

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE

WELTGESUNDHEITSORGANISATION
REGIONALBÜRO FÜR EUROPA



ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ
BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE L'EUROPE

ВСЕМИРНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ ЗДРАВООХРАНЕНИЯ
ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЕ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЕ БЮРО

Working Group on Family Planning
and Sex Education of Young People

Copenhagen, 1-5 November 1982

ICP/MCH 024/9
0288F

ENGLISH ONLY

INDEXED

UNEDITED DRAFT
NOT TO BE QUOTED

Sex educ

Workeund s

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMMES

by

Willem de Regt
Member of Staff for Educational Affairs with
Rutgers Stichting (Dutch FPA), The Hague,
The Netherlands

The issue of this document does not constitute formal publication. It should not be reviewed, abstracted or quoted without the agreement of the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Authors alone are responsible for views expressed in signed articles.

Dieses Dokument erscheint nicht als formelle Veröffentlichung. Es darf nur mit Genehmigung des Regionalbüros für Europa der Weltgesundheitsorganisation besprochen, in Kurzfassung gebracht oder zitiert werden. Beiträge, die mit Namensunterschrift erscheinen, geben ausschliesslich die Meinung des Autors wieder.

Ce document ne constitue pas une publication. Il ne doit faire l'objet d'aucun compte rendu ou résumé ni d'aucune citation sans l'autorisation du Bureau régional de l'Europe de l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé. Les opinions exprimées dans les articles signés n'engagent que leurs auteurs.

Настоящий документ не является официальной публикацией. Не разрешается рецензировать, аннотировать или цитировать этот документ без согласия Европейского регионального бюро Всемирной организации здравоохранения. Всю ответственность за взгляды, выраженные в подписанных авторами статьях, несут сами авторы.

Draft Paper on

"The implementation of programmes"

by Willem de Regt, member of staff for educational affairs with Rutgers Stichting (Dutch FPA), Holland.

1. Introduction

Sex education is not obligatory in the schools. It is the responsibility of the parents. But schools are allowed to bring up the subject and in the near future schools will have to deal with some sex-education, because of a change in the law. It is not foreseen that this means an alteration in school practice. Nowadays, a global view learns that most of the schools, both primary and secondary do, at some time, pay attention to matters of sexuality. But a closer look learns also that this attention is in most cases very general, very biological and very abstract.

Sex education is a subject teachers and other educators, including parents, still try to avoid. And that is not easy these days.

One of the possibilities for avoidance is to ask "specialists" from outside to tell the kids the ins and outs of sexuality.

We, Rutgers Stichting, the Dutch FPA, have a few teams of educational workers, acting as specialists in educational systems.

There are, in this context, several ways of implementing programs for sex-education.

- a. The "specialist" workers go into schools and other educational systems to bring their information and messages about sexuality and intimate relations.
- b. The specialists offer training programs to teachers and other professional educators, to make them skillfull sex-educators.
- c. So-called "open groups" are offered to young people (or other target groups). In these groups youngsters can participate voluntarily and talk with people of their own age about topics related with their sexuality. The role of the "specialist" is a facilitator.
- d. We've thought about a far more directive way of approach also. We want to try to stant groups of youngsters who are selected as opinion leaders in their peer group. The specialists go through the whole lot of information stuff of sexuality and intimate relations. The aim is that these opinion leaders can do something with it in their groups. Till now, we never tried to do it. But it remains an exciting possibility for the implementation of educational programs.
- e. Adressing "all the youngsters" with written educational materials is another way of implementing programs.
- f. In fact, our information-phone is also an educational tool. Youngsters can get quick answers on questions that occur suddenly.

In this paper I want to go quickly through all these six sorts of educational activities.

2. Bringing the sex-education to the educational systems

There are not many schools and other educational systems that deny their responsibility for some sex-education.

By education they mean: giving some basic information about heterosexual acts, so that young people know about the main biological things that come with these acts. So, the information is about eggs and semen. And after that comes birth control.

Some years ago schools asked doctors or nurses from our institution to come for that sort of biological/medical information. And they went, demonstrating pill-strips, condoms, pelvic models in which the insertion of IUD's and the cap could be shown.

Although these sort of demonstrations are still done, the sex-educators go to the schools nowadays with different programs. The conviction these days is, that you

cannot even provide basic information about sexuality in one session. Talking about sexuality is surrounded with barriers:

- it is not a subject for in the classroom
- there are lots of different levels of experience with sexuality within one age-group
- youngsters don't trust grown-ups by telling them what is worrying them about their sexual development.

There are more barriers. In practice they mean that basic information, provided in short "neutral" education-programs, was not taken by the youngsters. So, another educational program is offered to the schools and other systems these days.

Roughly that program is as follows:

- classes are divided in small groups of maximum fifteen persons
- every group has at least six sessions of one hour with the educator
- during these sessions the youngsters and educator talk together about sexuality and intimate relationships
- the group makes an appointment about the secrecy of what is said by the members of the group. Nobody can be forced to make a more personal statement than she/he wants, but all such statements are respected and will stay within the group
- there are some subjects the educator wants to talk about: contraception, sex-role-patterns, sexual preferences. But there is enough room to bring up all the topics related with sexuality that concern the youngsters themselves
- the aims of the sessions are:
 - to give information
 - to practice talking about sexuality with your age-group
 - to bring the sex-education to the level of experience of the youngsters themselves.

