

Perception of Problems and Prospects of Introducing Sex Education in School Curriculum

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Abstract: The concept of sexuality education has been a topical issue and its inclusion in the school curriculum has generated and is still generating a lot of interest in Nigeria. The controversy around sexuality education stems from the fact that most people do not have an accurate understanding of what sexuality education is all about and the benefits that could be derived from it. Sexuality education is an education and moral process designed to assist young people in their physical, social, emotional and moral development as they prepare for adulthood, marriage, parenthood and ageing, as well as their social relationship in the socio-cultural context of family and society. Functional education, a major factor in the development process, to be relevant, must help appropriately an individual to understand his/her own culture and integrate into the other cultures, foreign or local, for the proper enhancement of his/her ways of life. The objective of sexuality education is to promote the proper development of personality, sexual well-being and quality of life of the population as a whole and thus implies that its contents cover all aspects of life in society, namely economic, political, social, legal, health, cultural and spiritual, making sure that both individual and collective interests work in harmony for the goodness of individuals and the society as a whole.

Keywords: Sex education, sexuality, school curriculum, secondary school, adolescent health, religion, socio-cultural, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of sexuality can be dated back to our ancestors, who laid much emphasis on the care of self and the act of procreation, emerging population and health concerns have led to the re-thinking and re-identification of the relationship between sexuality and human activity and behavior [1]. Invariably, the concept of sexuality has undergone many changes over the years. In recent times, young people (ages 10 – 24) in Nigeria, are found to be highly vulnerable to antisocial behaviors such as violent crimes, unsafe sexual activities and drug abuse among others. The Nigerian Association for the Promotion of Adolescent Health and Development, (NAPAHD) and hospital based research have alerted and shown that, 80 percent of patients with abortion complications are adolescents [2]. This assertion was based on the fact that, over 16 percent of teenage females reported first sexual intercourse by age 15 while 8.5 percent of boys of age 15 have also had their first encounters. This adolescents' health dilemma has been attributed to their lack of information and knowledge about the implications of their behaviour on their sexual health. In this vain the introduction and

institutionalization of sexuality education became one of the immediate efforts made to address this problem and to create awareness about these sexually based problems. The rational was to acquaint youth with factual and accurate sexual information about the dimensions of sexual knowledge that will enable them understand and clarify their personal values, improve their sexual knowledge and sexual decision making and promote their knowledge about how all these interact with socio-cultural and religious factors to affect personal well-being [3].

However, in view of the predicament suffered by similar intervention packages such as Population/Family life Education it is relevant to examine the potentials for success and failure of this nascent subject. In recent times the Action Health Incorporated [4] has been in frontline of NGOs complementing government's effort in raising awareness about adolescent health issues and setting a new direction for adolescent sexuality education in Nigeria. This they did by building on lessons from the past success and constraints, and appreciating the

present potentials of sexuality education in strengthening national development efforts for a brighter future [5]. AHI has viewed sexuality education as an educational process which provides for an articulated and practical study of the various dimensions of human sexuality with the aim of developing in the individual a more rational attitude and responsible behaviour towards improving the quality of life of the individual now and in future. International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) viewed sexuality education as: 'an education process designed to assist young people in their physical, social, emotional and moral development as they prepare for adulthood, marriage, parenthood and ageing, as well as their social relationship in the socio-cultural context of family and society' [6].

Sex education can serve as weapon against ignorance and as such has many setbacks or challenges from culture, society and religion. These socio-cultural and religious challenges on sex education can be perpetuated to the extent that it has the potential to overpower intervention programmes and educational innovations; therefore, the problem of this study is to investigate the problem and prospects of introducing sex education into the secondary school curriculum in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- To investigate the challenges and prospects of sex education in Bayelsa State.
- To bring to light the importance sexuality education in secondary schools.
- To determine the goals of introducing sexuality education in our society.

