

SAFETY EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Life is like the most important game that is ever played. There are rules for playing it safely and well. If you follow the rules, you can reach your goal. A risky short cut which is common with students may cut a life short. A safe school environment is crucial to the healthy academic and social development of the student and the larger society. Walking across the freeway, swimming in unprotected pools, crossing the road unnecessarily and carelessly instead of walking in the pavement, standing on a chair instead of step ladder and trying to make electrical repairs without shutting off the current are all dangerous short cuts. Each time you fail to follow the rules of safety you may be taking a life taking risk. Though it is natural to have accidents in various phases of our lives, it can however be prevented to a reasonable extent hence the need for safety education. This paper looks into the need for safety education to students and also outlines the major aspects of safety education.

INTRODUCTION

A safe school environment is crucial to the healthy academic and social development of students and the safety of a school environment affects a range of factors from staff retention through parent satisfaction and the overall achievement of sustainable development goals. Perhaps most importantly is students perception of safety which affects their academic achievement. When students feel safe they are better able to focus on learning, which in turn leads to increased academic achievements. Therefore, stakeholders in school system should strive to determine whether their students and staff are comfortable and safe in their school environment both physically and emotionally and whether families are comfortable with the school environment in which their children learn. Threats to students and staff within their school environment present a challenge to the achievement of educational goals and the overall achievement of sustainable development goals. Recent research suggested that perceptions of school safety may have a greater impact on student's success than actual safety. These perceptions should be kept in mind as planning teams address potential or actual threats before, during and after an occurrence, and as they incorporate the fire mission areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery into preparedness protocols.

WHAT IS SAFETY EDUCATION?

To define safety education we firstly have to understand what the term 'safety' means. Safety according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary means the state of being protected, therefore, safety education is a broad topic covering a very wide range of human activities but for the purpose of this paper, Safety education refers to an orderly, sequential process of change in which a child learns about how to survive, protect him/herself and others against all forms of danger. This automatically and necessarily involve education in many emerging areas such as drug abuse, environment, human rights, gender, family life, HIV/AIDS, Road Safety all targeted to protect the child from harm as to enable him function effectively. It is globally desired that every child has access to quality education across regions of the world. For instance in African Region using Nigeria in particular which is battling towards ensuring this goal is achieved, an integral part of this is being safe at all levels hence the need to teach a child how to survive and protect his or herself from all forms of danger. Safety Education in summary is the teaching of specific knowledge, skills and understanding that children need in order to stay safe in a given situation. Generally, all things being equal, schools themselves are safe places for children of all ages, so the focus of safety education

is to prepare children and young people for the world outside of school now and in the future. In Nigeria today, the concept, theme and messages of child safety education are structured and infused into career subjects (e.g. English Studies, Social Studies, Cultural and Creative Arts, Physical and Health Education) in Schools.

However, the key players in this battle include the government, curriculum planners, the school administrators and of course the students. It is not enough to set or outline a well-organized curriculum approach to be adopted by schools on safety education, paramount interest also lies on the perception of the students as regards the battle to be safe.

IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY EDUCATION:

An effective well organized, planned and delivered safety education will help both teachers and students. It will importantly help teachers to promote key skills on one side which include information technology, improving pupils learning and performance, information processing, enquiry and evaluation, and on the other hand thinking skills that include: working with others, problem solving, reasoning and creative thinking.

Furthermore, security of life of individuals and that of a nation is no doubt a thing of concern to any nation because it plays a vital role in the growth of any country. School security is vital to effective teaching and learning. School activities thrive in environment and support protection of lives and properties. A well secured learning environment that is devoid of security threats is perceived to enhance learning. Therefore, the need for safety education cannot be over emphasized and can be outlined as follows:

- ✓ Safety education helps to provide safe and healthy living
- ✓ It protects people from premature and unexpected death
- ✓ It helps in longevity
- ✓ It helps to create a civilized and progressive society
- ✓ It helps to build healthy and successive personality
- ✓ It helps protect people from unnecessary expenses
- ✓ It protects people from undue mental tension

Accident statistics are also often quoted as an important justification for safety education in schools. In Nigeria today, with lots of unrest as 'Boko Haram' and Fulani Herdsmen invasions, the need to educate children on how to be conscious of their environment and report to the appropriate authorities in case of any sign of threat cannot be over stressed.