These programs are implemented in lots of schools. Most of the time in a satisfying way. But there are also some troubles that come back in many schools.

- It is very difficult to convince the school that you need so much time for your minimal sex-education program.
- If the schools make room for you, they do mostly at ineffective times, late in the day, when the pupils are not motivated at all.
- It is hard to split up class-groups into small talk-groups.
- It is very difficult to talk about emotions and other private feelings in the school. Youngsters are not used to and they do not trust your attempts.
- The educators are seen as just another teacher. And with that view come the expectations. Pupils do want you to give the information, they want to see you as the authority. They are not used to be active partners in the group. They are consumers of information. It is difficult to ask them to act as an active group-member.

Apart from these difficulties, we think such an education program can work as a minimum in the schools. But you have to provide written information together with this program and offer every individual in the groups an adress and phone-number where she/he can come for counseling.

3. Training the educators

We think that in most of the educational systems, "special sex-educators" are not the best solution to the need for sex-education. Ideally, sex-education is an integrated part of education as such.

In our view teachers must be able to deal with problems of their pupils related with their sexual development. They can bring up the topic themselves or go into the subject when pupils give signals. Teachers are sensitive for these signals. The practical situation is that some of the teachers fully agree with our view on their ideal functioning, but they don't feel themselves skillfull and sensitive enough to be sex-educators as well.

For these teachers we offer a training program.

Through this training program run two main streams:

- a. sexuality is a personal matter. So you cannot talk about it in an abstract way only. The educator has to be aware of his and her own sexuality, his and her own experiences, his and her attitudes and principles. All these things show while you educate.
- b. Sex-education needs some methods and general background information.

So in the training program we offer the background-information about sexuality and the sexual development of adolescents. And together with that we try to make teachers aware of the fact that they are "sexual beings" themselves with all the experiences, fears, barriers, attitudes, prejudices and convictions that come with that.

The personal involvement of teachers in these training programs is big. And the fact that the program does not promise teachers to become skillfull sex-educators. Some of them do. Others only learn some methods, tricks to cope with the questions of the kids. Others learn that they have trouble with showing their own feelings and convictions.

Our conviction is that the training program is a necessary step towards the integration of sex-education in educational systems.

But we are also aware of the fact that the intentions of our training program are in a way contradictory to the organisation of the school-education. Learning by experience is not a common method in our schools. And teachers who want to be facilitators more than authorities, have trouble to survive in the educational system. As long as we know that many teachers feel strongly supported by the way we trained them, we go on with offering this program.

4. Open groups

The idea behind open groups is that sex-education cannot be forced upon individuals. But on the other hand there must be supportive possibilities for people who want some help with their sexual development.

So, if -in the context of this paper- youngsters do want to talk about their sexuality, they can adress our institution and join a group. They can, of course, also have an individual counseling.

These open groups make their own program together with the facilitator.

There are no special problems with the implementation of a sex-education program in these groups.

However, they are difficult to organise. There is a problem of adressing the target-group and a problem of selection. And during the program there is the problem of motivation. Group-members have to keep their appointments, otherwise it destroys the groupwork.

5. Training for opinion-leaders

It is mentioned here as a possibility, but we didn't experience this way of education.

The idea behind it is that most of the sexual talk is in the peergroup. Youngsters themselves say that they get most of their sexual informations from their peers.

So you can try to make the opinion-leaders in groups bearers of necessary (from our point of view) information. The problem will be how we can find these opinion-leaders. Ask the schoolteachers? Ask the youngsters themselves? And what about the credibility of our offer to such a group with this criterium.

So, it is still an idea on paper. But we work on it.

6. Written materials

In most of our educational work there is no special need for written materials during the face to face contacts. But we need these materials as a support to the sex-education in at least two phases of the process.

- a. In the phase of adressing our target-group.

People have to know what we offer them. They must know why we advertise ourselves as an institution that can be of any help with the troubles people have during their sexual development. They must know how we think about sexuality and which is our experience in talking about it.

b. In the phase after a sex-education program. You can talk with a person or group about, for instance, contraception, but in most cases people want to read the information afterwards. Then they have time for learning about facts.

So, written materials are used as a supplement before and after the "verbal sex-education programs".

7. Answers by phone

You can reach our bureaus by phone. To make appointments with counsellors, but also to ask questions or advise. More than 100.000 youngsters use that possibility for contact with us every year.

The phone is often a supplement with written materials. People want some clarification about things they've read. Or they cannot find the answer to their actual question in the written materials.

But sometimes they just want support for their acts and opinions.

We, as Rutgers Stichting, experience a great need for support in sex-education. Also after the so-called "sexual revolution" young people do want information about sexuality and it is not easy for them to find a trustworthy answer to all their questions.

Our policy is that we are just there whenever people need us. They have to choose the moments for consultation.

We will not force our services on to people. Because we have the conviction that sex-education programs only work when people choose to join them.

The Hague,
11th October 1982