

RELEVANCE OF SEX EDUCATION FOR YOUTHS IN THE PRESENT DISPENSATION

By

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Abstract

The teeming number of our adolescent youths is increasing by the day. The level of sexual activities also is on the increase. The dangers of sexual activities are telling on the adolescent/youths and the society generally. In view of the foregoing, the need for and the relevance of sex education has become of paramount importance especially in our educational sector. This paper on “The Relevance of Sex Education for Youth in the Present Educational Dispensation” therefore considers issues bordering on the causes of sexual abuse as well as its effects. It also considers the relevance of sex education and its implications in our schools. The acquisition of proper sex education is expected to be of help to adolescents/youths in living a fulfilling life and building a dynamic future generation. For proper sex education to be put in place some recommendations have been made among which are the need for the government to make concerted effort to provide funds and facilities to promote the teaching of sex education in our schools, the need for parents to be encouraged to take up their role of teaching their children to eschew immorality and the need for religious bodies to reemphasized the importance of social/moral conducts in churches and mosques

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Introduction

People of different societies at different periods in history held different opinions about sex and its practice. This is because sex has its positive and negative sides. In this generation, the 21 century, the issues of sex and sexual activities have become a matter of great concern to the society and youths in particular. Durojaiye (1976) says sex is the most dramatic problem of the adolescents.

The different forms of sex abuse in the society have caused some devastating effects on all groups of people; old and young, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, male and female irrespective of their status.

This paper therefore looked at among other things the historical perspectives of sex abuse, the effects of sex abuse as well as the need for the proper type of sex education. It also considered the relevance of sex education to our modern educational system and how sex education can be implemented for the betterment of the present and future generations.

History of Sex Education

The history of sex education can be traced back to the early period in the history of mankind when the task of educating the adolescents on matters of sex was seen to be the sole responsibility of parents. This was however impeded by the parental inhibition to speak to their children on issues related to sex. This inhibition as well as laxity on parents' side was according to Oladele (1998) not unconnected with some parent's objection to sex education on religious and moral grounds.

However, in the early 19th Century, attempts were made by educators and social workers to supplement the parental responsibility of educating the adolescent on sex matters.--Hence,- and early form of sex education started basically in form of biological and medical information about human reproduction system and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

With the increasing cases of sexual activities, especially after the Second World War, there arose the need for more complex and more sophisticated methods of teaching the adolescents and the society as a whole on the effects of sex. Therefore, in 1989, the National Council of Education (NCE) set up a committee to look into the problems of sexual activities and sexual harassment on its victims in institutions and the society in general as well as offer solutions to reduce or eradicate the problems (Oladele, 1998).

But the wave of sexual activities continued to increase as a result of exposures to foreign cultures through movies, pornographic magazines, television and other written materials on sex. This informed the needs for a variety of subjects to be explored and discussed in line with sex education. According to information on Microsoft Encarta (2004), these subjects include the physical processes of human reproduction, the workings of male and female sex organs, the origin, dissemination and effects of sexually transmitted disease, family role and structure, the ethics of relationship and the emotional and psychological consequences of sex, marriage and parenting.

Against the background of the problems of sexual activities, this paper is produced with the mind of studying the effects of sexuality as well as how sexual education can be infused into our schools and the society in general so as to bring solutions to the problems of sex abuse.

In essence, the paper seeks to look at the relevance of sex education to the modern educational system so as to serve as a basis for getting solutions to the menace of sex abuse at least if not for the present generation, but for generations yet unborn.

Problems and effects of sex abuse

The society today is bedeviled by so many problems as a result of lack of the proper type of sex education. Such problems range from great loss of lives, varied cases of sickness, broken homes, frustration and other sex related social problems.

There is also the much outcry against the different forms of sexual activities going on in the society. Cases of masters indulging in illicit sex with house maids, house wives getting involved in the same practice with house boys and drivers, teachers/lecturers with their pupils/students and cases of adults sexually harassing young children.

These problems and a host of others call for attention to find solutions to them. If left unchecked, these problems will continue to devastate the fabrics of our society and the future generation will have nothing but a dashed hope.

In the area of health, many have suffered the pains of various sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) Many- lost their lives to the hydra-headed deadly disease (HIV/AIDS) and many more are suffering from it. any Also have suffered the scourges of other diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea, herpes etc.

