

*Full Length Research Paper*

# THE RELEVANCE OF SEX EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULA IN ABRAKA METROPOLIS, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Accepted 26 February, 2012

**This paper was designed to look into the relevance of sex education in secondary school curricula in Delta State, Nigeria. The study was to compare the attitude of teachers towards sex education. It focused on the attitude of both male and female teachers towards sex education both at home and in the school system and the influence of their educational status on it. It also investigated if there is a significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to educational status. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, and it was a descriptive survey design. The target population consists of public senior secondary school teachers in Delta State, Nigeria. A simple random sampling technique was adopted and a chi-square statistic was used to analyse data gathered in the study and from the findings, it was revealed that there is significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to gender, and that there is significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to their educational status or attainment. It was therefore recommended that sex education programmes should be held for young people in secondary schools to help their self-worth, sense of responsibility, understanding and acceptance of diversity and sexual health.**

**Key Words:** Sex education, youths, secondary schools, Abraka metropolis, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Human sexuality has biological, emotional and physical or spiritual aspects. The biological aspect of sexuality refers to the reproductive mechanism as well as the basic biological drive that exists in all species, which is hormonally controlled. The emotional or physical aspect of sexuality refers to the bond that exists between individuals, and is expressed through profound feelings or physical manifestations of emotions of love, trust, and caring. There is also a spiritual aspect of sexuality of an individual or as a connection with others. Experience has shown that adolescents are curious about some or all the aspects of their sexuality as well as the nature of sexuality in general, and that many will wish to experience their sexuality.

Traditionally, adolescents were not given any information on sexual matters, with discussion of these issues being considered taboo. Such instruction as was given was traditionally left to a child's parents, and often this was put off until just before a child's marriage. Most of the information on sexual matters were obtained

informally from friends and the media, and much of this information was of doubtful value. Much of such information was usually known to be deficient, especially during the period following puberty when curiosity of sexual matters was the most acute. This deficiency became increasingly evident, by the increasing incidence of teenage pregnancies, especially in Western countries after the 1960s. As part of each country's efforts to reduce such pregnancies, programs of sex education were instituted, initially over strong opposition from parent and religious groups.

Indeed sex education does not mean instructing children in sexual techniques or acts, rather it entails giving the necessary facts or knowledge about sex and encouraging questions and discussions.

There are several suggestions on when to give a child sex education. The present researcher feels that sex education should commence as soon as the child begins to talk. For instance, it is not unusual to see a child of 2 to 4 years asking his / her parents why mummy is having

big breast and daddy so small or why Paul is having a hanging thing between his thigh and she is not. The answer to these questions should be simple and geared to the child level of understanding using terms and languages that are appropriate for male and female anatomy (Penis or Vulva). Nowadays, sex is being glamorized in books, television and movies. These places do not really encourage young ones to become chaste and also maintain conduct that gives them real happiness both now and in the future. Since they are curious to know about sex it will really be damaging if they are not given sex education both at home and in the school.

### **Statement of Problem**

There is increase problem in Nigeria today as to moral laxity, promiscuity, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI), forced marriage, school dropout etc. among youths. The increase of these problems according Orieh (1981) has been attributed to ignorance of youth about sex education, confusion and frustration resulting from lack of awareness of both the home and the school about the need for sex education in the educational setting. Hence, the relevance of sex education in our educational setting is the justification of the study.

### **Research Question**

For the purpose of this study, the following research questions were raised.

1. Is there any difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to gender?
2. Is there any difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to educational status?

### **Hypotheses**

For the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses have been drawn up for testing.

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to educational status.

## **REVIEW**

### **Meaning and Concept of Sex Education**

Sexual health is an important component of overall health

and well-being. It is a major positive part of personal health and healthy living and it follows that "sexual health education or sex education should be available to all as an important component of health promotion and services (Oganwu, 2003). In principle, all including youth have a right to the information, motivation/personal insight and skills necessary to prevent negative sexual health outcomes (e.g. sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancy) and also to enhance sexual health (e.g., maintenance of reproductive health, positive self image).