In order to achieve the stated objectives of the study, the following research questions are posited:

- What are the challenges and prospects of introducing sexuality education into the secondary school curriculum?
- What is the importance of sexuality education in our society?
- What are the goals of introducing sexuality education into the secondary school curriculum?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design use in this study was descriptive survey. The study aimed at collecting information from respondents on their opinions in relation to various factors impacting on the introduction of sex education in schools. The population area of the study consists of all the eight Local Government Areas in Bayelsa State of Nigeria. Nigeria as a country consisted of thirty-six autonomous States in which Bayelsa is one. Bayelsa State is situated at the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (South-South Geo-Political Zone) which is well endowed with natural resources. Bayelsa State consisted of eight Local Government

Areas out of which three were randomly selected by writing three 'yes' and five 'no' on pieces of paper against each of the eight Local Government Areas, and shuffling in a bag. Without looking into the bag, the papers are picked and the three Local Government Areas with 'yes' were then involved in the study. The three Local Government Areas were: Ogbia, Sagbama and Ekeremor Local Government Areas. Incidental sampling was the sampling technique adopted for the study as it was practically impossible to gather everybody in a Local Government at a point for proper sampling. The incidental sampling was done by the three researchers, each going to the three different Local Government Areas headquarters and distributing the instrument for data collection (questionnaire titled: Parents' Perception of the Introduction of Sex Education in Schools – PPISEIS Questionnaire) to at least fifty persons who are willing to fill-in the questionnaire as samples for the study after briefly discussing the objective of the study with the person). The sampling technique is called 'incidental sampling technique' because, the researcher walks round the Local Government headquarter and speaks to passers-by on the street as he/she goes along. The criteria of person to speak to was that, the person must be of age to understand and fill a questionnaire. The respondents were approached and convinced to provide information that is free from bias.

The instrument used in the study (PPISEIS Questionnaire) was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation of the Department of Educational Foundations of Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State for content and face validity. It was then validated to be adequate; the slight modifications and corrections were then incorporated in the final version that was used to collect the data. The reliability of the instruments was obtained using split half method. This was carried out in a pilot survey in another Local Government Area not involved in the main study. Twenty-five (25) respondents filled the questionnaire, the even number items and odd number items were subjected to analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis, a reliability coefficient of 0.77 was realized, which is within the acceptable benchmark of reliable coefficients, this indicates that the instrument was reliable for the study.

The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by each of the three researchers in each of the three Local Government Areas. Each of the researchers administered fifty of the questionnaire to fifty respondents and retrieve same making a total of one hundred and fifty filled questionnaires. The filled questionnaires were checked for correctness and eligibility, out of which fifty were discarded and hundred analysed for the study. The analysis of the hundred questionnaires are presented in Tables.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented on Tables 1-4. Table-1 analyzed respondents' demographic

data whilst Tables 2-4 analyzed respondent perceptions of the introduction of sex education in schools in line with the research questions posited for the study.

Table-1: Respondents Demographic Data Analysis

Analysis of Respondents by Gender			
S/N	Response Categories	Response Frequency	Response Percentage
1.	Male	35	35%
2.	Female	65	65%
	Total	100	100%
Analysis of Respondents by Age			
S/N	Categories of Respondents by Age	Response Frequency	Response Percentage
1.	15-18	26	26%
2.	18-25	15	15%
3.	25-30	35	35%
	30 and above	24	24%
	Total	100	100%
Analysis of Respondents by Occupation			
S/N	Respondents Occupation	Response Frequency	Response Percentage
1.	Student	30	30%
2.	Civil servant	44	44%
3.	Farming/fishing	14	14%
4.	Business	12	12%
	Total	100	100%
Analysis of Respondents by Type of Family			
S/N	Respondents Family Type	Response Frequency	Response Percentage
1.	Monogamous family	20	20%
2.	Nuclear family	12	12%
3.	Extended family	25	25%
4.	Polygamous family	43	43%
	Total	100	100%

From Table-1, out of the 100 respondents, 35 are females while 65 are males. 26% of the respondents aged between 15 and 18 years, and 15% of them are amid the ages of 18 and 25, respondents between the ages of 25-30 and 30 and above summed up to 35% and 24% respectively. 30% of respondents are students while 44% are civil servants, then 14% are farmers/fishermen, while 12% of the respondents are business men and women. Out of the 100 respondents who participated in the study, 20 respondents are from

monogamous families and 12 of them is from a nuclear family, while 25 are from extended family and 43 is from polygamous family.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1:

What are the challenges/prospects of introducing sexuality education into the secondary school curriculum?

