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No Turning Back: Exploring Sex Education in the United States

By

Xiyuan Chen

A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education
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No Turning Back: Exploring Sex Education in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Sex education provides valuable information for young people to know and practice safe and appropriate sexual activities. Sex education also educates students on what healthy relationships look like, developing their emotional and psychological well-being. The United States has increasingly adopted sex education for adolescents, who are highly vulnerable age group. However, the programs often only focus on abstinence and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and to some extent offer a simplistic discussion around consent. Most however, do not adequately address complicated issues like personal responsibility, open communication, a deeper understanding of gender and gender relations and the incorporation of LGBTQQ education. This paper explores various practices for LGBTQQ-inclusive sex education to teach adolescents informed content in order to improve their health levels. Methods that have produced positive outcomes in teaching existing forms of sex education are useful in adopting LGBTQQ-inclusive programs. Some recommendable actions include the development of LGBTQQ-inclusive sex education to provide learning content and training teachers to ensure they are competent to teach different sexual orientations. There is also a need for increased budgets to fund LGBTQQ-inclusive learning activities. Also, a supportive and safe school environment is necessary for LGBTQQ teenagers to learn and thrive in. The paper also describes factors supporting the provision of sex education to adolescent, and pros and cons. U.S. schools need to support LGBTQQ education to promote the health of this group to be on par with heterosexual teenagers.

Keywords: Gender, LGBTQQ, Sex Education, Adolescent, Schools

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This paper reviews the available literature to explore sex education within the context of North America, with a particular focus on issues facing LGBTQQ youth. The topic of sex and sexuality has attracted researchers—such as Gegenfurtner and Gebhardt (2017), Mayo (2007), Rankin (2003), and Renn (2010)—who provide an extensive body of literature to support ongoing interventions and inform future activities. Then, the researchers analyze the relationship between sexual consent and sexual violence (Adams, 2019). Given the impact on the health of the heterosexual persons, the measures that have been adopted to minimize incidents can produce positive outcomes when utilized in the case of the LGBTQQ community (Slater, 2013). In particular, the provision of LGBTQQ-inclusive sex education can go a long way to sensitize adolescents to take personal responsibility to prevent or minimize risks in school.

Outline of Paper

The current study is organized into sections informed by the literature. It begins by defining sex education and provides a description of the trends and practices in the U.S, but it may also incorporate some information from the Canadian context. Following this, I provide an overview of LGBTQQ education as part of sex education and practices adopted in the U.S. to educate adolescents. The understanding of sex education leads to the identification of the problem of inadequate teaching of LGBTQQ education in U.S. schools and the need for facilitation. Next, the paper discusses the factors encouraging the adoption of sex education, followed by a description of the pros and cons. The study goes on to explore how sex education is facilitated in the U.S. The information available in the literature provides insights for measures that can facilitate the adoption of LGBTQQ-inclusive sex education for the adolescents.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sex, Gender and Gender Identity

People often confuse sex, gender and gender identity. In fact, they are different things. The doctor often assigns the sex at birth based on genitals and chromosomes (Multicultural & Diversity Affairs., n.d.). Gender is more complicated than sex, because it is related to being male or female, which refers to social or cultural differences (Little, 2016). Gender is not about body parts, it's more about what people expect to do because of sex (Planned Parenthood, n.d.). Gender is a social construct. As for gender identity, it is how people feel inside, how people express gender through clothes, behavior, and personal appearance. It's a kind of feeling that starts earlier through a person's life (Planned Parenthood, n.d.).

Sex is a label decided by the reproductive organs at birth (Evans, 2019). However, gender is not limited to the reproductive organs. It also includes gender identity which is a person's perception, understanding and experience of their own and social roles (Little, 2016). For example, the clothing people wear, people's appearance and people's behavior all can be express their gender identity (Planned Parenthood, n.d.), highlighting how gender is socially constructed. Most people identify as either male or female. Some people who look like men, but they are biologically female. Some people don't think of themselves as either male or female so that they may be such as "gender queer" or "gender variant" (Planned Parenthood, n.d.). Also, if someone's gender identity matches their biological gender called cisgender. However, the gender identity and gender assigned at birth are not always matched (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.). For example, someone who was born with male genitalia is classified as male, but whose gender identity may be female or otherwise called transgender (Planned Parenthood, n.d.).

Sex Education in Schools

Sex education entails teaching about issues surrounding human sexuality and human relationships in schools (Kocsis, 2019). Sex education helps students understand themselves and helps them make better decisions concerning to their sexual practices along with educating them on issues of gender and gender relations. Sex education is also

necessary to bridge the gaps in the acquisition of sexuality information (Kocsis, 2019). However, it goes beyond educating youth about sex to also include a wide range of issues such as responsible emotional relations, sexual relationships, human sexual bodies, sexual responsibilities, reproductive health, sexual activities, birth-control methods, safe sex, sexual reproduction, and abstinence, among others (Kocsis, 2019). In the past, there was some teaching of sex education in schools. However, youth mainly learned through social interactions with their peers, families, or programs offered by religious organizations and cultural systems (Levin, 2010). However, some of these sources of information were very limited in their capacity to educate youth in a sophisticated way around topics found and sex education (Levin, 2010). Indeed, teaching topics related to sex education is best left to those adults who are informed by the best available science and research such as teachers.