In order to ensure that youth are equipped with the information, motivation/personal insight and skills to protect their sexual and reproductive health, "it is imperative that schools, in cooperation with parents, the community, counselors in schools and also health care professionals, play a major role in sexual health education and promotion" (Oganwu, 2003).

Talk about imparting sex education to young ones and you are bound to get clashing view points from people no matter where you are in the world. The term is actually quite a broad one use to describe teaching about human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual intercourse and other aspects related to human sexual behavior. It is however pertinent to note that an appreciation of sex education in schools and the elimination of sexual abuses and misuse of youth should also be greatly influenced by the active participation of parents at home.

Commenting on schools responsibility in sex education, Oladepo and Akintayo (1991) explains that "sex education is a responsibility of both the school and parents. The parent's primary role is to set the behavioral unit for their children. Fakunle (1986) suggested that in the early stage of personality development mostly in adolescent stage, sex education should be encouraged at home (family), particularly sexology (study of humans sexual behavior and physiology, (study of the normal function of living things) know how the body functions and sexual exchange fully enjoyed.

From the above view, sex education can be said as a mechanism or procedures, which stands for the protection, improvement and development of the human family based on accepted ethical ideas. Oladepo and Akintayo (1991) commented that sex education of his time was a work of deception focusing on biology while concealing excitement-arousal which is what a pubescent individual is mostly interested in. He added that this emphasis, obscures what he believed to be a basic psychological principles that all worries and difficulties originate from unsatisfied sexual impulses. Strauss (1992) sees it as the education which teaches young ones what he or she should know for his or her personal conduct and relationship with others Rubin and Kirkendu (1994) on the other hand defines sex education as not merely a unity in reproduction and teaching of how babies are conceived and born, but that it has a far reaching scope and goal of helping young ones

incorporate sexual norms into their present and future life so as to provide them with some basic understanding of virtually every aspect of it, so that by the time they attain full maturity, they will be able to recognize these, in order for them to be able to interact harmoniously with those whose sex norms differ from their own.

Oladejo and Akintayo (1991) view sex education as a process of acquiring sex knowledge, positive attitude towards sexual acts, male and female relationship and the role of parents. Sex is not limited in fact to genital activities. In reality, sex describes a huge range of activities.

On this basis, the concept of sex education can be outlined as followed:-

- i. Knowledge of human reproduction.
- ii. Misuse and abuse of sex.
- iii. The spread and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STD).
- iv. Dangers of adolescent pregnancy.
- v. Importance of inter-personal relationship.
- vi. Choosing a partner.
- vii. Family planning, importance and methods.

A critical analysis of the above concepts of sex education, indicates that sex education is a wide discipline covering the wide broad field of psychology, medicine, biology physiology and anthropology. Therefore, to be able to teach sex education effectively, the individual should have a basic knowledge of the above field of study.

According to Oganwu (2003), sex is a dimorphic concept in other words, it is the structural differentiation between male and female. It can also be said as the functional activity used for procreation.

### **The Need for Sex Education in Secondary Schools**

A study on the Nigeria scene have revealed that a high percentage of youth expressed the view that they should not engage in premarital sexual activity, 25%-50% disclosed that they were already sexually active. Then 25% of young girls interviewed revealed that their first experience of sexual inter-course was through rape or in a situation where consent was procured by force. There is early initiation of sexual activity. There is also high incidence of teenage pregnancy. Teenagers account for 80% of unsafe abortion complications treated in hospitals.

Therefore there is need for young ones to establish and accept the role and responsibilities of their own gender by acquiring the knowledge of sex. This will help to set up a foundation for future development in their acquaintance with friends and lovers and their interpersonal relationship.

Since it is a kind of holistic education, it will teach an individual about self-acceptance and the attitude and

skills of interpersonal relationship.

Sex education will also help to lessen or reduce risk behaviours in teenagers such as engaging in an unprotected sex which can result in unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease STD's. the need for young people to cultivate a sense of responsibility towards others as oneself will also be fulfill. The need for sex education in the school can also be seen from the fact that many parents are shy about talking/teaching their children on this subject. Sex education impacted through schools can also prove to be a significant and effective method of bettering the youngster's sex-related knowledge, attitude and behaviour.

