

# Sex Education in School Curriculum

Amit Kumar Ghosh

(Post Graduate Student of Human Rights Course, Ballygunge Science College, University of Calcutta)

---

## **Abstract**

*This paper aims to focus on the need of young people to obtain proper information on sex education. This paper also focuses on the responsibility of states and schools for providing the proper sex education to the children. It also aims to focus how sex education is related to human rights in a bigger context and how the rights of children and youngsters are being violated for not getting their deserving need of proper sex education which should have been incorporated in their school curriculum by now.*

**Key words:** Sex education, human rights, school curriculum

---

Date of Submission: 07-01-2024

Date of Acceptance: 17-01-2024

---

## **I. Introduction**

Sex education is high-quality teaching and learning which covers broad areas related to sex and sexuality. It explores values and beliefs about these issues and helps people develop the skills they need to navigate relationships with themselves, their partners and communities, and manage their sexual health. Sex education can take place at school, at home, in community spaces or online. Parents also play a important role in providing sex education through talking them about sexuality and reproduction.

The purpose of sex education in public schools is to provide accessible, accurate, comprehensive and positive information to children and young people. The aim is to teach young people about healthy sexual relations and to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies.

## **II. Role of Sex Education in Schools**

1. Without stigmatising or condemning them, sex education provides young people with age-appropriate, medically correct information and answers to their inquiries about relationships and sex. It has been demonstrated to have a good effect on the lives of young people. However, far too many young people lack access to sex education, or the programmes that are offered in their schools are demeaning or erroneous.
2. Furthermore, it goes beyond preventing STIs and unwanted pregnancies. Young people are taught the virtue of treating everyone with respect and dignity, as well as the necessity of racial justice, fairness, and compassion for others, via sex education.
3. Sex education in primary school covers the basics of things like consent and setting boundaries with friends, understanding our bodies and the beautiful diversity of creating and raising a human family.
4. Middle school sex education covers pertinent topics including puberty, positive peer interactions, bullying prevention, and media literacy to help children form healthy body images.
5. High school sex education encompasses a wide range of topics, including safer sexual practices and birth control, sexual decision-making, effective communication, how society and culture influence our perceptions of sex, gender, and race, and how we may fight to create more equitable societies.
6. Studies indicate that inclusive and culturally sensitive sex education aids in the development of the social and emotional competencies that young people require to grow up to be kind and compassionate adults. Early and widespread implementation of this kind of sex education helps to avoid child sex abuse, foster healthy relationships, recognise sexual variety, reduce dating and intimate partner violence, enhance social and emotional learning, and raise media literacy.

## **Sex Education and Human Rights**

According to international human rights standards, governments must ensure that teenagers have access to comprehensive, impartial, scientifically accurate, and discrimination-free sexuality education in primary and secondary schools in order to protect their rights to health, life, education, and non discrimination. According to international human rights treaties, governments are obliged to protect and guarantee the rights of their populations, especially young people, to health, life, non-discrimination, education and information. These rights cannot be fully realized and enjoyed if young people lack sex education. A comprehensive understanding of sexual

and reproductive health is important so that a person can protect their health and make informed decisions about sexuality and reproduction. It follows that such knowledge is essential to reduce teenage pregnancies, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, and to prevent the spread and spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS among young people. Governments cannot effectively guarantee these rights or address these important public health issues unless they ensure that individuals have access to comprehensive, evidence-based, non-discriminatory information about sexual and reproductive health. Promoting human rights and improving global public health need accurate and impartial sexuality education in schools. However, in many nations, sexuality education is either deficient or non-existent. School sexuality education programmes are being rejected more and more in favour of ideologically motivated initiatives that frequently present biased and medically incorrect material regarding HIV/AIDS, abortion, contraception, and sexual orientation. These programmes frequently focus on gender stereotypes about sex, sexuality, and gender identity, discourage the use of condoms, and push messages that are only about abstinence.

The international human rights treaties that protect people's fundamental rights to life, health, non-discrimination, education, and information also impose legal duties on nations to provide sexuality education in elementary and secondary schools.

