The Integration of Cross-cutting Issues into Teaching

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Introduction

What are Cross-Cutting Issues?

Cross cutting issues are issues that touch a number of different aspects of the society, on general principles such as democracy, human rights, good governance, children's rights, gender equality, population and family life education, poverty alleviation, environment and development, to mention but a few.
Examples of Cross cutting issues
Tanzania has identified a number of important cross-cutting issues, which need to be addressed through education. Some of these include:

- HIV/AIDS
- Environmental degradation,
- Sustainable development
- Gender equality and equity issues
- Population and family life
- Poverty alleviation
- Children’s rights
- Drug abuse
The concept of Integration

Integration is (from the Latin integer, meaning whole or entire) generally means combining parts so that they work together or form a whole. In education, integration involves the linking of knowledge of different kind to make learning holistic and meaningful.

The aim of integration is to provide more effective and stimulating ways of learning and to present the curriculum content in an interactive and unified manner in nature rather than static and segmented. It also helps to deal with the overcrowded curriculum and fragmentation of knowledge.
How to integrate cross cutting issues into teaching

When integrating cross-cutting issues into teaching the teacher or facilitator should:

1. Examine the syllabus and identify topics or areas where the different cross-cutting issues can be integrated.

2. Find the content of the cross-cutting issue which is to be integrated into the content of the selected topic.

3. State the core messages which you want the learner to get by going through the topic.
4. Choose the teaching and learning method which will help the learners develop the intended knowledge, skills competencies and attitudes.

5. Plan his/her lesson while integrating the subject matter content with the content of the cross-cutting issue, without watering down the subject content.
Learning for action competence

The notion of action competence refers to the learners’ ability to act at personal and societal levels in identifying and addressing issues and problems (Jensen, 1995; Schnack, 1994). In other words, action competence refers to students’ ability to act with reference to societal concerns. It includes the ability to identify problems, make decisions about solutions and take action to solve that problem.
Competence based learning should therefore help learners develop the capacity of being able to act, now and in the future, and to assume responsibility for their actions. Such competency is referred to as *Applied Competence*, which is a combination of *Practical Competence*, *Foundational Competence* and *Reflexive Competence* (EECI, 2000). These can be referred to as the different levels of competence as shown below.
Reflexive Competence (Can act under different contexts)

Applied Competence (Can take Action)

Practical Competence (Can do)

Foundational Competence (Can explain Why)
Teaching and Learning methods

To address crosscutting issues and also to make learning meaningful, hence to enable learners develop deep understanding of what they learn, teachers need to use participatory and cooperative teaching methods.

Participatory and cooperative teaching methods help learners develop critical thinking, reflect on their own situations and get insights of their own situations.

But Teachers face some challenges in using participatory and cooperative methods
Teacher Challenges in Using participatory and Cooperative Teaching methods

Some of the challenges facing teachers in using participatory teaching methods are:

- Curriculum related challenges
- Large Classes
- Lack of teaching and learning materials
- Lack of adequate knowledgebase in the cross cutting issues
Enhancing the integration of cross cutting issues into Teaching

- Developing a broad knowledgebase about the different cross cutting issues which they have to integrate into their teaching.
- The curriculum and syllabus should indicate clearly what is to be integrated.
- Teacher educators to orient teachers on how to teach while integrating cross cutting issues.
- Encourage the use of participatory and cooperative teaching methods.
- Support teachers with modules/guidelines handbooks.
- Cross cutting issues should be examined.
Conclusion

Integrating cross-cutting issues into teaching makes the education we offer meaningful and relevant to the individual and the society at large. The integrative approach to teaching and learning is motivating, meaningful and above all empowering because it helps individuals develop action competence. Experience has shown that teachers as implementers face challenges in integrating cross-cutting issues into their teaching. For teachers to be able to integrate cross cutting issues into their teaching, they need to be empowered both academically and professionally through pre-service and in-service courses.
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