Many problems relating to sexuality have been on the rise, necessitating the provision of guidance for youth to confront the problem (Leung, Shek, Leung, & Shek, 2019). For instance, the invention of the Internet and social media has led to an unlimited supply of sexual content that young people can access on their mobile phones and computers (Thornburgh & Lin, 2004). American youth, in particular boys, watch much more pornography than their parents know, and it is shaping their ideas about sexual intimacy and power (Jones, 2018). Absent guidance from informed teachers, boys are taught by media, where they find themselves overwhelmed by images of male sexual entitlement and female passivity. Thus, the sex education that this content provides boys often fuels misogynistic and sexist fantasies (Jones, 2018). These developments have led to problems such as sexual abuse and other offensive sexual behaviors (Elliott & Beech, 2009). Of course, problems faced by youth when it comes to sex education is not limited to how their attitudes are shaped by Internet content. Cases of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and diseases (STIs and STDs), violence in relationships, stigma, and other issues are examples of problems related to human sexuality (Sears, 2013). Sex education will help to address these issues and promote the wellbeing of learners.

Over recent years, revamped and updated, research-based sex education has been adopted in schools to provide information to the children (Trust for America's Health, 2016). In America, local governments have the mandate to support education provision in their areas and make decisions on whether to implement sex education in schools and at

what levels. Twenty-four states such as California, Nevada, New Mexico have accepted the teaching of sex education in schools in their territories (Trust for America's Health, 2016). Each state develops policies and programs to be followed. The provision of sex education to adolescents has sparked ongoing debates. In some states such as Texas, people oppose this move as one contributing to the weak morals and behaviors of teenagers (Tanne, 2005). Other states like California support adolescent sex education because this population is the most vulnerable to problems related to sex and sexuality (Kattari & Matter, 2013). The above-mentioned explains the variations in teaching practices observed across states.

The teaching of sex education in schools is not always welcomed as some educators are worried about the side-effect of discussing sensitive topics such as sex (Mellanby, Newcombe, Rees, & Tripp, 2001). However, teenagers have a strong desire to learn about sexual health because changes in their bodies make them want to explore more about themselves in this way. Nevertheless, if students are not provided with CSE, it will be a hidden danger to the sexual health of adolescents. So far, many schools have adopted sex education programs to fit the needs of teenagers (Trust for America's Health, 2016). Teachers in these schools select educational materials for different levels of students.

School is the most direct and useful place to transfer scientific, research-based knowledge about topics related to sex education. For example, some parents avoided talk about sex, and they think their children will come to their questions when they encounter sexual problems. In contrast, children think that parents will discuss sex first because they feel embarrassed to talk about sex with their parents (Flores, & Barroso, 2017). Over time, children were not being guided by their parents on sex, for various reasons. Because of this, teachers can play a crucial role in the whole process. At the same time, the teachers have also expressed support for sex education are interested in obtaining professional training on how to teach adolescents (Kocsis, 2019). Teachers recognize the growing need to guide children in their growth, particular about sex issues (Woo et al., 2011).

The resources and time allocated for sex education are also inadequate. Unlike the academic work that is tested to assess the development of the learners, sex education does not involve these exams. Because it is a subject that is not tested by standardized testing, so it does not receive the same attention or funding as other subjects such as math. Schools

teach the students to create awareness and not primarily to ensure optimal growth in sexuality and social aspects. Hence, schools have not attained full implementation of sex education for adolescents to realize full benefits.

Although schools have not attained full implementation of sex education in the U.S., many people have increasingly supported these programs to help address the problems affecting adolescents (Stanger & Hall, 2011). In California, a large number of non-English speaking parents (Chinese, Korean, Hispanic and Muslim) are against the adoption of sex education in the early stages, arguing that the state's failure to consider the cultural backgrounds of minorities makes it hard for them to accept the subject. However, more recently, they have increased their support and participation in the implementation phase (Millner, Mulekar & Turrens, 2015), after having reviewed the content.

With the development of science and technology, cybersex and network security risks have brought a clear challenge to teenagers. Some of these challenges included Internet content that was increasingly defined as pornography, but also educators, parents and other adults are concerned by youth's use of social media and its complicated relationship to sex and sexual identity (Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2008). Twenty years ago, educators and parents alike did not have to worry about 'sexting.' Sexting, by definition, is best understood as the exchange between two or more people of sexual messages, photos or videos via a mobile phone (Matte, 2019). Therefore, educators and other concerned adults view sex education for teenagers as necessary in that young people should approach these particular issues, including sexting in an informed and thoughtful way.

Some research has pointed to the fact that many young people support the provision and implementation of high-quality sex education in schools because they cannot get adequate knowledge from their parents (Levin, 2010). This is not surprising that it is fairly well-known that some parents find it difficult to talk about sex and sex-related issues for a variety of different reasons, including lack of knowledge and embarrassment (Ashcraft & Murray, 2017). The failure of parents to talk about sex and sex-related issues openly with children at a young age is counterproductive in many ways as a child's initial curiosity about sex is simply about acquiring knowledge of sex (Levin, 2010). Children are curious about the world, and that includes issues around sex and sexual relationships. Moreover,

since some parents are reluctant to talk about these particular issues, or if they do decide to discuss these issues may do so in an uninformed way, it seems clear that the best place for young people to learn about sex education is in school (Ashcraft & Murray, 2017). A well-informed, educated, and thoughtful teacher can help develop students' knowledge base a young age around issues that they likely have been curious about for some time.