Also youngster's usually derives information on sex and related subjects from sources like friends, books, the media comprising advertising, television, magazines and the internet. The problem with all these sources is that, they may or may not really provide them with correct and accurate information. As such, sex education in school will help to transfer authentic information and in the process, also correct any misinformation that they may have apart from adding to their already existing knowledge.

### **Importance of Sex Education for Teenager**

While sex education is already part of a number of Western Countries such as the United States, its implementation in Nigeria schools recently kicked up a massive discussion. However, the proponents of sex education in schools usually underscore the following benefits advantages in support of their view.

A well developed and implemented school-based sex education programme can effectively help young people reduce their risk of STI/HIV infection and unwanted pregnancy. In addition, it should also be emphasized here that an important goal of sexuality education is to provide insights into broader aspects of sexuality, including sexual well-being and rewarding interpersonal relationships (Oganwu, 2003).

It will also help to provide young people with information on a wide range of sexual health topics including puberty, reproduction, healthy relationships, STI/AIDs prevention, birth control, abstinence, sexual orientation, and sexual abuse/coercion (Rueben, 1979).

Effective sex education will also support informed decision-making by providing individuals with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, personal insight, motivation and behavioural skills that are consistent with each individual's personal values and choices. For many young people, these personal values and choices will lead to the decision to abstain from sexual intercourse and other sexual activities. In addition, particularly for young teens who have not yet become sexually active, delaying first intercourse can also be an effective way for adolescents to avoid unwanted pregnancy and STI/HIV

infection.

Sexuality education programmes which focus on delaying first intercourse as part of a broadly based curriculum that also focuses on contraceptive/safer sex practices can help some adolescents who have been sexually active to have a re-think and also see the need to quit until they are physically and emotionally ready for it.

It is a fact that more and more teens these days are engaging into pregnancy sex. This further underscores the need for sex education to students. This will help them to make better informed decision about their personal sexual activities.

Sex education imparted through school can also prove to be a significance and effective method of bettering the youngster's sex-related knowledge, attitude and behaviour.

Sex education is also importance because many parents (especially in African) are shy about talking/teaching their children on this subject.

The provision of information about sexual orientation also helps to fulfill the sexual health education needs of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students such as homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation can be addressed.

Through sex education children will be able to establish and accept the role and responsibility of their own gender by acquiring the knowledge of sex.

It also enable young ones understand the body structures of men and women and acquire the knowledge about birth.

Through sex education, young people will be able to develop a positive sense of their own sexuality by creating opportunities for them to consider all aspects of sexuality, ask questions and also understand that there are adults who supports them as they learn about this part of themselves.

### Agencies for Sex Education

In order to ensure that youth are equipped with the information, motivation/personal insight, and skills to protect their sexual and reproductive health, it is imperative that schools, in cooperation with parents, the community, and healthcare professionals play a major role in sexual health education and promotion (Oganwu, 2004).

Parent and guardians are a primary and important source of sexual health education for young people. This is because adolescents often look to their families as one of several preferred sources of sexual health information King et al (1988). In addition, most young people also agree according to Byers et al (2003) that sexual health education should be a shared responsibility between parents and schools.

Other agencies for the promotion of sex education will

include

**The Mass Media:** This refers to both electronic and the print media. E.g. Radio, television, journals, newspaper, cinema etc. All these can play a major roles as an agency for sex education. Byers (2003) states that the mass media has educated the Nigeria teenagers to a great extent. A popular programme on Delta Rainbow Television (DRTV) titled "I NEED TO KNOW". It is meant to educate young people on sex issue including the awareness of Sexually Transmitted Disease (STDs) and also the danger of early marriage. Programme of this nature can be a source of help to our young ones.

The community can also be another agency for sex education since moral and religious values are the fabric of any community and most children absorb values, attitudes and beliefs from it, the community can do well to organize programmes that will influence teenagers positively, as in the case in Otu-Jeremi community where a similar programme was organized by SPDC in 2000.

Another agency is religious organization (Church): The various religious bodies are also not left out in the race. They can do well to in still in members moral and values that are upbuilding and that can benefits them (especially young people).

