their own style. The use of these methods will also give the children the chance to experience, discover, create and construct their own knowledge. They will be given the opportunity to personalize the information and develop positive attitudes and values as well as to practise the new skills. Life skills-based education can be carried out even in large classes with 50 and more children. For example, a lecture is an effective way to increase knowledge, but it is less effective in influencing beliefs and building skills. Discussion, debates and carefully prepared written materials can be more effective than lectures in dispelling any false beliefs in the community regarding water, sanitation and hygiene.

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**Box 4.2 Examples of how gender and poverty can be incorporated in the themes**

Part of life skills-based hygiene education is that children become aware of gender and social differences and the inequalities and discrimination that are often associated with them. Imaginative and creative teachers can bring up social and gender differences and problem-solving actions in many ways as part of lessons. For example:

**Hygiene work and responsibilities**

How is the work on sanitation and hygiene divided in the class/school? How is hygiene and sanitation work divided at home, between mother and father, older sisters and brothers, you and your brother/sister? Who sets good examples (a) in school and (b) at home? What do you do when you see that a classmate/younger child does not leave the toilet clean/does not wash hands/ throws away rubbish? What do you do when your younger brother/sister does something unhygienic?

**Latrines in the community**

Does everyone at home have latrines? How many families in our neighbourhood/community have no latrine? What does it mean for our community/neighbourhood when one third/half/three quarters... of the families do not have a latrine? What keeps some families from having latrines? Who may find it the most difficult to dig a latrine pit, buy/install a slab, build an outhouse? What can be done by/for families who have little or no money or no labour to build a latrine?
The design and selection of educational methods should be in-line with the age of the children. The development and characteristic patterns that are common for most children within specific age ranges can be divided into three categories: physical, cognitive and social-emotional (National Council of Educational Research and Training 1998). Below are examples of how the child’s age and characteristics influence the choice of learning and teaching methods.

**Physical**
Children in the age range of 4 to 7 find it difficult to sit for a long time and will need a variety of activities involving frequent changes of body position. The child needs opportunities to run, jump, balance, etc. During life skills-based hygiene education, the child can, for example, be asked to go outside and make drawings of different water sources and indicate which ones are suitable and safe for drinking.

Children in the age range of 8 to 11 can perform movements involving better body control. In hygiene class children can be asked to play pantomime games, for example, to depict different hygiene behaviours.

**Cognitive**
Children in the range of 4 to 7 years have short attention spans and can only concentrate on single elements at a time. They also need a lot of opportunities to speak with others and listen to good language. In hygiene class the teacher can tell a story, for example, on the effects of eating raw food. The story has to be simple, short and fun, and the teacher should allow children to comment and interpret at some point.

Children in the age range of 8 to 11 years develop the capacity to see other points of view. This development helps the child analyse, understand and see logical relationships.
For example, in hygiene class, the children can be asked to organise and have a discussion that critically analyses a hygiene-related problem in the community and develops a number of solutions.

**Social-emotional**
Children in the age range of 4 to 7 years need physical reassurance through appropriate patting and touching to give them a sense of security and confidence. In hygiene class children can, for example, sing songs about how to clean themselves in the morning, during which they can act out the different behaviours. After this they can be complimented on their performance.

Children in the age range 8 to 11 get embarrassed by physical displays of feelings and are sensitive to gender differences. In hygiene education, the teacher has to take these feelings into account, for example, when working in groups, being careful not to reinforce unhelpful or antisocial gender differences and stereotypes, but instead promoting cooperation.

Table 4.2 gives an overview of different methods that could be used in life skills-based hygiene education for different age groups. A detailed description of the different methods can be found in the booklet on life skills-based hygiene education produced by IRC and UNICEF.

**Table 4.2 Examples of child-friendly methods suitable for life skills-based hygiene education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods most suitable for age group 4-7</th>
<th>Methods most suitable for age group 8-12</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Reading stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciting poems and singing songs</td>
<td>Carrying out projects or surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puppet plays</td>
<td>Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language games</td>
<td>Conversations and discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading stories</td>
<td>Singing and dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walks</td>
<td>Drawing, painting, clay modelling, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations and discussions</td>
<td>Writing compositions and creative writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing, painting, colouring</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excursions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drama, role playing, pantomime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language and math games such as</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>crosswords</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of maps, e.g. of the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing surveys and asking questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the lesson might be joyful and activity based, the method used can sometimes fail to lead to the planned learning. It is therefore important to ensure that the chosen method will effectively address the planned content (knowledge, attitudes and skills) and enable the child to learn in a joyful and interesting way.
4.3 Implementation of life skills-based hygiene education

Making lesson plans
Information that can be included in a typical lesson plan is shown in table 4.3. Examples of lesson plans can be found in the Joy of Learning booklet on life skills-based hygiene education produced by IRC and UNICEF.\(^8\)

Educational materials for life skills-based hygiene
Educational materials are anything that help people to learn and facilitate teaching. Life skills-based hygiene education materials may be sets of questions, which students are asked to reflect on, discuss and answer; they may be textbooks; or they may be games, activities and practical exercises through which the students learn.