Oddly, some of the problems arise from parents' own education. Many adults did not receive research-based learning when it comes to sexual education in their schooling, and therefore have significant difficulties talking about these issues with their children (Levin, 2010). Many parents have little understanding of sexuality, and adolescents cannot rely on them to acquire skills to cope with sexual challenges facing them (Levin, 2010). To put in a little bit differently, the problem is cyclical as misinformed children become misinformed adults, who go on to misinform their children. It seems reasonable then to suggest that youth should rely on teachers, health practitioners to obtain research-based, up-to-date information about sex (Levin, 2010). For example, courses and lectures on sex education can be conducted in schools and communities to teach scientific sexual knowledge, such as the human sexual organs and reproductive system, human sexual development, sexual orientation and gender, and how to prevent the spread of diseases.

LGBTQQ Education in Sex Education

LGBTQQ issues are a part of any good sex education curriculum. LGBTQQ is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning, which represents gender minority groups (Gegenfurtner & Gebhardt, 2017). This historical marginalized group differs from other people who identify as cisgender. The beliefs, sexual activities, behaviors, and other aspects of this segment are in line with their sexual orientation (Sutter & Perrin, 2016).

LGBTQQ issues are part of the broader aspect of human sexuality, and members continue to push for political and social recognition (Trust for America's Health, 2016). LGBTQQ education is a constituent of sex education and is among the issues covered in comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) (Trust for America's Health, 2016). It entails teaching the aspects relating to the LGBTQQ group in similar ways as the education targeting heterosexuals. Some of the issues affecting them are similar to those facing cisgender persons. They experience pregnancies, STDs, violence, relationships, and others.

However, the LGBTQQ group faces more problems such as institutional and individual violence, discrimination, cyberbullying, isolation, victimization and stigma (Kattari & Matter, 2013). For instance, they experience discrimination in healthcare facilities when they go to seek medical attention (Kattari & Matter, 2013). They face every day discriminations based on their perceived or real sexual identity in schools. Also, many interventions are available targeting heterosexuals, but the LGBTQQ does not receive the same kind of assistance or support in order to manage their problems (Russell & Fish, 2016). It all stems from society's low tolerance for LGBTQQ communities. These problems may lead to dangerous or self-abuse behaviors such as substance abuse, which affect their health adversely compared to heterosexual people (Hafeez, Zeshan, Tahir, Jahan, & Naveed, 2017). The LGBTQQ communities require sex education that focuses on these unique practices, and problems to register great health outcomes. CSE programs offer this information.

However, CSE is rare in U.S. schools, and this leads to the exclusion of LGBTQQ students in sex education learning practices (Elia & Eliason, 2010). This is unfortunate as the CSE curriculum provides sex education for all school levels, and it should be available to all students in an equal way. The information provided helps to meet the needs of children and adolescents, including LGBTQQ at every stage of development. Despite this, it is rare to find schools teaching the CSE in America (Trust for America's Health, 2016). For the most part, schools tend to offer sex education programs primarily targeting cisgender identities. Given the heteronormative nature of schools in general, this is not surprising. Although the teachers are aware of the likelihood of some students being LGBTQQ, they do not offer teaching that is inclusive for this group. LGBTQQ learners have little or no option as they have to depend on sex education designed to meet the needs of cisgender youth, but they often receive minimal information about sex education targeting LGBTQQ (Kocsis, 2019). As such, they are not cognizant of problems that may arise due to inappropriate sexual behaviors.

Adolescents from LGBTQQ communities may face unique risks and stresses, including bullying, victimization, bias, and isolation by heterosexual teachers and students (Gegenfurtner & Gebhardt, 2017). It is often the case, unfortunately, that the school environment is not safe nor conducive for them to go public about their sexual orientation

(Snyder, Burack & Petrova, 2017). Students to identify as LGBTQQ often have to hide their identities within the context of school for fear of ridicule or physical or verbal violence. It is long being known, in the United States but also in Canada, that schools are deeply heteronormative, and foster a climate that nurtures homophobia (Little, 2016).

Historically, the heteronormative nature of schools has informed the knowledge and practices found in sex education classes (Kocsis, 2019). To put it in a little bit differently, all students are assumed to be heterosexuals. This assumption has had a wide variety of implications for the LGBTQQ community. To take one short example, LGBTQQ students faced difficulties in sex education as they cannot approach teachers to ask for information on LGBTQQ issues (Snyder et al., 2017). To a certain degree, these difficulties would often stem from explicit or implicit discrimination against LGBTQQ classmates by heterosexual teachers and classmates. This, of course, with only individual-based discrimination, which ran alongside institutional forms of oppression and discrimination. Although heterosexuality is one of the sexual orientations that distinguishes lesbians and bisexuals, the share of the population is overwhelmingly higher than that of LGBTQQ. Therefore, heterosexuality is the gender dominant group (Little, 2016). Inadequate LGBTQQ-inclusive sex education calls for facilitation efforts to ensure many adolescents obtain the right information to deal with issues they face.

Researchers have demonstrated that LGBTQQ students are often the most vulnerable group in schools (Russell & Fish, 2016). Part of the problem is that there are still some parents who are homophobic and oppose the inclusion of LGBTQQ education in sex education. Sex education classes taught by informed and thoughtful teachers can help to counteract the homophobic attitudes that may be found in the home. Children who identify as LGBTQQ often need support and encouragement from adults outside the home, and good teachers can provide this. Sex education teaches youth the values of respect and tolerance, requiring students to know that the LGBTQQ group is a natural presence, clearly part of the natural world.

