

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

The programme produced unanticipated results. According to the data the experimental group were not significantly better off on any of the global measures, i.e. in regard to their sexual knowledge, behaviour and attitudes the programme. The programme failed to make a positive contribution in these areas, and on some variables even made things worse (sexual behaviour).

It is tempting to find answers to these disappointing outcomes, though several co-existing variables probably interact to produce the results. One major problem for example could be the general demise in government school in South Africa. In many schools discipline has collapsed and most learners perform poorly and do not seem motivated to improve. A project such as the research undertaken at the school, was probably not taken seriously by the students, and hence the integrity of the results is brought into question.

### 6.2 Other Observations

A number of observations, which were noted with regard to subjects that took part in the research were made. The observations might have affected the outcome of the research. For starters, most subjects came from a community that is experiencing a number of socio-economic problems. For instance, there is abject poverty and many families have disintegrated, some due to the ravages of HIV/Aids. Children who experience poverty lack basic needs and this affects their lives in general as well as their performance at school. Family disintegration leads to divorce and in turn children would not have a mother or father to identify with.

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Many parents also struggle with old-world attitudes towards parenting, and either do not have the knowledge or the will to accommodate their parenting styles to fit with the modern world. In these cases parents can either be overprotective or disengaged. One way or another there is a clear alienation between parents and their kin when it comes to discussing sensitive issues like sex. Table 5.1 suggests that only slightly more than 10% of learners are comfortable talking to their parents about sex. In most cases such children fail to communicate their thoughts hence fail to find solutions for themselves to their everyday problems.

The African society is in transition between the traditional and modern worlds. Children live in two worlds that are totally different. At home sex education is taboo and they have to conform to traditional values but at school they are taught sex education. They are also encouraged to communicate their thoughts and to conform to the western culture. This double standard confuses learners as they keep quiet at home but are encouraged to question everything at school.

The political climate that exists in township schools affects the teaching and learning situation. Since 1976, learners have adopted a culture of boycotting, becoming violent and defying authority. As a result, a few schools are able to maintain discipline and in most cases there is no effective teaching and learning. Unfortunately the lack of commitment is not confined to learners – many teachers burnt out or worn down from years of struggle have similarly given up.

### **6.3 Other Complications**

In retrospect, the PPASA programme might have been too long to complete in three months. Given the volume of information and the level of the learners, the same programme over a one year period would probably be more fruitful.

The study was mainly conducted in English because the PPASA programme is designed in English. In addition to covering the material, more time must therefore be spent on translation into Southern Sotho. It is possible that certain concepts might not have been explained properly in the mother tongue and perhaps information became distorted causing some confusion. In addition the programme is probably better facilitated by an outsider as children could be inhibited in opening up. They might have felt uncomfortable discussing very personal issues with the class teacher. This might similarly have impacted on the assessments, and it seems likely – given the obvious pre/post contradictions that many students did not answer with honesty and integrity.

Due to limited resources the learners did not have their own copies of the materials and thus could not do any preparation before class. Ideally if each learner had their own file, classroom discussions might have been more informative and the results might have been different.

In regard to the assessment, the Mathtech questionnaire was too long. Whilst answering it during pretesting and posttesting, it appears as if some learners became impatient and started answering questions just for the sake of doing so without reading them properly and understanding them. Some questions were not answered, particularly those that were towards the end of the questionnaire. This could have been caused by tiredness, boredom and impatience to answer too many questions. The questionnaire is set in English. As all subjects were second language speakers some questions might have not been well understood, thus inappropriate answers were given.

The programme was conducted after school hours. This was an inopportune time as learners are generally saturated after a long day at school. Attendance was thus erratic for some of the less committed learners. In addition the programme had to compete with extracurricular activities like debate meetings, sports and music that are also held in the afternoon.

Learners would have benefited if smaller numbers were handled. For example a group of forty subjects could have been divided into groups of five or eight so that individual attention could be paid. The large numbers were complicated by the fact that learners that were used for the research came from different grades, that is grade 9 and 11. The experimental group had 3 grade 11 learners, and 37 grade 9 learners. The control group had no grade 11 learners, but it had 40 grade 9 learners. The different grades made it difficult to pitch the information adequately to suit all levels simultaneously.

The subjects that were used for the research were never prepared psychologically and emotionally for the programme. The mindset of most African learners is ill prepared for sexuality education programmes because that type of education is still taboo in most communities. As a result most subjects were shy during presentations especially at the beginning of the programme. Others became embarrassed when sensitive issues were discussed. Giggling was observed from time to time; maybe this was done to camouflage embarrassment.

The group that was used for researching the programme might not have been representative of the community at large. They all derived from a similar environment and all attend only one school. Perhaps a more representative sample would do more justice to the programme.

#### **6.4 Views On Improvements**

The room that was used every time the subjects met could be used to create an atmosphere that is conducive to proper teaching and learning. For instance colorful collages and posters that relate to the PPASA life skills and HIV/AIDS education could be displayed on walls. There could also be a table placed somewhere in the room to display different forms of contraceptives. A number of pamphlets as well as books that deal with sexuality education aspects could be displayed, so that learners can have access to them. Arrangement of desks could be in a form of groups, that is two double desks put together to facilitate group work and discussions.

To make it easier for learners to understand the contents of the programme role-plays, pictures and fact games could be used. According to Vogel and McPhail (2000), drama gives learners an opportunity to develop their social and communication skills, it instigates social action and change and it also teaches learners to respond emotionally to imagined situations that reflect everyday life. In general, participatory methods encourage learners to be directly involved in their education and to learn more rather than just listening to someone talking.

Medical field professionals could be invited to come and make presentations on any of the aspects that relate to sexuality education like contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. Professionals are experts in their fields, so the presence of the medical personnel would boost the tone of the programme.

