

## **An Evaluation of Sex Education in School Curriculum on Moral Grounds**

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### **Introduction**

Education is an integral aspect of human life. It is vital that school curriculums include the subject of sex education. On moral grounds, sex education in school curriculum is plausible as it helps the school children to understand all the aspects of human sexuality and their implications. In itself sex education is broad and covers a whole range of topics which have to do with sexuality. Topics such as teenage pregnancy, abortion, masturbation, sexual intercourse, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexually transmitted infections and diseases (STI/D) marriage, relationships, menstruation, contraceptives and many others, which are subjects to sex education, clearly indicates the moral importance of sex education in school curriculum. However, on the other hand, including sex education in school curriculum means exciting in the students the desire to experiment on sexual intercourse among other things. Having said this, the article shall in detail, evaluate on moral grounds sex education in school curriculum.

### **What is morality**

In order to understand better the moral grounds for evaluating sex education in school curriculum, it is of a paramount idea to start by a simple definition of morality. According to Lohkamp:

What is “moral” has to do with goodness or badness that I am now aware of and freely decide upon. Morality, therefore, is a condition or quality of my actions: there are good or bad because of what they are as my choices.... Morality is a way I respond to God and to other people, in view of all I know about God’s love.<sup>1</sup>

Following this line of thought, sex education in school curriculum shall be evaluated on the grounds of how it can be good or bad to the students in so far as they relate to God and to one another.

### **Sex education**

After defining morality, it is important to get to know what is sex education. What is it all about? What does it involve? In general terms, sex education in school curriculum is all about teaching the school children about all that has to do with sex bearing in mind their level of understanding and the needs proper to their age. According to WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA:

Sexuality education means learning about the cognitive, emotional, social, interactive and physical aspects of sexuality. Sexuality education starts early in childhood and progresses through adolescence and adulthood. For children and young people, it aims at supporting and protecting sexual development. It gradually equips and empowers children and young people with information, skills and positive values to understand and enjoy their sexuality, have safe and fulfilling relationships and take responsibility for their own and other people's sexual health and well-being.<sup>2</sup>

In line with this definition, one can clearly grasp the details involved in sex education in school curriculum. On moral grounds it is crucial that, children be taught about sex in schools since throughout earthly life, a human being lives his or her sexuality.

### **Moral evaluation of sex education in school curriculum: the positive side**

In considering the moral grounds for evaluation of sex education in school curriculum there are positives elements that can be drawn. These positive elements favour, and are inclined towards good morals. According to UK Essays, "Most definitely, sex education should be implemented in schools because sex education can reduce teen pregnancy, it's better for the teenagers to get information about sex and sexual protection methods from right sources (schools) rather than from the media and sex education in schools can also protect children and teenagers". Sex education at this point takes note of the fact that students are to be helped to clearly understand sex and sexuality with all the implications that comes with it. Emphasis is placed on why different sex related actions can be evaluated as morally wrong so as to teach the right things to the students from the

word go.

### **Teenage and unwanted pregnancies**

The issues of teenage and unwanted pregnancies are found everywhere in the world. In most cases the lack of sufficient knowledge and understanding of sexual implications is always central to these pregnancies. According to Allen, “sexual practice without sexual knowledge is more likely to lead to negative consequences such as ‘unplanned pregnancy’ or the contraction of a sexually transmissible infection”.<sup>4</sup> In the same light, Beaumont has it that:

Experts have argued in numerous studies and reports that a flawed or insufficient sexuality education leads to an increase of teenage pregnancy rate and a higher amount of people suffering from AIDS and STIs. Sexuality education of young people must therefore be regarded as an appropriate means to prevent these negative effects.<sup>5</sup>

In this line of thought, one would appreciate sex education in school curriculum as a way of curbing sexual immorality resulting in teen and unintended pregnancies. In moral terms, premarital sex is regarded as a bad thing to do and out of God’s plan. Zimmerman notes that, “Using models and metaphors from the animal world, sex education sought to communicate “the facts of life” while simultaneously discouraging human sexual activity outside of marriage”.<sup>6</sup> Having sex education in school curriculum can raise a moral awareness among children on the need for self-control and moral uprightness and therefore, has a higher chance of decreasing the problems associated with these kinds of pregnancies noted here.

### **Sexual abuse and exploitation.**

At any stage of life, it is important to bring to the children’s understanding according to their age, the realities of sexual exploitation and abuse. UK Essays has it that, “Sex education has only recently become important in these past few years but child sexual abuse has existed throughout human history. Thus, implementing sex education into schools can decrease the rate of child sexual abuses and thus providing a way out for children and teenagers”.<sup>7</sup> From a moral perspective sexual exploitation

and abuse go against the moral norms and have to be always prevented. Incorporating sex education helps children to know and understand the evils involved especially when such exploitations and abuses happen, so that they know how to report about such things. According to UNESCO, “Few young people receive adequate preparation for their sexual lives. This leaves them potentially vulnerable to coercion, abuse and exploitation...”<sup>8</sup> From this perspective, in morally evaluating sex education in school curriculum, one can see clearly that, it is very crucial and critical as far as addressing the issues of sexual exploitation and abuse are concerned.

