

**Committee: Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee**

**Issue: upholding sexual education in schools**

**Student Officer: Madelief van der Koogh**

**Position: Co-Chair**

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### **PERSONAL INTRODUCTION**

My name is Madelief van der Koogh and I'm honored to be serving as your Co-chair in the Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of the 3rd ACGMUN conference. I'm 17 years old and I'm a senior IB student at the Cambreur College in the Netherlands. This year's topic will focus on the upholding of sexual education in schools. During the conference in April, you will be able to showcase your knowledge regarding this topic. I created this study guide for you as a start of your research process. It contains the most essential basic information you need to know. Nevertheless, it is of great importance that you conduct your own research regarding your country and its relation with the topic. I sincerely hope to see well-prepared and enthusiastic delegates during the conference, so that there will be lively debates. I wish you all the best of luck!

If there are still any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [madeliefvanderkoogh@outlook.com](mailto:madeliefvanderkoogh@outlook.com)

Kindest regards,

Madelief van der Koogh

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The issue about whether the school curriculum should include sexual education is an ongoing discussion in 2019. It can be considered an important issue, since having a lack of sexual knowledge can have real consequence. 34% of the youth does not have this proper knowledge that is needed to prevent STDs and unintended pregnancies. According to different researchers, sexual education in school will let students understand certain risks they face and the rights they have. Learning how to be more responsible is valuable for many aspects in their further life. The opinions are widespread, as some believe that sexual education is a parental right that should not be taken away. Others are afraid that including it in the school curriculum will encourage teenagers to become earlier sexually active.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Term 1

Sexual education: “Sex education is a broad term used to describe education about human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual intercourse, and other aspects of human sexual behavior.”<sup>1</sup> This sex education can either take place at home in family settings, at school or online.

Abortion: Pregnancy that is deliberately interrupted. Abortion is mostly committed when the pregnancy is unwanted. It is the opposite of a miscarriage, which connotes a natural loss of the fetus<sup>2</sup>.

STDs : Abbreviation for ‘Sexually Transmitted Disease’. These are infections that are transmitted during vaginal, anal and oral sex. Nowadays more and more STDs are easy to treat, however they could be dangerous. Examples of STDs are Hepatitis B, HIV and AIDS, Herpes, Genital Warts, Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. STDs can be prevented by using a condom. It is important to be open with our partner and to get tested regularly.

LGBTQ+ Community: LGBTQ+ is the term for people that consider themselves as ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or gender nonconforming people’<sup>3</sup>.

Lesbian= female homosexual

Gay = male homosexual, however lesbians may also be referred to as gay

Bisexual = people who have a sexual attraction to both men and women

Transgender = umbrella term for those people who do not identify themselves with the gender they are born with.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/sex\\_education.htm](https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/sex_education.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/abortion>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/parents/identity>

Queer = umbrella term for both sexual as gender minorities of which people do often not know the existence.

Reproductive rights: The rights of individuals to decide about their reproductive health. It includes the right to terminate a pregnancy, to use contraceptives, to gain access to reproductive health services, but also the right to teach about sex education in public schools. Nowadays, the subject is a politically and emotionally charged issue, partly because of recent laws and new technologies.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In 2009 the UNESCO introduced the 'International technical guidance on sexuality education': It was an evidence-informed approach for teachers, schools and health educators. It was supported by UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Health Organization<sup>4</sup>. In the beginning of 2018, the United Nations came out with an updated version of the guidance to encourage, especially in the developing countries, to invest more in Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for young people. They are voluntary guidelines that promote a positive and broad understanding in a more progressive approach than before. CSE focusses on rights, gender and safe sex in order to avoid early/unintended pregnancy. The curriculum is based on different aspects of sexuality, such as the cognitive, social, emotional and physical. The aim of CSE is to empower young people to realize their own health and dignity by teaching them the right knowledge, attitudes and values. CSE can have great benefits to the sustainable development agenda, as reducing unwanted pregnancies lead to better health outcomes. In addition, it keeps girls in schools. CSE also reduces the rates of STDs and according to a research of the Population Council, a well-designed educating program will promote equality of gender as it will reduce gender-based violence. The 2018 version is covering the gender and LGBTQ+ issues in more detail than the version in 2009 did.

In general, research of UNAIDS shows that in some countries only one in three young girls had the correct knowledge on how to prevent the transmission of HIV. Globally this percentage is only 34%. For this reason, it is essential to understand the importance of the issue, as there is a huge increase in teenage pregnancies, child marriages and increasing numbers of people with STDs. On top of that, the issue of reproductive rights and health rights, of which a lot of people are not aware<sup>3</sup>, is worrying.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183281>

## Types of sexual education

Sexual education is often divided into two main programs. We distinguish Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Abstinence-Only-until-Marriage Program<sup>5</sup>. CSE starts already in kindergarten and continues through high school, it discusses age-appropriate sexuality topics. CSE has a broad curriculum, covering mostly contraceptives, safe sex, STDs, masturbation, body image. It also covers topics such as relationships, personal expression and culture to teach that sexuality belongs to a healthy living. In addition, it includes medical information on, for example, infections such as HIV. It creates a good atmosphere around sex so that there is no embarrassment when talking about sex issues.

The Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage program on the other hand emphasizes on abstinence from all sexual behaviors. Therefore, it does not cover information about STDs, contraceptives etc. Instead, it teaches the harmful consequences on psychological, social and physical area when there is sexual expression outside of marriage. The approach of this program is totally different from CSE as it does not cover abortion, masturbation or other controversial topics. It may refer for example to the use of condoms. However, it would emphasize that using them will have a failure rate.

Some people might argue that CSE will encourage youngsters to be sexual active from a young age, and that it therefore may have harmful consequences. Others believe that sex is too personal an issue to be taught in schools and that information around it should be provided only by parents. According to different studies, though, CSE will increase the responsible behaviors towards sex, but also towards sexuality.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### Countries

#### (In general)

European countries have, according to data from the World Bank, the lowest rate of teen pregnancies. Countries such as Germany, Italy and Switzerland had fewer than fourteen births per thousand babies born. Other countries that are following the generally progressive approach and doing well are France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden and Denmark<sup>6</sup>. Instead of putting emphasis on the danger of sex, those countries teach sex as a healthy, normal and positive act.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.verywellfamily.com/sex-education-in-schools-2611290>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.seeker.com/which-countries-have-the-best-sex-education-1792604688.html>

USA: sex education taught at school is widely supported by the majority of the Americans<sup>7</sup>. Both CSE and Abstinence-Only-until-Marriage as sexual education programs are used in the USA. The percentage of teen pregnancies was clearly lower than last year. However, it is not clear whether that is because of the CSE or due to some other method.

Guatemala: the situation of sexual education in Guatemala is far from optimal. There is a lack of education about reproductive and sexual health and the access to contraceptives is inadequate. In this country, the abuse towards teenage girls is increasing. This resulted in 1 out of 5 teenage mothers, who are in the age category between 10 and 19 years old.

### **Organizations**

UNESCO, in collaboration with: UNAIDS, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>8</sup>, produced and published the fully updated version of the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. It advocates and promotes the quality of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and the corresponding health and well-being as well as the importance of gender equality. It was designed to provide accurate and age-appropriate knowledge.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/for-educators/whats-state-sex-education-us>

<sup>8</sup> <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/un-publication-urges-comprehensive-approach-sexuality-education>

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1910	UK's solution is sex education in order to beat venereal diseases.
1912	Teacher training programs in sexuality education were called by the National Education Association (NEA).
1914	The American Hygiene Association was founded and was part of the Progressive-era social purity movement. The aim was to teach soldiers throughout war about sexual hygiene.
1920	Sexual education started to get integrated into school curriculum during the 1920s.
1940	Between 1940-1950, courses on sexuality started to appear on college campuses.
1944	Education Act stated the need for sexual education in schools. However, there was very little government support as individual schools were allowed to decide how to approach the subject. It was a situation that was typical of laissez-faire.
1953	The family life education was nationwide launched by the American School Health Association.
1983	In the context of more comprehensive family life education/human growth/devilment courses, sexual education was being taught. It emphasized next to reproduction, also the importance of responsibility and self-esteem.
1970	Post-sexual revolution, sexual education started to change. For example, biology books became more detailed on the topic and birth control began to be included in sexual education.
1986	U.S Surgeon General C. Everett Koop called in a report for comprehensive AIDS and sexual education in public schools. Next to that, he stated that information about homosexuals should be included.
1989	SIECUS published 'Sex Education 2000: A Call to Action'. The aim was to ensure that by the year 2000 all children would receive comprehensive sexual education.
2009	UNESCO introduced the 'International technical guidance on sexuality education'. It was an evidence-informed approach for teachers, schools and health educators. It was supported by UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Health Organization
2011	Modern sex education hits TV. 'The Joy Of Teen Sex' was a programme that reached a real large audience.
2018	UN came with a progressive up-to-date version of the guidance for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

A previous attempt is the 'International technical guidance on sexuality education' in 2009 and the updated version of 2018 that was supported by UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Health Organization .

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Integrated sexual education in schools has many advantages. CSE is the most accurate and complete method as it does not only teach about safe sex, but it is also deals with multiple other aspects of sexuality. It clarifies the dangers, but emphasizes on the positive aspect of the issue. It is significant to shift gender norms, which reduce gender-based violence. In addition, it reduces the rate of unwanted pregnancies and STDs, and therefore better health outcomes. A possible solution would be a well-designed sexual education program that will be valid in all parts of the world. Some countries tend to see sexual education as a parental right, however with the current state of affairs some real measures should be taken, thus, placing this responsibility fully on the parents cannot work. So, this program should be created having the cooperation of parents from all over the world.

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