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SEX EDUCATION IN UKRAINE AND IN THE WORLD

Abstract. *The article considers major aspects of sex education provided at different educational levels and for various age youth groups. It analyses quality and efficiency of the available programs and defines approaches for their improvement and ways of adaptation in compliance with the modern society requirements. Besides, both positive and negative experience concerning youth safety, sex awareness and expediency were analyzed. The research is conducted on the basis of youth interviewing and developed countries experience investigation.*

Keywords: *awareness; diseases; sexually transmitted; expediency; sex education quality; trust; teenagers.*

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СЕКСУАЛЬНА ОСВІТА В УКРАЇНІ ТА СВІТІ

Анотація. *В статті розглянуто ключові аспекти надання сексуального виховання молоді на різних рівнях освітнього процесу, проаналізована якість та дієвість існуючих освітніх програм та шляхи їх оновлення, способи вікової адаптації та вдосконалення згідно потреб сучасного суспільства. До того ж проаналізовано як дієвий, так і недієвий досвід інформування молоді щодо питань безпеки і доцільності в питаннях сексу. Дослідження проведено на основі опитування та вивчення досвіду розвинутих країн світу.*

Ключові слова: *інформованість; хвороби; передаватись статевим шляхом; доцільність освіти; якість сексуальної освіти; довіра; підлітки.*

Introduction. When it comes to the topic of sex awareness, many parents and adults in general avoid it. They make judgements from the viewpoint of their own experience and mistakenly think that during such conversations and at such classes, children will be at once taught how to have sex or use contraceptives. However, this concept should primarily be understood as sexual safety, which both children and adolescents should be informed about. At school in biology classes, teenagers are told where babies come from, how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases and how to avoid pregnancy. But all of this is just a tiny drop in the sea of sex education. So, teenagers make up for their ignorance with materials from the Internet, porn films, peers and elder friends' gossip. Due to the fact that in most cases, all the information received that way is far from the truth, but subjective, stereotypical and is provided by unqualified people, it creates many problems in the future. The propaganda of primitive sex leads to negative consequences. Young boys and girls begin their sexual lives out of curiosity, not realizing the results it can have. Nothing else but love is the cornerstone of sex, for it is a part of a full-fledged relationship, an extension of intimacy that is shaped by love, honesty, openness, trust and compassion. If it begins under the slogan "sex for sex's sake," it then results in emotional devastation, leaving a bunch of complexes. But how can inexperienced boys and girls know that?

Problem statement. Since children become aware of their gender identity, they should be told about sex, at rudimentary level, proponents say. Contrary to entrenched stereotypes that early interest in "forbidden topics" leads to debauchery, world studies show the opposite – in countries where sex education is provided from an early age, there observed low rates of teenage pregnancy, abortion, infection with HIV or STDs. And vice versa...

Sweden can be considered a pioneer in sexual education. They were the first to talk about it with secondary school students in 1921, and since 1942 – with the younger ones. Analyzing the example of England and the Netherlands, we see that children should be told about sex from the age of four. Usually at this age babies ask their first questions about how new people are born, and they begin noticing the differences between boys and girls. Experts advise not to resort to euphemisms and talk about "it" frankly, but using corresponding the age language. As experience shows, the child does not need absolutely all the details, he/she is usually satisfied with a few simple facts. Depending on the age, children should be informed on the specific aspects of the topic of sex and sexuality. From an early age you need to develop the child's right perception of the human body, as something beautiful and unique, worth absolute respect, but requiring care and training.

However, if the first conversation about 'it' takes place in teenage years, it might be too late. And not actually because the child can possibly have his/her first sexual experience (remind you that the average age for Ukraine is about 13 years), but simply because they are not likely to listen to. Talking to teenagers, especially on "uncomfortable topics" – is like walking through a minefield. Because of their age, they just do not accept adults, consider them different, alien, old-fashioned, unable to understand and give advice. So, if you, out of the blue, start talking to your daughter or son about "it", when at school "it" sounds every day, mostly in a vulgar form, do not be surprised if your conversation ends with no result, but a quarrel.

Trust between parents and children is something that takes years to build. It is also important for the family to create friendly and trustful atmosphere where the child is not afraid of asking "uncomfortable" questions, because his/her interest cannot but appear, and that is the junction defining direction he/she goes.