In the United States, the number of schools that teach CSE is still in the minority (Elia & Eliason, 2010). There is less research on sex and sexuality and the needs of the LGBTQQ group. The problem then is that much of the content found in sex education classes tend to ignore valuable content for LGBTQQ students. So many young people from

LGBTQQ community do not have the necessary information to help them make safe and informed decisions. It seems reasonable to suggest that publicly funded schools have the responsibility to provide sex education to all youth that covers the natural variety of sexual orientations. No matter what youth is sexual orientation or identity in their self-development, they could feel that the sex education curriculum is relevant to them and fulfill their needs. Therefore, adding LGBTQQ content into sex education not only promotes gender equality but also helps LGBTQQ fight against gender discrimination and gender-based violence.

CHAPTER 3

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SEX-RELATED DISEASES AMONG THE ADOLESCENTS

The Spread of STIs and STDs

Inappropriate sex education may lead to many severe problems for many youths (Haberland, 2015). For instance, the prevalence of sexually transmittable infections and diseases necessitates the provision of sex education to all young people to prevent new incidents (Haberland, 2015). First of all, sexually transmitted diseases are very harmful if the treatment is not timely (Haberland, 2015). For example, advanced syphilis can cause nerve, cardiovascular and bone damage (Bezalely, Jacob, Flusser, & Ablin, 2014). Also, those who contract the disease face stigma from others, and this negatively affects their mental health, self-esteem, and interactions with others (Haberland, 2015). It is not hard to imagine that if a youth's peers found out that another person had syphilis, that social stigma would not take place. Secondly, STDs can be easily transmitted to a partner. Contaminated youth's household items can also be transmitted to families, causing STDs to spread within the family (Haberland, 2015). Finally, if a youth is pregnant, the sick mother can transmit sexually transmitted pathogens to fetuses or infants. For instance, pregnant women suffered from syphilis. Then, the syphilis helix can be transmitted to the fetus through the placenta, which will cause abortion, premature birth, stillbirth and congenital syphilis ("Syphilis", 2019). The spread of STDs destroys each aspect of life, so it is urgent to carry out sex education for adolescents.

Another sexually transmitted virus is HPV, more than 70 percent of women are infected with HPV because men carry the carrier of the HPV virus, which is transmitted to women through sexual relations (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2019). According to research, HPV contributes to cervical cancer in women, among other infections (Castellsague, 20018). Other STDs include gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, herpes, and hepatitis (Howard, 2019). Also, sharing items such as needles, razors, and toothbrushes, which is common among people in sexual relationships, can lead to diseases (Mansour-Ghanaei et al., 2013). Therefore, various methods have been developed to control the spread of STIs and STDs. They included the use of protection, tests to a partner's

health status, abstinence, and responsible sexual practices. This information needs to be passed to the youths to prevent incidents.

Young people face increased risks for contracting diseases, especially the LGBTQQ community (Ponzetti, 2015). They require sex education to enable them to take personal responsibility to prevent harm. For example, young people need to take into careful consideration there are risks involved in having sexual relations with multiple partners (Ponzetti, 2015). It is not hard to imagine that they may not know the health status of the people they have sexual intercourse with and can be ignorant of safety precautions to take (Hebenton & Seddon, 2009). Even some LGBTQQ members are unable to recognize that same-sex sex also requires skills and safety measures to prevent the spread of disease, due to inadequate sex education materials (Hebenton & Seddon, 2009).

Following this, adolescents require information to understand the risks inherently found in physical and emotional intimacy, and, of course, how to practice safe sex. Sex education covers all matters related to emotional and psychological health, sex and sexuality, including STIs and STDs. Through sex education, youth learn the causes, effects, and preventive measures. Educators also teach them on how to use protection correctly because mistakes and incorrect use increases risks for diseases, and perhaps, unwanted pregnancies. Those who are sexually active can apply this information to avoid or minimize the risks of contracting diseases (Rickard, 2016).

Sex education also creates awareness of the available treatments and management practices, as well as the need to seek quick medical attention (United Nations Population Fund, 2018). Some illnesses can be prevented after sexual activity, and this encourages adolescents who may face rape or unprotected sex to visit health facilities and get treatments to avoid infections (Rickard, 2016). Thus, the risks of STIs and STDs support the adoption of sex education for adolescents to get information for preventing or minimizing new incidents.

Unwanted Pregnancies and Reproductive Health Complications

Sex education classes, grounded in a rich curriculum and taught by a thoughtful and informed teacher, can do a world of good for young people — especially young girls, who run the risk of having an unwanted pregnancy. The lack of awareness among adolescents, for both boys and girls, about contraceptive knowledge and sexual protection

has led to an increase in the number of unwanted pregnancies (Craig, Dehlendorf, Borrero, Harper, & Rocca, 2014). That a young woman in high school is likely not ready for pregnancy and the responsibilities that come with having children (Herrman, 2007). Of course, that is also true of boys, but the responsibility of most high school pregnancies tends to rest on women. One responsibility that young women who are pregnant face is deciding between an abortion. Not only would the consideration of abortion and the experience itself produce psychological anxieties (e.g., shame) and potential harm for young women, but abortion may also lead to accidents such as bleeding to death.

Moreover, there are risks for the destruction of the womb that may necessitate the removal of the uterus and make the mother unable to carry a pregnancy, which can haunt them when they are ready for children as they age (Rickard, 2016). However, the problems do not end there for young women who find themselves pregnant. They can also give birth to preterm babies or newborns with physical and biological disabilities. These complications affect the mothers emotionally and can cause them long-lasting suffering, especially if they lose their babies or give birth to infants with physical challenges (Steel & Herlitz, 2005).