Coupled with any are outside there who have destroyed their life chances as a result of involvement in one sexual act or the other. Many have destroyed their chances of having children as a result of the effects of their sexual activities at early age-abortion and use of contraceptives.

On the educational scene, many young people have damaged their future. As Durojaiye (1976) pointed out, some pupils and students, especially girls, have destroyed their chances in education as well as life status as a result of teenage pregnancy. Such girls also end up being stigmatized in the society, thus making them become frustrated in life.

Lack of proper sex education also has some socio-economic effects on the individuals and the society. Due to lack of sex education, some people give birth to many children, more than they can cater for. Such children end up becoming street children who mostly perpetrate most of the societal vices we face. Such street children will also continue to breed their types through sexual activities among themselves.

The society needs to be sensitized about this canker worm so that people will know how to keep themselves from it, for after all, healthy society is a sure way to a progressive society. Cuter and Glahn (1998) stated that human sexuality represents a powerful aspect of our being and that it can bring some of life's greatest joy, but can also generate enormous pain.

According to Jean Gerland, there is a lot involved in sexual activities than just two bodies coming together for fun and passions Sex, he says, can bring more pain and heartache than can be imagined.

Daily Sun (2007) stated that there is an array of sexually transmitted diseases that have invaded man today more than ever before. This results from the alarming rate at which sexual activities are carried on in the society. NEEDS (2005) has it that more than 2.7 million Nigerians are now suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The effect of sex abuse can also be felt in the area of broken homes. Married couples who involve in acts of infidelity and promiscuity pass through hard times which may lead to broken homes. When parents are separated, the children are left to face some untold hardships.

Durojaiye (1976) also observed that some perverted adults sexually abuse or entice young boys or girls, which can be frightening and cruel experience for the child. Sexually harassed children in early years of their lives experience some resentment and frustration in their later lives. They develop a sense of guilt, shame and sadness having destroyed their self-respect and self-worth, some due to lack of self control. They become more embittered when they get to know that they were merely used instead of being loved and accepted.

Relevance of sex education to modern educational system

Sex education has become a matter of necessity. to our modern educational system as most of those affected by the scourge of sex abuse are our teeming adolescents who are within the mainstream of the educational system.

Sex education is relevant to the modern education system taking into consideration the aims for its design. Oladele (1998) outlines the aims of designing sex education as follows:

- a) To prepare our youths to cope with their developmental task of becoming responsible men/women in future
- b) To give correct and factual information and understanding of problem of sex such as its development, function and expression.

- c) To give our youth cogent reasons so that they can avoid sex abuse and cultivate wholesome attitudes to sexual experiences when they are mature enough to do so.
- d) To enlighten our youths and prevent them from developing a sense of guilt, horror, disgust or fear of sex especially when they perform the sex act at the right time, for right purposes and with the right person
- e) To enable our youths develop self-respect and self-control with due consideration to their spouses.

Durojaiye (1976) also spells out the aims of sex education for boys and girls in summarized form as follows:

- a) To give correct and adequate factual information and understanding of sex, its development, its function and its expression.
- b) To cultivate correct reactions to sexual experience.
- c) To prevent the children from acquiring a sense of guilt, horror, disgust or fear of sex.
- d) To teach children continuing and widening sublimatory or socially acceptable expression for sexual thoughts, feelings and acts.
- e) To cultivate in children self-respect and self-control without blocking or repression, but with growing consideration for others
- f) To introduce children to the roles of parents.

Taking into consideration these outlined aims of sex education by both Oladele and Durojaiye, it can be said without any fear of contradiction that sexual activities have become more pronounced and with more devastating effects than ever before.

Since sex education is said to be a process of making the individual develop a positive and wholesome attitude to sex, and a process that will enable the individual to lead a fulfilled life and to enjoy life fully; also to be developed to become a responsible member of the society, its relevance to the upbringing of the young generation cannot be over emphasized.

Microsoft Corporation (1993-2003) information has it that safe sexual practice is increasingly focused on especially with the advent of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It stressed the importance and relevance of sex education which is the central focus of our education and the society as a whole.