When developing educational materials, teachers don’t necessarily have to make use of expensive materials, but can also use practical, locally-available, low-cost materials. For example, in Colombia, the children were asked to take water and sanitation materials that are not harmful, such as empty plastic bottles, toilet roles, etc., to school. These were then used for making a colourful display of a safe and clean school environment.

Experiences in various countries such as Vietnam, Zambia, Nicaragua and Colombia have shown that the participation of teachers, parents, district education officers and community representatives in developing hygiene education materials during a training course has various positive results: Their involvement not only leads to the increased skills needed for the implementation of hygiene education, but it also helps develop positive attitudes towards its introduction.

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\(^8\) Link to the full document as well as to separate chapters can be found at http://www.irc.nl/page/26444
Institutional aspects

The implementation of hygiene education in schools requires support at national/regional level. The lack of support for implementation of new programmes is one of the most important factors causing failure. For most teachers both the content and methods of life skills-based hygiene education are new. They need sufficient support, training and practice in pre- and in-service training sessions and workshops to enable them to reflect on and adjust their own attitudes. This support should motivate teachers to apply their new knowledge and skills, rather than continue with the more didactic, traditional teaching methods, which are often focused on information alone (Gachuhi 1999; Gatawa 1995). See also Tips and Hints 4.1.

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**Box 4.3 Information to be included in a typical lesson plan**

**Topic/title of lesson**
To prepare lessons, it is helpful to begin by considering what the children already know about the topic.

**Objectives of the lesson**
This part of the lesson plan should describe what the children will have learned (knowledge, attitude and skills) at the end of this lesson. The teacher should also make sure that each lesson correctly deals with cross-cutting issues such as gender, equity, human and children's rights, and poverty.

**Time**
The amount of time needed for the lesson.

**Resources and tools needed**
The teacher should determine the information and tools needed to carry out the lesson plan.

**Introduction**
In the introduction, the teacher has to activate the existing knowledge of the children, slowly moving to the new information about the topic.

**Main activity**
This section should describe the activity through which the children will learn about the topic and what method is being used.

**Closure**
In addition to monitoring student progress throughout the lesson, the teacher can check understanding at the completion of the lesson and confirm key points by summarising conclusions.

**Reflection for the teacher**
After the lesson, the teacher can reflect on what went well and what could have gone better. Based on this knowledge, he/she can adjust the lesson plan if necessary and can also apply the knowledge to the development of future lessons.
An important issue that also will need to be addressed within the educational institutions and institutional arena is the often high turnover of teachers. Frequent teacher transfers can have a huge impact on the sustainability of the WASH in Schools initiatives. One way of addressing the issue is to ensure regular refresher training courses.

Tips and Hints 4.1 Successful introduction of life skills-based hygiene education

When introducing and implementing life skills-based hygiene education within the context of a WASH in Schools programme one should consider whether it is possible to link up with the following initiatives or institutions:

- national curriculum reform, which takes place once every 5 or 10 years in many countries;
- teacher training centres (such centres can also participate in the development of materials);
- refresher courses, which might be organised for the teachers during summer holidays; and
- teacher conferences.

One should also consider taking advantage of materials that have been developed by other institutions such as UNICEF, Plan International and NGOs.

An important issue that also will need to be addressed within the educational institutions and institutional arena is the often high turnover of teachers. Frequent teacher transfers can have a huge impact on the sustainability of the WASH in Schools initiatives. One way of addressing the issue is to ensure regular refresher training courses.
Furthermore for consistent and quality teaching of life skills-based hygiene education, the district education officers should be trained and motivated to support the teachers through regular visits to the schools.

**Outreach to the community through extra-curricular activities**

Outreach activities will increase the chance that students practise new hygiene behaviours at home and that the hygiene practices brought home by them will be adopted by family members. These activities can also reach children who may have dropped out of school at an early age, especially girls. Good WASH in Schools programmes therefore include child-friendly outreach strategies (Hooff 1998).

To make the link with the home, teachers can encourage the children to share information and skills with their families or to spread their ideas and messages within their communities. This can be done through:

a) activities that are developed specifically for outreach to communities, such as school open days to inform the community about the WASH in Schools initiatives and sanitation or cleaning campaigns organised by school health clubs;

b) surveys by students and other school-related activities within the community; and

c) community displays of the materials (posters and models) or of the students’ skills (through theatre for example) that were developed during life skills-based hygiene education.