### **Pornography and masturbation.**

In the realm of morality, pornography and masturbation are in themselves intrinsically evil. According to Zimmerman, “In particular, young people are flooded with a constant deluge of sexual imagery and messages from fashion, film, and other forms of popular entertainment”.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore important for schools to include in their curricula the teaching of sex education. The end to which sex is designed by God is mainly procreation in marriage, outside this sphere all sexual activities are to be understood as evil. The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith notes that:

... both the Magisterium of the Church - in the course of a constant tradition - and the moral sense of the faithful have declared without hesitation that masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act. The main reason is that, whatever the motive for acting this way, the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty.<sup>10</sup>

In light of this teaching therefore, sex education in school curriculum has the moral grounds of helping the students to grasp the insinuations of things such as masturbation and pornography before they venture into them and be addictive, as in most cases it tends to become.

### **Prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases**

The Church, following the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition strongly advocates for no sexual intercourse outside marriage. According to the

Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “the use of the sexual function has its true meaning and moral rectitude only in true marriage”.<sup>11</sup> Things such as prostitution are therefore condemned, since, they are not in line with moral principles advocated for by the Church and even society at large. Sex education in school curriculum should help the children to understand the immorality involved in prostitution. More often than not, the immorality of prostitution is always accompanied by sexually transmitted diseases. It is therefore plausible moral grounds, for schools to include in their curriculums the subject of sex education for as to caution students about the dangers of engaging in things such as prostitution.

### **The negative side**

Sex education in school syllabus cannot be completely evaluated on ethical grounds without looking into the negative side of it. Its history suggests that when it was first introduced in various countries and places, it was met with resistance from different angles. Zimmerman has it that, “Too much sexual information harmed innocent children, critics said, all in the guise of protecting them. “We cannot bear those haughty wise children who look upon their pregnant mother with a knowing glance,” one spokesman wrote”.<sup>12</sup> From this understanding, it is clear that if the content taught in sex instructions is not extremely selected to fit the age group to which it will be transmitted, it might have wrong moral consequences

### **Learning and doing**

The problem that often comes with the sex education in school curriculum is that of students who want to experiment on what they would have acquired at school. In other words, sex education then promotes sexual immorality among students. A good example is teaching about the use of artificial birth control methods or contraceptives. Even more, teaching the students about the use of women infertile periods as well as pre-ejaculation removal of penis during sexual act, may all have consequences on sex experimentation which is entirely judged to be morally wrong. Zimmerman noted that, “...sex education was equally fraudulent ...especially in its claim that knowledge would deter immoral practices;

instead, it would more likely promote them. Sex education “is one of the most dangerous causes of that evil which it hopes to destroy”<sup>13</sup>. From this point of view, using moral grounds for evaluation, one can clearly see the negative influences of sex education in school curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

From the above evaluation, it can be deduced that, sex education in school curriculum can be evaluated on moral grounds as to its ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’. Sex education in school curriculum has positive effects as far as ethical grounds are concerned. Given that it is taught to the right group at the right time it can reduce all problems that have to do with immoral issues. Nevertheless, critics to this sex education have often accused it of arousing the desire to experiment sexually among students and thus promoting sexual immorality which it seeks to end.

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<sup>1</sup> Lohkamp, Nicholas. *What’s Happening to Morality?* (Ohio: Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA. *Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe: A Framework for Policy Makers, Educational and Health Authorities and Specialists*. Bologna: Federal Centre for Health Education, BZgA, 2020. pdf. 10 02 2021. <[https://www.bzga-whocc.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/WHO\\_BZgA\\_Standards\\_English.pdf](https://www.bzga-whocc.de/fileadmin/user_upload/WHO_BZgA_Standards_English.pdf)>. Accessed: 8 February 2021.

<sup>3</sup> “Sex Education in Schools Argumentative Essay”. UK Essays. ukessays.com, November 2018. Web. 14 February 2021. <<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/young-people/should-sex-education-be-implemented-in-schools-young-people-essay.php?vref=1>>. Accessed: 10 February 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, Louisa. *Sexual Subjects: Young People, Sexuality and Education*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.) 57.

<sup>5</sup> Beaumont, Karolina. *Policies for Sexuality Education in Europe*. Ed. Marcia Maguire. Brussels: European Union, 2013. 10 02 2021. <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/462515/IPOL-FEMM\\_NT\(2013\)462515\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/462515/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2013)462515_EN.pdf)>. Accessed: 7 February 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Beaumont 25.

<sup>7</sup> UK Essays

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO. *International Guidelines on Sexuality Education: An Evidence Informed Approach to Effective Sex, Relationships and HIV/STI Education*. Paris: UNESCO, 2009. Document. 05 02 2021. <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/8556521DD-9D4A9E64925762000240120-UNESCO-Aug2009.pdf>>. 2. Accessed: 8 February 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Zimmerman, Jonathan. *Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015.) 38.

<sup>10</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Declaration on Procured Abortion. Rome: Vatican Press, 1974. html. 10 02 2021. <[http://m.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19751229\\_persona-humana\\_en.html](http://m.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html)>. ix. Accessed: 10 February 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. v.

<sup>12</sup> Zimmerman 45.

<sup>13</sup> Zimmerman 47.