Roads are an especially hazardous environment for children and young people of school age. This group of people have been reportedly killed through road accidents or seriously injured.

SAFETY EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS:

Safety education is the responsibility of all staff in the school; teaching and non-teaching and students through the formal and informal curriculum. If safety education is to be effective, safety should underpin the whole culture and ethics of the school. With safety education in schools, children, young people and their parents are enabled to put effective safety measures into practice. For example, they can be taught the safe ways of crossing roads, take safer routes to avoid difficult junctions where most accidents occur as well as how to handle dangerous objects and tools. Fitting smoke alarms and rehearsing escape routes can save lives in fire outbreaks. What pupils learn about risk assessments in school can be applied to life outside the school gates and can increase receptiveness to safety information and advice from other sources. Safety education can help young people make decisions about and undertake a wide range of activities – sport, adventurous activities, travel, and work experience – confidently and competently.

ASPECTS/OUTLINE OF SAFETY EDUCATION

Safety education should enable pupils to keep themselves safe as well as contribute to keeping others safe too. It helps them to be aware of possible hazards in different areas of their lives and

be able to take appropriate decisions and actions. It is not isolating young people from all hazards as the bumps, cuts and bruises which are normal part of growing up but about equipping them to deal safely with a wide range of situations. We can therefore see below major aspects and outlines which must be contained in safety education in order to achieve its set goals.

- i. ***The skills of hazard awareness, recognition, risk assessment and management.***
Here pupils are taught about risk assessments in subjects as designs and technology, science and physical education. Safety education here enables pupils and students to transfer their learning to other areas of their lives.
- ii. ***Factors that influence attitude and behaviors which relate to safety:*** Safety education should include consideration of the stereotypes and pressures which affect risk taking, for example, media images linking drinking and speed, or the influence of fashion trends on the wearing of protective devices.
- iii. ***Personal and social skills:*** This area involves assertiveness which is very vital in enabling pupils to take responsibility for their safety and that of others. For instance, when asking for help or calling the emergency services, or asking an adult to wear a seat belt or to drive more slowly.
- iv. ***The role of emotions in recognizing and managing risks.*** This is the ability to control anger, deal with stress and fear in the face of danger and risks.
- v. ***Playing a part in keeping community safe:*** Safety education involves learning to take responsibility for social and moral issues. Discussing safety issues that have to do with their discussion about social and political issues, which impact on improving safety.

CONTEXTS FOR SAFETY EDUCATION:

An effective safety education should include a range of contents appropriate to the age and developmental stages of the pupils. Account should be taken of the immediate environment of the pupils. For example, urban or rural roads as well as unfamiliar environments that pupil may encounter. For example, driving, field visits, family holidays or work experience settings.

ISSUES FOR SAFETY EDUCATION

- ❖ Play
- ❖ Sport and leisure
- ❖ Construction sites
- ❖ Water
- ❖ Roads
- ❖ Rail
- ❖ Fire
- ❖ Electricity, gas
- ❖ Agricultural settings
- ❖ School
- ❖ Community safety
- ❖ The world of work
- ❖ Home
- ❖ Personal safety
- ❖ Socio-political issues

HEALTH SAFETY EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

General teaching for health and safety education requires teachers to teach pupils how to:

- ***Unhealthy Building.*** This leads to contaminated air, children under such building have symptoms similar to cold, an allergy and if the doctor has eliminated other causes, it is advised that child be observed for days.

- **Pesticides in School:** Because their young bodies are still developing, children are more prone than adults to harm from pesticides. Schools can employ safer alternative pest control methods.
- **Unsafe Drinking Water:** Occasionally, schools are found to have contaminants as lead in the drinking water in students contaminating water. All schools should have their water tested periodically.
- Awareness should be created about new disease outbreaks and preventive measures emphasized.