Unwanted pregnancies also affect girls socially. After they experience ten months of being pregnant and accompanied by long period breastfeeding, young mothers lose significant school time. When they give attention to their children, this can lead to poor performance and impact their future success (Potard, Courtois & Rusch, 2008). Girls can also suffer from weak relationships with their peers because of the stigma attached to young girls who get pregnant (Potard, Courtois & Rusch, 2008). The shame in the embarrassment which follows young women, and by the way which rarely follows young boys, is sure to bring psychological harm to the students. However, it is also much more complicated than this. For example, it is hard for young mothers to get into peers' conversation because as mothers, their lives revolve around their children. To put a little bit differently, the priorities of these young women change from the priorities of their friends. Furthermore, the way they are in shape after pregnancy can make girls feel more inferior, thus avoiding the social circle of their peers. The dangers of unwanted pregnancy mentioned above show that adolescents girls may suffer from psychological and health problems without proper sex education and measures.

Adolescents require sensitization on issues of unwanted pregnancies and associated health complications. Young people can get this information through sex education in schools. Training for both boys and girls is necessary, as the former can appreciate the consequences of adolescent pregnancies on the girls and support preventive measures. For instance, sexually active adolescents can use protection to prevent pregnancies (Thomas, 2009). Sex education also describes the experiences of the girls who get pregnant that encourage teenagers to show compassion and support instead of cutting ties and looking down on them. In so doing, they minimize social suffering and stigma for victims (Irvine, 2004). Sex education also provides knowledge on how victims get assistance to prevent or cope with pregnancies and outcomes. The use of protection and contraceptives are some of the methods available. Adolescents further learn the need to seek quick medical attention after unsafe sex as doctors can help stop pregnancies. This information is useful for girls who may be raped, enticed, or coerced into having unprotected sex (Kirby, 2002). Those who get pregnant get the necessary knowledge to minimize complications. Hence, the risks for unwanted pregnancies and complications call for sex education for adolescents as many are increasingly sexually active.

Peer Influence and Irresponsible Sexual Behaviors

Teenagers are more open with their peers as they spend more time together and confront similar experiences, unlike with different age groups (Gullette & Lyons, 2006). Adolescents are at a stage in life where they undergo significant physical and biological changes that can cause frustrations. They feel connected by sharing similar situations. For this reason, coupled with their immaturity, teenagers easily fall for peer influence, exposing them to the risk of irresponsible sexual activities (Thomas, 2009). Despite this, peers who are guiding the others often lack in-depth knowledge on topics such as sex and sexuality (Gullette & Lyons, 2006). There are high risks of many adolescents getting misleading information, ending up engaging in irresponsible sexual behaviors.

During adolescence, with physical and psychological changes, many young people are curious about sex and try to practice with their peers. For example, the sharing of sexual experiences among peers makes them more eager to experiment with sex. However, when they do not receive enough education on sexual safety, such sexual experimentation is unsafe (Kreager & Staff, 2009). Following this, peer influence can drag many into sexual

relationships and activities (Schroeder & Kuriansky, 2009). Those who are sexually active share stories of their experiences and persuade others into the act.

Sex education in schools ensure the students get the right information when they are highly curious, and this help to combat peer influence (Gullette & Lyons, 2006). Sex educators possess professional sex education knowledge and received professional training. They could teach professional sex education simple and clearly (Sexuality Education, n.d.). Moreover, teachers have a neutral attitude towards sexual morality so that students could have a smooth communication with their teacher, and they do not need to worry about embarrassed and challenging to accept. This is different from the sexual communication among peers. Teachers teach more authoritative knowledge than students' private exploration of sex (Carr, 2020). Students can listen and grasp sex lessons then apply them in their lives. Hence, peer pressure and high risks for irresponsible sexual behaviors warrant the provision of sex education for teenagers in schools.

The Threat of Technological and Internet Influence

Unprecedented technological advancement and Internet access in contemporary society poses a significant challenge for young people as they engage in relationships and sexual activities (Daneback, Månsson, & Ross, 2012). They have access to open sources of information that can shape their behaviors in ways that do themselves and others harm. The vulnerabilities in Internet network regulation make it easy to search for information and advertising about sex. The Internet is awash with “free” content, including sex trading ads, sex videos, erotic novels, porn sites such as *Pornhub* (Schroeder & Kuriansky, 2009). Also, there are dating sites where individuals can interact and meet others interested in sexual affair such as *Tinder*. Adolescents can access these sites through their mobile phones and computers. Although the sites put age limits on users, ineligible Internet users can falsify their details to gain access to sexual materials on the websites.

Parents and guardians have to monitor the children on their Internet activities to ensure they do not browse unofficial websites (Thomas, 2009). However, this is barely effective as the children spend much time away from their parents. Also, they can conceal their Internet activities by using secret browsing features. Besides the Internet, other technologies expose teenagers to sexual material. For instance, some songs, videos, and TV programs promote behaviors in the open (Schroeder & Kuriansky, 2009). Adolescents

perceive activities on these media as allowable and practice them in real-life. The provision of sex education in schools helps to counter Internet influence as learners obtain vetted content to ensure it is appropriate for their age. Also, the students can get an adequate education in classes and satisfy their curiosity. Following this, some lack the interest to search the Internet. Furthermore, teachers equip adolescents with the right information that enables them to recognize misleading websites and observe responsible sexual behaviors.

The Collapse of Traditional Sex Education Systems

Sex education for adolescents in schools is necessary, if the goal is to help them live healthy productive lives (Irvine, 2004). If young students do not receive accurate sex knowledge from formal education, but instead turn to private knowledge they are likely to cause themselves and others harm. The ‘private’ knowledge obtained in this way is not rigorous. In the past sex education system, children did not receive sex education at a young age, and people had ways of teaching their children on matters of sex, sexuality, relationships, family, and other aspects of life as they grew to adulthood (Ponzetti, 2015). Many parents think that children will know about sex when they grow up, although somehow this magically happens. They do not think the same way when they think and math or science.