Table 2: Problems and Prospects of Introducing Sexuality Education into the School Curriculum

S/N	What are the problems and prospects of introducing sexuality education into the secondary school curriculum?	Response Frequency	Response Percentage
1.	Religious beliefs, (both Christianity & Islam)	45	45%
2.	Culture and socio-cultural beliefs of parents	25	25%
3.	Socio-economic status	10	10%
4.	Communication	12	12%
5.	Gender	8	8%
	Total	100	100%

The above analysis reveals that, 45% of the respondents agreed that religious beliefs do not see the need for sexuality education. 25% of the respondents also agreed that culture and socio-cultural beliefs of

parents are another challenge of sex education in our society. While socio-economic status, communication and gender are also seen as challenges and influence for introducing sexuality education into the secondary

school curriculum 10%, 12% and 8% response respectively. Therefore, Table 2 implies that the introduction of sex education in the secondary school curriculum has many challenges. However, this is further confirmed by Adepoju [7] who submitted that; Sexuality education in Nigeria is a huge task, though it

has many prospect, but like other intervention programmes, it has suffered many setbacks.

Research Question 2:

What is the importance of sexuality education in our society?

Table-3: Importance of Sexuality Education in the Society

S/N	The Importance of Sexuality Education in the Society?	Response Frequency	Response Percentage
1.	It ensures better understanding of influence of society on everyday interactions.	30	30%
2.	It prevents disease, promotes abstinence and teaches social, psychological and health gains.	30	30%
3.	It prevents unwanted and out of wedlock pregnancies	40	40%
	Total	100	100%

From the analysis above, 30% of the respondents agreed that sex education provides the basic understanding of the influence of everyday interactions on the society. Also, 30% of the respondents also agreed that sex education is important because it prevents diseases, promotes abstinence and teaches social, psychological and health gains. While 40% of the respondents agreed that sex education also prevents unwanted and out of wedlock pregnancies.

This is also confirmed by Dienye [8], who highlighted that; the importance of sex education ensures a better understanding of the influence of society on everyday interactions and it prevents diseases and promote abstinence.

Research Question 3:

What are the goals of introducing sexuality education into the secondary school curriculum?

Table-7: Goals of Introducing Sexuality Education into Secondary School Curriculum

S/N	Goals of Introducing Sexuality Education into Secondary School Curriculum?	Response Frequency	Response Percentage
1.	To help students make wise, responsible and informed decisions through the provision of accurate, current and age-appropriate knowledge on human sexuality and the consequences of sexual activity.	62	62%
2.	To help students know themselves and build healthy and rewarding relationships through the acquisition of social and emotional skills of self-awareness, management of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours and decision making skills.	19	19%
3.	To help students develop a moral compass, respect for themselves and for others as sexual beings, premised on the family formed from a healthy, heterosexual marriage as the basic unit of the society through the inculcation of positive mainstream values and attitudes about sexuality.	-	-
	Total	81	81%

From the analysis above, 62% of the respondents agreed that the goals of introducing sexuality education into the secondary school curriculum is to help students make wise, responsible and informed decisions through the provision of accurate, current and age-appropriate knowledge on human sexuality and the consequences of sexual activities. The same way, 19% of the respondents also agreed that goals of introducing sexuality education into the secondary school curriculum is to help students know themselves and build healthy and rewarding relationships through the acquisition of social and emotional skills of self-awareness, management of their

thoughts, feelings and behaviours and decision making skills.

This is further confirmed by the International Planned Parenthood Federation [9], that; the goal is to help students make wise, responsible and informed decision through the provision of accurate, current and age-appropriate knowledge on human sexuality and the consequences of sexual activities.