Curriculum and implementation of sex education in schools

Following the concern created by the scourge of HI V/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases globally, Nigeria brought to the fore the urgent need to deal with adolescents reproductive health issues. A report on the cases of HIV/AIDS in 1998 showed that 60% of HIV/AIDS cases are within the age group 15-24 years which constitute more than 50% of the national population.

In order to vigorously keep in the word HIV/AIDS and other STDs prevention in schools, sexuality education curriculum need to be reviewed and redesigned as family life and HIV/AIDS education curriculum for primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria. The directive of the 49th session of National Council on Education (NCE) of September 2002 authorized total inclusiveness of state concern about acceptable humanity terms that gave rise to the family life and HIV/AIDS Education (FLE)

The curriculum designed by the National Family Life and HIV/AJDS education for Junior and senior Secondary schools under the auspices of the National Council on Education dealt with matters that have to do with sexually Transmitted disease and body abuse for the junior secondary school and contraceptions, sexually transmitted diseases and sex abuse for the senior secondary school (Federal Ministry of Education, 2005). -

According to the curriculum, the teachers are expected to employ various methods to teach the students. These methods include: teaching, lectures, discussion, demonstration as well as counseling. Posters and film projection are to be used to enable the students see and identify some of the things taught to them.

In the teaching, according to the curriculum, teachers are to explain issues that have to do with sexually transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS, the mode of transmission of such diseases (risk behaviors like unprotected sexual intercourse and juvenile sex), the symptoms of the diseases, and the mode of preventing transmission of the diseases as well as ways of helping affected persons. Teachers are also to explain the importance of testing for STDs and HIV/AIDS to the students.

The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, in its publication, 'Nigeria and the rights of the child' (1992-2001) points out that the government has a role to play in the implementation of sex education in schools by:

- a) Protecting children from sexual abuse and sex exploitation
- b) Prohibiting the use of children for prostitution or other sexual practices.

- c) Preventing the use of children in pornographic publications and activities.
- d) Prohibiting early marriage especially for the girl child

The parents also have been entrusted with the role of:

- a) Protecting their children from situations and circumstances that expose them to the risks of inducement, coercion, rape and defilement and actual performance of sexual practices.
- b) Monitoring and reporting instances of such exploitation to law enforcement agencies so as to protect the dignity and decency of children.

Conclusion

In view of the increasing cases of the effects of sexual activities in our society, the relevance of sex education for the youths in the present educational dispensation cannot be over emphasized. Though the adolescents have been hearing of the word sex, most of them have not gone into the real experience of sex and might not have learned about the dangers associated with sexual abuse.

In this regard, the knowledge of the effects of sexual abuse is very important for the adolescents as this will help them to develop a healthy attitude towards sex and sexuality. The unpleasant results of sexual abuse are far greater than the pleasure of it. Thus, the adolescents should be made to understand its implications and keep away for the time being until they are ready.

It is also necessary to know that all stakeholders in child training — the religious bodies, the teachers, the parents and of course everybody should have their hands on deck to ensure that the correct attitude to sex is instilled into the adolescents so that the future can be brighter and the generations to come become better. The youths of today are the custodians of tomorrow, so they need to be better informed.

Finally it is observed that the increase in cases of sexual activities in the society, more especially among the adolescents result from the fact that they are not properly informed of the hazards involved. The fact that it is not easy to know who is infected with STDs and HIV/AIDS by mere looking also makes people to get involved in indiscriminate sex. The only way out of all the mess is the correct sex education being given to the adolescents. They should be made to know that sex is a special reserve for the married and within the matrimonial home. It is not something to be practiced before marriage or outside the matrimonial home.

Recommendations

In line with the discussions above, I would like to make the following recommendations:

1. The government, through the Federal Ministry of Education and the Education policy makers should design curriculum on sex education to include the primary schools.
2. The government should re-direct and make concerted effort to provide the needed funds and facilities to promote the teaching of sex education in schools.
3. The parents should be encouraged to assume their traditional role of teaching their children to eschew immorality rather than leaving them at the mercy of the school teachers and religious bodies.
4. The religious bodies should re-emphasize the importance of knowledge of sex education in churches and mosques.
5. The adolescents should be encouraged to abstain from all forms of sexual activities rather than being encouraged to use condom as a safety device.
6. There is need for more researchers to research on the issue of sex education and other related subjects that could help mould and shape the adolescents.

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