United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

World Health Organization

Substance use among children and young people: Towards a comprehensive education sector response

FRESH School Health Webinar

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Current status & challenges (1/2)

- Availability of substantial scientific evidence on education policies and school-based programmes that are found to be effective to prevent substance use and its negative consequences (UNODC International Standards)
- However, the sustained and scaled-up implementation of evidence-based programmes and policies still remains low and unequally spread globally
- In many settings policies and school-based prevention programmes exist but they are not evidence-based and often ineffective

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Current status & challenges (2/2)

- Often lack of coordination between stakeholders involved in the national response to substance use, particularly in relation to education
- In a number of countries the education sector (Ministry of education and other education authorities) is not meaningfully involved in the national response to substance use among children and young people for various reasons (e.g. lack of expertise, resources, etc.)
- Therefore urgent need to scale up evidenced-based education policies and school-based programmes, by improving coordination at national level and building the capacity of all stakeholders, including Ministries of education and other education authorities

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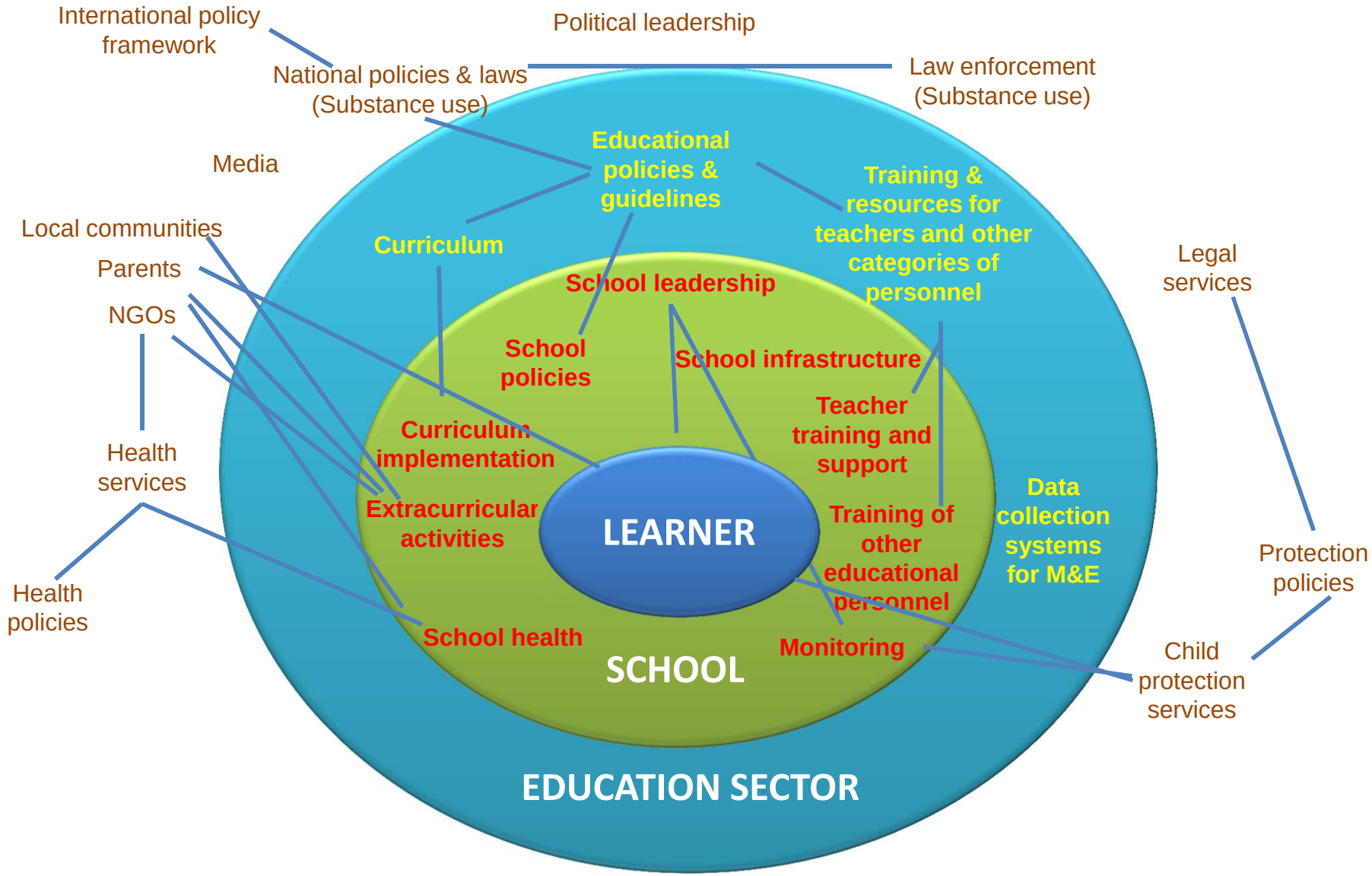
Why these challenges? (1/2)



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Why these challenges (1/2)

- Ministers of education, school principals, teachers are under the scrutiny/pressure of very diverse constituencies who belong to different sectors from society and accountable to them. Therefore **the education sector often tends to be relatively slow in implementing change**

- Whatever the level of centralization, **implementation of policies/guidelines is ultimately up to education personnel**: personal values and readiness/resistance to change + capacities, hence the importance of training targeting knowledge, skills, values, behaviours and attitudes

- **In some countries most educational institutions** often have de facto a **large autonomy in implementing policies and guidelines**

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Why these challenges? (2/2)

- All these elements **do not always facilitate the adoption of "evidence-based" approaches including contents and methods**. This applies to substance use prevention education

- **Cycles in the education sector tend to be relatively slow** (much slower than in the health sector): Policies related to contents → Curricula and lessons plans → Teaching materials → Training of trainers → In-service and pre-service training → Delivery in schools

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Towards a comprehensive education sector responses - the conceptual framework

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The UNESCO-UNODC-WHO joint initiative to support education sector responses – PROCESS

An inclusive consultative process, involving:

- Technical background paper synthesizing available evidence and collection of additional data
- International expert meeting
- Publication and dissemination of joint UNESCO-UNDOC-WHO publication on best policy and practice

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The UNESCO-UNODC-WHO joint initiative to support education sector responses -Output

A joint UNESCO-UNODC-WHO publication (forthcoming December 2016) that

- summarizes data available on substance use among children and young people
- provides rationale for the role of the education sector and school health services in addressing substance use among youth
- highlights approaches that have and have not been effective
- contains practical guidance for developing and implementing evidence-based education sector responses including linkages with the health sector through school health services

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