COMING TO SCHOOL SAFETY EDUCATION

- A safety audit with the help of a school safety team should be done that includes staff, parents, police and someone from the community.
- Many of the traffic problems around schools are caused by parents. Some ignore the pick-up zones, double park or block the buses.
- Traffic rules violations put kids in danger and so be properly addressed.

School bus Safety: Kids should be taught school bus safety rules. For example, they should stay away from the wheels and the back of the school bus. If they cross in front of the bus after disembarking, they should move to at least 10 feet in front of the bus and wait for a signal showing that it is safe to cross.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Metal equipment should be painted or galvanized to prevent rusting which students may taste and will cause health challenge. The structure can also become weakened or develop sharp broken edges. Parts used for climbing and gripping are safest if covered with slip resistant material.

- Wooden equipment can deteriorate and become splintered and bolt loosen.
- Moving parts can pinch or crush a child's finger. Give special security to many go-rounds, seesaw and supervision bridges.
- Kids should never wear clothing which draws strings. The strings can get caught on playground equipment and other places and strangles them.
- Elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, should have guardians to prevent falls.
- Recognize hazards, hazards being something with the potential to cause harm. (This can include objects, substances, machines, ways of working and the working environment).

POINTS TO PONDER UPON

Assess risk: A risk is the likelihood of potential harm from the hazard being realized. The extent of the risk will depend on:

- i. The likelihood of the occurrence of that harm
- ii. The potential severity of that harm
- iii. The number of people who might be affected.

Control risk: the purpose of the risk assessment is to determine what measures should be taken to control the risk, taking into account existing precaution and their effectiveness.

Given above background, it is important to consider the following points while making effort to achieve the goals of safety education:

- ✓ Is the priority the safety of the students, school and community?
- ✓ Do parents have access to reports that give information about the number of violent or other unsafe incidents at the school?
- ✓ Does the school have procedures to respond quickly to unsafe situations?
- ✓ Is the school addressing ways to prevent as well as respond to crisis?
- ✓ Is the school board, which includes the principal, parent-teachers association, teachers, school staff, students and community professionals all, involved in these efforts?

- ✓ Has someone been assigned the duty of coordinating activities to maintain a safe and healthy environment?
- ✓ Are counselors and psychologists available to work with students who are troubled or disruptive?
- ✓ Are all students participating in safety education classes to help them develop conflict resolution and other life skills?
- ✓ Do school health service providers help or refer students who come to them with concerns about safety?
- ✓ Does the school emphasize promoting self-esteem and respect for others in all aspects of the school programs?
- ✓ Are parents and students involved in activities that promote school safety?
- ✓ Are teachers encouraged to set examples of positive physical, social and emotional health?
- ✓ Does the school have fair, firm, consistent, discipline policies?
- ✓ Are school facilities attractive and hazard free?
- ✓ Is safety addressed in all aspects of the school programmes; the cafeteria, physical education, classrooms, playgrounds, after school performances?

FIRE SAFETY DRILLS

- Use of fire extinguisher should be taught to all
- Review the drill over and over at every given gathering and commend exemplary behaviors.
- Is the TV Monitor with available security fastened to a stable platform?

LABORATORY SAFETY MEASURES

- Use of lab-gear, lab coats, hand gloves and the likes must be emphasized.
- There should be adequately trained lab staff.
- Safety drills from the lab staff in case of an emergency
- Training the students for safety precautions related to use of chemicals, electric points, hazardous equipments etc.

CONCLUSION

Safety education is inevitable due to the facts that correction on the rights of the child stipulates that children have a right to live and develop to their full capacity and as such a programme as safety education should be used as an entry point for other developmental activities which will benefit the entire community thereby encouraging public, private partnership in education and leading to overall achievement of the sustainable development goals as well as ensure the survival of many more children as they are prepared early enough for safety issues.

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