The school as stated by UNESCO is another ideal forum for imparting sex education because of their ability to reach so many children and adolescent and also because of their standing as trusted sources of information within the community. Healthcare professionals can also play a major role in the promotion of sexual health education.

### METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive study. The target population consists of public senior secondary school teachers in Delta State, Nigeria.

For the purpose of authenticity, the researcher used the random sampling technique. This method is adopted because it gives a more objective result since the selection of sample is not influenced by the researcher's influence. It also ensures that the population is fairly covered.

The instrument used in this study was a self structured questionnaire which consists of two sections A and B section. A was made up of personal data while B consists of statements/questions designed to determine knowledge of sex education. The respondents were requested to indicate either "Yes or No".

The questionnaire was made up of twenty (20) questions and it was given to the supervisor for criticism and suggestions/corrections for its content and face values. The instrument was also found reliable using 10 subjects and the test retest method was employed. The data collected were analyzed with the Pearson 'r'

**Table 1:** Chi-square calculated value of observed and expected on attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to gender

Observed	Expected	(o-E)	(o-E) <sup>2</sup>	X2 $\frac{(o-E)^2}{E}$
89	50	-39	1521	30.42
9	50	+41	1681	33.62
96	50	-46	2116	42.32
69	50	-19	361	7.22
9	48	+39	1521	31.688
89	48	-41	1681	35.020
2	48	+46	2116	44.083
29	48	+19	361	7.529
392	392	0	11358	31888.212

**Table 2:** Chi-square calculated value of observed and expected on attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to educational status

Observed	Expected	(o-E)	(o-E) <sup>2</sup>	X2 $\frac{(o-E)^2}{E}$
73	60	-13	169	2.817
98	60	-38	1444	24.067
89	60	-29	841	14.017
93	60	-33	1089	18.15
25	38	+13	169	4.448
-	38	-18	1444	38
9	38	+29	841	22.131
5	38	+33	1089	28.658
392	392	0	7086	152.288

statistic, which yielded 0.75 reliability coefficient. This implies that the instrument was reliable.

The questionnaire was personally distributed by the researcher to the respondents (teachers) in each of the schools in the area under study and later went for retrieval.

The responses were grouped into two categories of "Yes or No". The statistical method used in the analysis of data in this study, is the chi-square.

### Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

In the analyses, the hypotheses formulated were used as a basis for the researcher's conclusion.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to gender.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Test: Degree of freedom} &= (R-1)(C-1) \\ &= (4-1)(4-1) \\ &= 3 \times 3 \\ &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Level of significance} &= 0.05 \\ \text{Critical value} &= 3.841 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Calculated value} = 31888.212$$

Table 1 show that the calculated t-value of 31888.212 is more than the critical t-value of 3.841 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to gender.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to educational status.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Test: Degree of freedom} &= (R-1)(C-1) \\ &= (4-1)(4-1) \\ &= 3 \times 3 \\ &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Level of significance} &= 0.05 \\ \text{Critical value} &= 3.841 \\ \text{Calculated value} &= 152.288 \end{aligned}$$

Table 2 show that the calculated t-value of 152.288 is more than the critical t-value of 3.841 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex

education due to educational status or attainment.

## FINDINGS

The following findings were made in the study.

1. There is significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to gender.
2. There is significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education due to their educational status or attainment.

## CONCLUSION

It is concluded in the study that the attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education differs due to gender. The attitude of teachers towards the relevance of sex education also differs due to their educational status or attainment. And, sex education is relevant in secondary school curricula.

## Recommendations

From the findings, the following were recommended in the study:

1. Sex education programmes should be held for young people in secondary schools to help their self-worth, sense of responsibility, understanding and acceptance of diversity and sexual health.
2. Sex education should be given to dispel the unfounded belief by many that sex education would encourage "sexual experiment".
3. Sex education should also be delivered via mass media as most information available to youth comes largely from news, magazines, movie, etc.
4. In a nutshell, young people need sex education in order to assist them to develop a positive sense of their own sexuality by creating opportunities for them to consider all aspects of sexuality, to ask questions, and to understand that there are adults who support them as they learn about this part of themselves.

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