The Pressure of Advocacy Groups

The increased exposure and suffering of teenagers from negative consequences of sexual offences and malpractices have led to the emergence of activists who push for the adoption of policies to safeguard young people. These groups are interested in ensuring the government and education policymakers implement strategies that protect the children from violations (Thomas, 2009). They speak on behalf of the children who are not mature enough to voice their interests. They engage in various activities to push the authorities to develop changes in the education sector and curriculum to address problems facing adolescents, such as sex and sexuality (Thomas, 2009). The young people have been at the receiving end of irresponsible sexual behaviors, and the provision of sex education is encouraged to equip adolescents with the right information to overcome adverse consequences (Kocsis, 2019).

These groups, such as the America Social Hygiene Association that oppose unwanted pregnancies, the spread of STIs and STDs, among other adverse effects on young people (Zimmerman, 2015), see sex education as necessary for youth. The advocacy groups also support the provision of skills that can help prevent these issues from enabling the teenagers to complete their education smoothly and transition to adulthood without difficulties. The groups recognize the increased challenges and temptations in contemporary life and the need to empower young people with knowledge for them to make informed decisions on sexual matters and other social issues (Schroeder & Kuriansky, 2009). For instance, the availability of the many avenues for children to learn or access misleading sexual information has driven activists to support sex education as a way of protecting adolescents. Also, the group of advocating sex education are aware that cases of sexual harassment and abuse of children are increasing these years. About 325,000 children in the United States run the risk of sexual exploitation (National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, 2012). Thus, the advocacy group needs to call for educating the teenagers on strategies to avoid these sexual offenders, but also cast an eye to educating around sexual predators.

Supportive Studies

The provision of sex education has received an endorsement from scholars who have carried out studies on the topic (Breuner, Mattson, & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2016). Evidence-based research works in education matters play a significant role in the adoption of reforms to address issues facing the sector. Many scholars have studied various concerns on sex education in schools to provide evidence that help in decision-making. Following this, they have provided information on the need for sex education to respond to challenges affecting adolescents (Schroeder & Kuriansky, 2009). Some studies have focused on the support of sex education by parents and guardians, the opinions of the adolescents, roles of schools in developing people's behaviors, and the pros and cons of offering sex education (United Nations Population Fund, 2018).

Furthermore, the adolescents have voiced the support for sex education because they do not have different platforms to learn from, and are interested in knowing more (Rickard, 2016). Some parents are not free to talk to them about sexual matters and trust

their teachers for the provision of guidance. Parents and guardians increasingly support the provision of education in schools because they have little time to spend with their children, and they are not comfortable engaging the adolescents in sex-related topics.

Scholars have also shown that the school provides an excellent environment to teach sex education (Kocsis, 2019). Learners and teachers are more comfortable in participating in sex education because of lower incidences of judgment on their morals. Available studies have shown more benefits of sex education for adolescents as they become aware and can use knowledge to observe responsible sexual behaviors (Leung et al., 2019). Research works on the prevalence of sexual activity has shown that many teenagers are sexually active, which encourages the provision of sex education for them to engage in safe sex and avoid risky behaviors (Breuner et al., 2016). Thus, the availability of supportive study findings promotes the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual practices in schools.

Stigmatization

The effects of the stigma associated with engagement in sexual practices have contributed to the adoption of sex education to promote the mental well-being of adolescents (Gruskin, Yadav, Castellanos-Usigli, Khizanishvili, Kismödi, & Gruskin, 2019). The teenagers face increased risks of shame as they are immature to know how to deal with problems they face, ranging from body changes to failed relationships and negative consequences of sexual activities (Schroeder & Kuriansky, 2009). Adolescents undergo significant changes in their bodies, and many are frustrated as they do not understand or experience extreme changes when compared to others. The youths lose self-esteem and need support to recognize the changes as natural and healthy (Schroeder & Kuriansky, 2009). The teenagers learn of the possibility of more significant changes among some and how to handle them. Students can appreciate the differences with their peers, accept themselves, and gain the support of others. In so doing, they can cope with the stigma that comes with body changes.

Some young people have experienced adverse consequences from their sexuality and sexual relationships that have caused them a stigma. Teenage girls who get pregnant can feel ashamed as they handle the shame of engaging in unprotected sexual activities (Thomas, 2009). The peers of such girls can look down upon them and cut their

associations, and this causes stigma to the victims. Also, some young people can be victims of sexual offences of rape and defilement, which causes them trauma and poor self-image (Chivers-Wilson, 2006). The victims live with memories of these ordeals for a long time, and some may attempt suicide to avoid shame in the eyes of other people. Some teenagers also contract STIs and STDs, while others suffer from failed relationships that expose them to stigma (Rickard, 2016). Peers can isolate or make fun of them, which can drive some victims to have low esteem or even take their lives.