Sexuality education programmes do not have to be taught after school only. The programmes should be part of life and be taught by every teacher throughout the day. Thus all teachers should be well equipped to be change agents in the education arena. As sexuality education has to take place continuously, once the school is out, parents should take over. Parents and teachers should share the same objectives with regard to sexuality education in order to minimize confusing learners. If parents and teachers are united, learners will always know what is expected of them.

Subjects who are in the same grade should be taught sexuality education as a group so that information could be graded. There is no way that grade eleven learners can be given the same information as a grade nine learners. For example, it is unfair to explain a process like birth to grade 9 and 11 learners all at once. Grade 9 learners should be given basics for the process but grade 11 learners should be given basics as well as information, which broaden the process. Teaching all subjects at once makes ones group to suffer at the expense of another one.

The lecture method should be used less during presentations. Learners should be encouraged to take part in discussions by way of voicing out their opinions and answering questions. They should also be encouraged to improvise dramas and picture codes that deal with scenes from everyday life. Active involvement of subjects in a sexuality education programme prepares their states of mind, so learners become ready for different activities and they will also understand the subject matter better.

The long Mathtech questionnaire really turned off subjects. The questionnaire could be answered in 3 days to minimise the incidence of becoming impatient to finish the questions. Section A could be answered on day one, section B on day two and section C on day three. If the questionnaire is answered according to its sections learners will get enough time to read questions properly, understand them and answer appropriately.

Counseling sessions within the programme would do adolescents well. If counseling was incorporated into the programme, adolescents who experience sexuality problems would be helped to deal with their problems or adjust to their everyday life if changes could not be made. Counselling would also help subjects to open up and get rid of shyness gradually. Generally learners would be psychologically prepared for the programme and the importance of sexuality education would be acknowledged.

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African learners have to be taught sexuality education in their mother tongue to make it easier for them to understand subject matter. Second language presentations create a problem, as learners have to master the second language before they could actually understand the content of the subject matter. Teaching in a second language is a factor that contributes to a high failure rate, particularly in township schools.

Peer education could also be incorporated into the PPASA programme so that young people could influence and inform other young people. Through peer education, the self-esteem and confidence of subjects could be developed. Subjects would also acquire the ability to deal and cope with problems that they experience. However, it is imperative that peer educators be well trained to acquire skills that are required to lead groups and assist peers. Peer educators should be matured, innovative, trustworthy and be people that other adolescents would naturally turn to for help.

All parents should be responsible for sexuality education. In “black” schools, most parents are not committed to the education of their children. Parents should participate in the education of their children so that expected outcomes could be delivered. In this way challenges that face transformation would be met. Parents should motivate educators, monitor the progress of their children, liaise with educators and principals, attend and participate in parents meetings and be involved in sexuality education. If a sexuality education programme is presented in the presence of parents, that could boost the morale of learners and educators. An atmosphere, which would convince learners that their teachers and parent share the same objectives with regard to sexuality education, could also be created.

### **6.5 Implications And Recommendations**

The findings of this study have important implications for future research as well as sexuality education in schools and communities. Even in the poor circumstances described the study clearly had value for subsets of the sample. Therefore the school has an important task of being the main agent to provide adolescents with sexuality education. As sexuality education is important to children, it is necessary to continue training teachers in that field as well as in life skills so that the information could be communicated to learners. Resource materials that make it easier to impart the information should also be made available. It is also proper to make follow up of the presentations with evaluation in a form of tests and examinations so as to measure the knowledge and skills of learners.

Parents, teachers and school counselors have a unique opportunity to help adolescents to adjust to their sexuality. Parents and the school should team up with the community and the church so that adolescents could be afforded an opportunity to accept themselves as they are and be taught responsible behavior. Sensitive issues should be discussed with parents before they are discussed with learners so that a suitable approach that would not offend anyone could be selected. It is important for parents to know what their children are taught at school. (Parillo, Felts & Mikow-Porto, 1997).

The school counselor should take the leading role in offering sexuality education. The counselor should act as a change agent despite the resistance he is bound to encounter. He or she should also be a mediator and an ombudsman. Parents, teachers, the church, the community and learners must build a new South African culture, which will bring new ways of living and thinking. Since sexuality education is an important part of culture its acceptance is an inevitable recommendation.

### **6.6 Future Research**

Future research should try to avoid some of the difficulties described above. Research should be well resourced both in regards to materials and time. It is crucial to investigate the impact of sex education programmes, to understand what makes them succeed and what makes them fail. Research should also be extended towards breaking the African family taboos around sex talk and how this can be done in the most optimal way.

### **6.7 Conclusion**

Devenish, Funnel & Greathead (1992) explain that adolescents need to adjust to the adult world. Other authors also point out issues, which affect adolescents. For instance: -

- (a) Craig (1992) says the sexual behavior of adolescents is affected by education, family relationships and psychological makeup.
- (b) Perlman (1997) emphasizes that adolescents are faced with many choices about sex and relationships.
- (c) Painter (1997) stresses that young people do not have control over their lives most of the time.
- (d) Lambke & Kavanaugh (1999) posit that nurses are frustrated because their potential is not being used to contribute to the reproductive health of adolescent females.
- (e) Gibbons (1998) point out that rural area teenagers are often neglected because they do not have access to health services and do not get sexuality education from their schools.

All these explanations indicate that there is a need to teach adolescents sexuality education and that should start from birth. Children should be prepared so that they should not become victims of sexual abuse, harassment and rape. They should also be made aware that sex is a topic of discussion and that it is not wrong, dirty or evil. When children are given sexuality education by reliable sources, they will reject wrong information from other sources and they will be in a position to solve problems they experience in sexual relationships when they are adults.