A simple example. It is of common knowledge that physical contact should bring full satisfaction to both partners. Thus, having texted in Google the phrase like "how to satisfy a girl" for instance, we get a number of links. Having scanned these links, I was horrified. Probably only one out of ten articles is written professionally and scientifically reasoned. All the rest are boys' own experiences. It makes me feel sorry for the girls who tend to be "satisfied" by the readers of similar materials, because they (these materials) are superficial, subjective and can only damage the sexual life of a couple. Each girl or guy is completely individual and requires special approach, and the degree of the received satisfaction depends entirely on the level of emotional closeness of the partners, trust and psychological state of both a girl and a boy. So the result of implementing those online materials can have a destructive effect. But the boy will inevitably think he was right, while the girl may think it is her to be blamed in case of a failure. Both parties acquire certain complexes, phobias and fears! Relationships with negative sexual experience leave unpleasant and unpredictable trace in the soul and life as a whole, destroy physically and emotionally.

Even worse example is information received from pornographic movies. Absolute absence of any emotional component, just met. The same empty, particularly dangerous information floods the Internet. In real life it is quite different. The way to normal, emotionally full and harmonious relationships is not only a physical, but also spiritual one. Without knowing and realizing it, contemporary youth is subjected to various psychological and sexual diseases and complexes. Because they learn from their own experience, many irreversible changes can take place.

Children have to receive information in such quantity and of such quality which their psychological maturity allows. Too candid content, received at a definite age, can be as traumatic as ignorance and consequently result in first sex failure.

Results and discussion. What do we observe in the world? What is the situation like in the most developed countries?

Sex education in American educational establishments started to be discussed at the end of XIX century when National Educational Association claimed such necessity. Later, in 1922, Public Healthcare Service published the handbook on sex education in high school which stipulated: "We are still leaving young boys and girls to their fate, making them either pave the route by the stormy sea or sail it, succumbing to the will of a current and winds".

The breakthrough, which caused sex education introduction, took place only in the second part of the 20th century. Sexual revolution of 60s freed sex of the shackles of the Fall and gave birth to a generation of free love supporters. But due to lack of knowledge and medical research the former appeared to be still more dangerous. Gradually American government, scared of the tendencies and under the influence of the conservative part of the society took the side of agitation in favor of abstinence only until marriage (AOUM). Adolescent Family Life Act of 1982 officially stated the that model promotion. In 1996 it was supplemented with the 5th chapter that considerably increased the expenses. "Abstinence" in the sphere of sex education proclaims preservation of virtue until marriage and is presented to 12–18-year-old youth as the only correct behavioral model. In access, teachers are forbidden to tell teenagers about pregnancy prevention, while contraceptives are mentioned only in the context of its ineffectiveness.

The cases when abstinence propaganda acquire inadequate forms are of public awareness, for example Pam Stensel who yelled at American schoolchildren as if trying to rid them of demons. And D. Shelly in the speeches compared the girls who had more than one partner with adhesive tape. She meant such girls are like an adhesive tape when stuck on hands of several people becomes "good-for-nothing". By the way, there was no a word mentioned about men, whose lives are far from being humble...

While the American authorities are "captivated" by the medieval approach to sex education, experts are trying to draw their attention to its ineffectiveness (the average age of American boys' sex debut is 16,8 and American girls' – 17,2; when the average age of getting married is 29,2 and 27,1 correspondingly) and even danger. In 2004 the State Reform Committee published the report which stated that 11 out of 13 top-popular programs after which the sex education was conducted, contained untrue, deceptive or distorted information concerning reproductive health, condom effectiveness and even more – promoted gender stereotypes, religious ideology, etc. The facts revealed in 2006 were also of significance. It was brought in light that the Department of Child and Family Affairs, which is obliged to control the major part of AOUM finance, does not check the programs in terms of scientific reliability, moreover, it does not require that from the authors of the such.

Let us move on to China.

An average Chinese family considers sex as taboo. In the Maoist era (1950s – 1970s) it was called "bourgeois whim". Speaking frankly about sex, to children in particular, is simply unacceptable. Answering a child's question about where he/she comes from, most parents would assure the child that they found him/her ... in a dump. Sun Yunxiao, deputy director of the Chinese Youth Research Center, noticed: "It is only a western mother can take off her pants and show the child where he/she comes from. Very few Chinese parents would dare to do that".

Approximately 13 million abortions are made in China annually, most of them on single women of 20–29. At the same time, the survey conducted by the local affiliate of International Contraception Day organization found out that 68 per cent of women do not understand the difference between contraceptives.

The large-scale research of 2001 showed that the main sources of information referring sexuality, STI (sexually transmitted infections), HIV, AIDS are still peers and mass media. The school and the family might dare to speak only about less "difficult" topic of a pubertal period.