Sex education addresses issues of stigma to inspire victims of sexual offences and adolescent's frustrations to live positively (Rickard, 2016). Teenagers can learn the causes and management of stigma to attain a healthy life like other people. For instance, acknowledging body changes during puberty as a normal process can help many adolescents to form positive self-image and avoid frustrations. Also, teenagers get information on the risks of irresponsible sexual behaviors causing stigma and exercise caution. In so doing, they can be proactive in avoiding incidents that can lead to depression and stigma (Rickard, 2016). The adolescents also gain information on how to deal with misfortunes such as rape, defilement, forced sex, and unacceptable sexual behaviors to minimize to overcome the stigma that comes with these ordeals. In particular, creating awareness for peers inspires them to empathize with victims and support them in overcoming the stigma to live positively (Rickard, 2016). Sex education covers all these issues to promote the mental welfare of adolescents. Thus, the risks for the stigma associated with adolescent sexual practices and consequences encourage the provision of sex education in schools.

Sexual Exploitation and Rape

The risks of sexual exploitation and rape cases for adolescents encourage the provision of sexual consent in sex education to empower them to be cautious and report incidents for the authorities to take action. Based on research into the concept of sexual consent (i.e. Beres, 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016), sexual consent defined as a specific sexual act with a specific person in a specific context when the person is voluntary, sober and conscious (Willis, Jozkowski, & Read, 2019). Moreover, consent is a sexual relationship's essential and must be obtained for every sexual act. Sexual consent is also one's right to make people's own choices about sexual behavior (Teaching Sexual

Health.ca, n.d.). Therefore, sexual exploitation, rape, defilement, and other activities on young people below the age of consensual sex are punishable offences (Kangaude & Skelton, 2018).

Despite this, some people attempt to take advantage of young people's innocence and immaturity to lure or coerce them into sexual activities (Wolak et al., 2008). The perpetrators include relatives, well-known individuals, and strangers who can entice adolescents with small gifts, lies, and other methods (Schroeder & Kuriansky, 2009). Some perpetrators use threats to force young people into sexual affairs and warn them against reporting to anyone (Webster, 2017). Threats and enticements silence the young people, and some get exposure to repeated violations by the culprits. Besides, the adolescent victims can be ashamed to report these incidents to other people or authorities for fear of being recognized. Some also do not know if they can get assistance to deal with sexual ordeals that happen to them. In other cases, victims may report to people who do not seek justice from relevant authorities and attempt to settle matters at family levels through agreements with culprits (Rickard, 2016). Some parents or guardians may also not take legal actions for fear of shaming their families. These issues of sexual exploitation call for sex education for the youths as a way of protecting them.

Sex education is endorsed to create awareness and empower adolescents to identify risks, exercise caution, and report people who attempt or succeed to commit the offences. Sexual consent should be taught to students before they become sexually active if the purpose of sex education is to avoid unsafe practices about sexual (Willis, Jozkowski, & Read, 2019). The young people require information on the methods sexual perpetrators use to drive or force them into sexual activities. They become aware of the risks of accepting gifts from people, lies told to lure them, and threats issued to coerce them into sex (Rickard, 2016). Besides, they need knowledge of factors and their practices that expose them to sexual assaults (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, n.d.). For instance, sex education on their dress code, walking in isolated places, bad relationships, and others are taught. Also, consent sexual in sex education aims to equip them with information on ways to minimize threats of sexual exploitation, rape, and other related offences on them (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, n.d.). With this knowledge,

adolescents can exercise caution to prevent sexual assault, harassment, rape and other activities.

Despite this, some face sexual exploitation and require awareness of what to do in such situations. Sex education is necessary to empower the adolescents who are suffered from sexually exploited to report cases and seek medical attention for health practitioners to obtain evidence that can help police to pursue offenders (Rickard, 2016). The adolescents need to know they can get counselling to overcome trauma and any other assistance to lead healthy and happier lives. Sex education encourages victims to report even when issued with threats because they can receive security, and this prevents them from repeated violations and suffering (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, n.d.). Thus, the risks of sexual exploitation, rape, and other threats encourage the adoption of sex education for adolescents to equip them with skills to prevent, minimize, or cope with incidents that may occur.

CHAPTER 4

BENEFITS AND CRITICISMS OF SEX EDUCATION

Benefits of sex education

Reduced adolescent pregnancies

Sex education in schools contributes to decreasing teen pregnancies and births that indicate positive results (The Center for the Advancement of Health, 2008). Pregnancies measured by the number of births among adolescents in the U.S. has been declining, and this can relate to the provision of sex education, among other reasons. The number of births per 1000 female adolescents aged 15 to 19 years in the U.S. dropped from about 60 in 1990 to about 19 in 2017 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2019). The falling trend is not only observed nationally, but also for different races, such as White, Hispanics, and African Americans. Figure 1 below shows the trends of the pregnancy (birth) rates among adolescent girls in the U.S. since 1990. A significant drop is observable among the Hispanics and African American races that had over 100 births per 1000 adolescents in 1990. However, the number has fallen to below 20 births as of 2017 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2019). The fall in incidents has been observable at a time when the population has been growing, and this shows the measures adopted to prevent adolescent pregnancies have had positive outcomes. Among these interventions is the use of birth control methods like contraceptives, protected sex, as well as sex education present in different states in the country.

Girls who get pregnant while in school lose some time as they have to give birth and bring up their children. Some young women do go back to continue with their studies, while others may drop out and fail to complete high school (Rahmani, Merghati-Khoei, & Fallahi, 2018). As such, it is clear that girls bear the burden of engaging in sexual activities as they get pregnant and have to stay away from school, not boys. The girls face physical and psychological problems that affect their studies and grades. The solution? Sex education contributes to low pregnancy rates as teenage girls know the risks of sexual activities and the availability of birth-control methods. With this information, young women protect themselves and seek assistance when necessary to prevent pregnancies (Thomas, 2009). Therefore, the declining US adolescent pregnancy rate is indicative of the contributions of sex education for teenagers to minimize incidents.