DISCUSSIONS

An outlook at the analysis of raw information gathered from the questionnaires could confirm that a greater number of the sampled population, believe that

the introduction of sex education into secondary school curriculum, like other intervention programmes has suffered many setbacks. From the results from research question one reveals that, almost half of the respondents do not see the need for sexuality education from a religious perspective. Religion plays an important role in individual's sexuality as its principles, regulations and practices affect our everyday interactions. SIECUS [10] emphasized that religious beliefs influence sexual attitudes and behavior. Greenberg, Bruess and Haffner [11] opined that religious and spiritual beliefs influence feelings about morality, sexual behavior, premarital sexual behavior, adultery, divorce, contraception and abortion. Some of the positive impact of religion on sexuality have been said to include assertiveness, postponement of age of first sexual experience, diminished pre and post – marital sexual permissiveness, responsible relationships in marriage and parenthood.

Finding from the research question two reveals respondents agreed that sex education also prevents unwanted and out of wedlock pregnancies. This result agrees with Adepaju [12] who opined in his work on 'sexuality education in Nigeria: Evolution, challenges and prospects' that, sex education preaches abstinence which indicates that sexual activities outside the context of marriage have harmful psychological, social and physical effects that damages one personality. In a study conducted by Oshi, Nakalema & Oshi [13] in such South-Eastern Nigeria on sex education and HIV/AIDS, the findings revealed that teachers are not passing the knowledge of sex education helping in the prevention of unwanted pregnancies because of cultural and social inhibitions. In addition, teachers have not been receiving adequate training and motivation on information, education and communication for unplanned pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, and sex education. This situation calls for serious intervention.

From the results of research question three, majority of the respondents (62%) agreed that, the goals of introducing sexuality education into secondary school curriculum is to help students make wise, responsible and informed decisions through the provision of accurate, current and age-appropriate knowledge on human sexuality and the consequences of sexual activities.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study indicates the problems and prospects of introducing sexuality education into secondary school curriculum with indication to religion, society and culture as the key factors. In light of the incessant problems of unwanted and out of wedlock pregnancies and the increase of sexual transmittable diseases and its subsequent awareness in our society,

the importance and relevance of sex education cannot be overemphasized hence the bright prospect for the introduction of sexuality education in our secondary schools' curriculum. Thus, the task of all education stakeholders, administration and teachers is to ensure that sexuality education is fully taught in secondary school. This will go a long way on molding the youth's behavioral pattern through adequate sex education knowledge and implications of behavioural choices made today and in the future. Knowledge, it is generally acknowledged, is a great weapon against ignorance. A sound foundation of sexual knowledge helps the individual to dispel sexual myths, superstitions and misinformation that hinder proper understanding or create confusion. Accurate information enables an individual to think critically and make sound decisions and also take responsibility for sexual health.

EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has shown that religious beliefs do not see the need for sexuality education, the same way society and culture at times sees that sexuality education debunks ideologies and social constructs that regard certain words as dirty and wrong, that certain parts of the body are unmentionable and that sometimes we should hide our feelings and other myths and taboos that influence the human sexuality negatively. Sexuality education teaches youths how to open up their relationship to discussion of problems, how to foster a style of communication that will enhance all aspects of their relationship and enable them to discuss freely matters that bother them through free expression of their emotions and behaviour. This is one of the great gains of sexuality education.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to minimize the setbacks (challenges or problems) of introducing sexuality education in the secondary school curriculum in Bayelsa State, the state government should carry out intervention programmes from the grass root of our rural communities preaching the important and necessity of sex education even to the old illiterate.

However, media houses should also be encouraged to publicize the need for sexuality education, by bringing to light the consequences of been ignorant about sexual implications, so as to help teenagers make wise, responsible and informed decisions through the provision of accurate, current and age-appropriate knowledge/information on human sexuality and the consequences of sexual activity. Parents are also encouraged to help their children know themselves and build healthy and rewarding relationships through the acquisition of social and emotional skills of self-awareness, management of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Counselors should therefore utilize different counselling strategies such as individual and group counseling in order to be able to sufficiently facilitate society about the importance and the goals of introducing sexuality education into school curriculum.

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