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Photo: Peru, Annemarieke Mooijman
Monitoring the quality of life skills-based hygiene education

Here are several questions that could be used by education officers or managers to check the quality of life skills-based education in the school:

**Capacity:**
- Have the teachers been trained in how to teach life skills-based hygiene education? Do teachers have and use educational guides and materials?
- In teacher training, which teachers are trained on hygiene: female teachers, male teachers or both? (Both is usually best for reaching both girls and boys).
- Are school supervisors and district staff trained/oriented in WASH in Schools?

**Curriculum and teaching:**
- Is there sufficient time in the primary school curriculum for life skills-based hygiene education?
- Does the content reflect the age and the interests of the students?
- Are a range of appropriate methods and materials being used?
- Are students involved in active learning and thinking?
- Do students enjoy learning about and practising hygiene in their school?
- Do they try to spread lessons to others?

**In the school:**
- Is life skills-based hygiene education part of the school programme?
- Who is in charge of life skills-based hygiene education: female teachers, male teachers or, as is preferred, both?
- Are there activities such as school health clubs and child-to-child learning?

**For the extension from school to home and community:**
- Are children involved in activities that reach into the community and home? Are children involved in planning these activities rather than merely carrying out a programme entirely designed by adults?
### 4.4 Example of content for life skills-based hygiene education

Theme: Water, sanitation and waste (Postma et al. 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required knowledge</th>
<th>Required attitude</th>
<th>Required skills</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Children of 6 – 9 years:**  
- Know how water is transported in the community in various ways  
- Know two ways for safe water transport  
- Know that it is important to safely store and handle drinking water  
- Know how to safely store and handle water in their house and school  
- Know which vendors around the school do handle water safely | **Children of 6 – 9 years:**  
- Are aware that there are different ways to transport water  
- Find it important when transporting water to do it in a safe way  
- Are concerned when seeing others transporting water in an unsafe way  
- Appreciate the importance of storing and handling drinking water safely  
- Are willing to store and handle water safely  
- Are keen to drink safely-handled water | **Children of 6 – 9 years:**  
- Are able to explain two different ways to transport water  
- Are able to mention two different ways for safe water transport and can explain why these ways are safe  
- Understand that gender roles in the context of water transport are interchangeable and that both girls and boys have a responsibility  
- Are able to store and handle the water in their house and school in a safe way  
- Are able to explain how drinking water can be stored safely  
- Are able to refuse to buy drinks and food from vendors who do not handle water and food safely | **Children of 6 – 9 years:**  
- Learning a song about two different ways to transport water in a safe way  
- Role-playing: Different safe ways to transport water  
- Telling a story about water transport which includes gender aspects  
- Demonstration: How to store and handle drinking water in a safe way  
- Song about safe ways to store and handle water  
- Daily practice and supervision in the class |

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Theme: Personal and food hygiene (Postma et al. 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition - Food hygiene, eating patterns, water available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Children of 6 – 9 years:**  
  - Know that diseases may be introduced or passed on by eating raw (uncooked) food, such as fruit, milk, meat and vegetables  
  - Know how to safely handle food  
  - Know some of the most risky practices when handling food | **Children of 6 – 9 years:**  
  - Are willing to avoid eating raw (uncooked) food  
  - Are willing to prevent introduction or passing on of diseases  
  - Are willing to wash their hands correctly before eating  
  - Are willing to handle food safely  
  - Are aware of the most risky practices in food handling  
  - Appreciate that some family members are more involved in food preparation than others  
  - Appreciate that some family members may find it difficult to always wash their hands when needed because of multiple tasks, e.g. mothers taking care of small babies while cooking food | **Children of 6 – 9 years:**  
  - Are able to explain how diseases may be introduced or passed on by eating raw (uncooked) food  
  - Are able to list types of food that should be cooked  
  - Are able to prepare and eat food with clean hands to prevent diseases  
  - Are able to explain how to handle food safely  
  - Are able to avoid the most risky practices in food handling | **Children of 6 – 9 years:**  
  - Play: children perform a play in which they explain how raw/ uncooked food can introduce diseases and how to prevent this. The parents are invited to this play  
  - Drawing of food handling followed by a discussion of which drawings represent good food handling and which drawings represent bad food handling |
Theme: Facilities for water, sanitation and hygiene (Postma et al. 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical and managerial aspects of facilities at home and at school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children of 10 – 12 years:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Know the basic construction aspects of latrines and handwashing and water facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Know how the school water source should be protected from contamination (e.g. located at least 15 metres from sources of contamination; need for fencing, drainage and covering of the well)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Know different technical options for water and sanitation facilities and have a rough idea of the costs involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Life skills-based hygiene education

School children about to eat lunch
Photo: Tamil Nadu, India, IRC

Key hygiene messages
Photo: Uttarakhal, India, IRC

Photos: Annemarieke Mooijman