In 2009 China finally made some steps in direction of sex education. There was launched a campaign, named "Sun Project to care of sexual health", entitled to inspire people apply for the medical help. The pilot project on sex education for the Beijing schools was launched the same year with the assistance of the Sexual Education Research Centre. Being designed for children of 6–18, this program instantly caused parent dissatisfaction, though still having been worked after at almost 50 schools of the capital. The main resource is videos, which simply and coherently explain the children the main rules of the safe and happy sex life.

Although local legislation suggests availability of sex education at schools, this requirement remains only on paper, similarly to Ukraine, where the majority of teachers leave these chapters of the textbook for self-study.

Absurdly obvious gap between the views of high-rank officials on the sexual life of the population and reality is vividly exemplified by Japan. Speaking frankly about sex is not customary here, but making money on it is a common practice. Specialized bars, sex-tourism and one of the most profitable world porn-industries – this is the Japanese "asexual" theatre backstage. This "repertoire" is also composed of massive depopulation and crisis of marital relations, where couples do not practice sex at all. And only rarely, "in the entr'acte", there is sometimes found time for the sex awareness, mainly in the form of public initiatives. The principles of sex awareness, approved by the government, have existed untapped since 90s last century. In 2002 the Ministry of Education issued the regulation in compliance with which schoolchildren of the primary and secondary schools are forbidden to be told about "the processes which lead to a child conception", in other words – about sex itself. The investigation of 2008 revealed that the Japanese schoolchildren had on average approximately 3 hours of sex education a year.

In the course of the investigation in the sphere of the sex awareness there arose a question if it is necessary to speak about homosexuality and transgenderism.

Definitely "yes". LGBT-people do not disappear because of default theme; on the contrary, LGBT-children are subjected to psychological pressure from peers; thus, try to hide identity, measure themselves. Homo- and trans-phobias are hatred that kills. That is limitation in the right of being yourself not only for LGBT representatives, buy for all of us. Discussions about homosexuality and transgenderism are not a propaganda, that is the imposed myth of homogeneous society ruination. In its last year report on Ukraine the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance of European Union concluded that LGBT discrimination is available in every sphere of our life. Almost a third of the interviewed informed about the prejudiced attitude of the teachers. In case "such" schoolchildren were "discovered", too little did administration do, rather nothing, to defend them from homophobic offence. There were cases when school employees themselves took part in harassment. The European Commission major recommendation was to implement training activities for teachers with the aim to promote understanding and respect to LGBT trainees and prevent bullying.

It is obscure, at what age exactly, the Ministry of Education considers, children should learn how they appeared in this world. The course in "Health Essentials" does not consider this topic in either 1st – 4th or 5th – 9th school years. On the other hand, one should appreciate information campaigns on AIDS because already in the 4th year children have to discuss this topic during the lessons. Though there are some issues here as well. Only one textbook out of dozens (6th year textbook by Boichenko, Koval, Dyvak) gives the reason for infection "its name", while the authors of the rest were too "modest" having noticed that AIDS is transmitted through "some human body fluids". Though this topic is a part of 5th – 8th year course, sociological research held by the "State Institute of Family and Youth Policy" in 2017 stipulates that only 26 per cent of young people at the age of 14–34 correctly define preventive AIDS measures and are aware of the ways the disease is transmitted.

Conclusions. Avoiding the word "sex" and its derivatives is one more feature of the researched textbooks. The authors are persistent using collocation "gender relationships/contacts". The policy of suppression also touched upon such manifestation of puberty as menstruation and pollution. These topics have been included by the Ministry of Education into the biology course of only the 8th school year. "Only" is applied because the average age of the young when first menstruations and pollutions occur is approximately 13 (the 7th year at school under the condition a child went to school at 6). One should also consider the worldwide acceleration tendencies. As for the masturbation, it seems it does not exist: no mention, even veiled. Parents' resistance creates one more problem, one more reason for the "silence mode" in the sphere of sexual awareness. Though some might argue. In my article on Texty.org.ua I interviewed parents of 5th – 9th year school children. 64 per cent out of 200 interviewed supported the introduction of a separate subject in sexual awareness as an obligatory, while 25 per cent – only under the condition of the one being optional. Which means the resistance is not that firm.

In early 2000s when AIDS in Ukraine was gaining threatening proportions UNICEF started opening "youth friendly clinics". Currently there are over a hundred of such in Ukraine. These institutions, beside pregnancy tests, provide free psychological, gynecological and dermato-neurological consultancy for the young of 14–24.

Thus, taking into account all the above mentioned, we come to a conclusion that sexual awareness has nothing in common with vulgarity, dirt and harlotry. This competency is essential for safe and conscious sexual life of people at any age.

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