In fact, these rights are interpreted by U.N. treaty-monitoring bodies that oversee state implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to require sexuality education in schools. These treaty-monitoring organisations periodically assess each state party's compliance—or lack thereof—with a certain treaty and provide suggestions. For example, the Human Rights Committee (which oversees the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)) has called for the removal of barriers that prevent young people from accessing information about safe sexual practices such as condom use. Commissions also mentioned sexuality education as a way to ensure the right to health because it helps reduce maternal mortality, abortion, adolescent and HIV/AIDS. In addition, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (which monitors the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)) recognizes that the right to education requires the availability of information necessary to develop healthy lifestyles.

The commissions specifically recommend making sexual and reproductive health education a mandatory and strong part of school education for all students. For example, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women calls on States Parties to make sex education compulsory and to offer it "systematically" in schools, including vocational schools. The Committee on the Rights of the Child also recommends that states parties include sexuality education in the formal curriculum of primary and secondary schools and has expressed concern about programs that allow parents to prefer for their children.

Recommendations and statements of international organizations and global international consensus documents also support the obligation to provide sex education in schools and sometimes better guide the content of the obligation. For example:

- The Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) recognizes that sexual and reproductive health education must begin in primary school and continue at all levels of formal, informal and non-formal education to be beneficial.
- The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) concluded that the most effective approaches to sexuality education begin with educating young people before they engage in sexual activity.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is important to start sex education early, because girls in the first grades of high school, especially in developing countries, are at the greatest risk of suffering the consequences of sexual activity.
- Guidelines from the WHO Regional Office for Europe call on Member States to ensure that sexuality and reproductive education is included in all secondary school curricula and that it is comprehensive.
- UNESCO EDUCAIDS, a framework for a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS in the education sector, recommends, among other things, that educational programs on HIV/AIDS in schools "start early, before sexual activity begins". "develop knowledge and skills to adopt protective behaviours and reduce vulnerability" and "address stigma and discrimination, gender inequality and other structural factors of the epidemic".

### **India on Sexuality Education**

India's historical heritage of liberated sexual perspectives is evident in literature and temple sculptures. Despite efforts to bring sex education back, it remains a taboo and unresolved interpsychic conflict among different Indian society strata. A global report by UNESCO shows that India lags behind underdeveloped countries like Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Sudan in the implementation of sex education. India's approach is primarily secondary education, where sexuality education is addressed only at the secondary level and there is no unified policy for comprehensive implementation.

In 2020, the Indian government, through the Ministries of Human Resource Development, Health, and Family Welfare, created an adolescent education programme aimed at educating children and teenagers about sexuality. The project encountered opposition from many societal groups, despite the fact that the guideline does not contain any reference to "sex or sexuality." Similarly, in response to criticism from various Indian social classes, NCERT was forced to delete a teacher training handbook on transgender education.

#### **What have to be done? : A Conclusion**

Although governments have more opportunities to implement reforms due to the decentralization of educational systems, topics such as sex education have not been included in the curricula. As a result, the Government of India must be able to ensure that sexuality education is implemented in all states and federations. Sexuality education should be part of an inclusive curriculum, which in turn increases the likelihood of its implementation.

There is a critical need for a large-scale public awareness campaign to dispel myths about the unwanted effects of sex education on children's growth and development. Mass media should be used frequently to spread such awareness.

The cultural inclusion of UNESCO's 2018 guidelines should be considered for the implementation of effective comprehensive sexuality education.

The curriculum should enhance children's decision-making and communication skills, particularly in the context of gender belief and practice.

#### **References**

- [1]. Desiderio, G. (2024, January 3). Sex Education Is Essential (Sex Ed For All Talking Points). Healthy Teen Network. <https://www.healthyteennetwork.org/news/sex-education-is-essential/>
- [2]. Pandey, M. K., & Rao, T. S. (2023). Sexuality Education In India Yet Remains A Taboo—An Attempt To Dust-Off. *Journal Of Psychosexual Health*, 5(1), 11–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/26318318231155993>
- [3]. Comprehensive Sexuality Education. (N.D.). <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/comprehensive-sexuality-education>