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The Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire take-up

The Schools Health Education Unit at Exeter University receives a large number of requests for details of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire service to secondary schools. We are, naturally, very interested in the reasons for its uptake, and the uses made of the resulting data; but we are also interested in the reasons for schools deciding *not* to use it.

As the research assistant responsible for this service, I was able to ascertain from our records the proportion of schools which had received the master copy of the questionnaire but had not used it. I secretly cherished the hope that by isolating this group of eighty or so health education co-ordinators (teachers and health education officers), I might gain insight into the problems teachers face in introducing the questionnaire into their school, or at least highlight areas of concern about the use of the

questionnaire and thereby assist our team in the process of compiling the new Version 10.

Being of a pessimistic nature, I assumed that there must be something inherent in the questionnaire which rendered it unsuitable; so I constructed a pro-forma with a series of boxes to tick if, having studied the document, it did not then meet the requirements of the school. The enquiry form is shown opposite.

I was delighted to discover that of the 40 (50%) responses no one felt (b) unsupported by colleagues in seeing the value of the questionnaire or (e) unable to see how the results of the survey could be utilized successfully in a health education course. Only five felt the language (c) or topics (d) inappropriate for their pupils – and these were responses from primary, middle or special schools for whom the

questionnaire is not intended. Seven respondents had already used the questionnaire or were about to do so, and five, unfortunately, had not had time to study the document. All the other respondents (23) ticked the “any other reasons” box, showing the need for such a category of response in a questionnaire of this type.

“Other reasons”

However, I have been able to sub-divide these responses into several groups, the two biggest of which perhaps reflect practical problems familiar to workers in health education or, indeed, to professionals in any emerging subject area where individual enthusiasm and charisma are important ingredients. In six cases the teacher responsible for requesting the questionnaire had left the department before using it in school, and in five cases, despite the enthusiasm of an individual, no health education programme had been implemented.

All of the Health Education Officers who had sent for the master copy had done so either to introduce its use to teachers or as a background resource for teachers to study. One small school felt inhibited by financial considerations; the questionnaires cost only £5 per year

group to process, regardless of the number of pupils, but paper, printing and postage for the completed questionnaires are additional costs which could bring the total cost to as much as £20. In another school the document had been passed to the Head of Department for approval.

My favourite response came from a teacher who claimed his delay in using the questionnaire was simply: *Procrastination! awaiting the appropriate time to present document to colleagues!* A frustrated reply came from a school where a colleague had inadvertently upset the health education co-ordinator by administering the questionnaire to the wrong age group!

If you have already requested Version 8 of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire and have not yet used it, do please await the imminent appearance of Version 10, which should be “hot off the press” in the very near future. Among the changes are check-lists for the diet and sports questions to simplify the completion of these important areas, some new road safety questions, a self-esteem dimension for each pupil, inclusion of video and computer questions; generally a much-improved format and presentation to meet the requirements of the secondary school pupil in 1984!