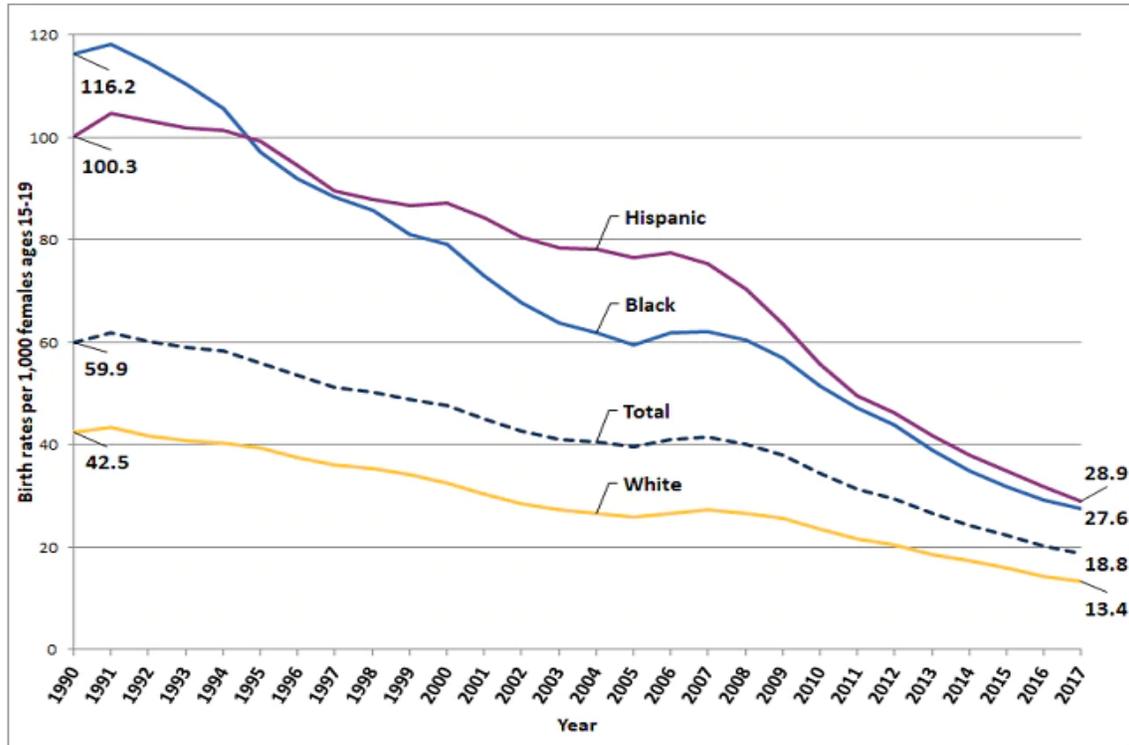


Figure 1 shows birth rates per 1,000 adolescent females aged 15-19, by race and origin of the mother, 1990-2017 (source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2019).

The Decline in Adolescent Incidents of STIs and STDs

Sex education contributes to the reduction of new cases of STDs as well as an increased diagnosis among adolescents (Howard, 2019). Teenagers learn about STDs, including the risks from engaging in sex, symptoms, effects, treatments, and prevention practices. They use this information to participate in safe sex and reduce the probability of contracting diseases (Rahmani, Merghati-Khoei, & Fallahi, 2018). In particular, HIV infections are on the decline in the US as the government has put measures to control the spread of the virus. The severity of the HIV/Aids drives many young people to protect themselves as they do not live with the disease in their lives (Rahmani, Merghati-Khoei, & Fallahi, 2018). However, new cases of other STDs in the US remain high and affect many young people, who account for about half of the new infections. According to the CDC, combined incidents of major STDs (gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis) have increased in the previous five years to reach a total of 2.4 million in 2018 (Howard, 2019). Apart from

the documented cases, there are other unreported cases because some people do not seek medical attention, especially for infections that heal after short durations.

The increasing number of new cases relates to many social issues in the modern environment. For instance, failures in the healthcare sector to address the needs of the youth increases risks for new cases. Besides this, more people are aware of the effects of STDs, as some can have far-reaching implications, such as affecting one's fertility, mental health, and other health problems (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2019). The large number of adolescents who report new cases of STDs is indicative of the information they possess that drives them to go to hospitals for diagnosis and treatments (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2019). So, that is good news as far as sex education is concerned. Therefore, sex education in schools helps to reduce STD incidents by educating teenagers to protect themselves and seek medical services when suspicious of contracting diseases.

Great Awareness on Sex-Related Issues

The most crucial part is sexual consent in sex education. And by consent, students learn that when engaging in sexual intimacy youth should respect each other's sexual boundaries to ensure safety, dignity and healthy relationships (Tatter, 2018). Moreover, children should clearly understand that sexual consent is mutual and that when someone says "no" to physical contact, the request should be immediately respected (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, n.d). Sexual violence is in every day problem but it is also everyone's problem. By educating young boys and young girls in affirmative consent, they can better navigate and negotiate complex sexual relationships in a way that produces healthy relationships. But this is not all. Greater awareness on sex-related issues is important for other reasons. For example, knowing the correct labels for each part of the body in early childhood can remove the stigma and create a positive gender perspective. Also, they will not feel awkward about talking about their body with their parents (Aswell, 2018). Then, early in elementary school, children need to be taught about physical autonomy, which means the individuals can control what happens to their bodies, including who can touch them (Tatter, 2018). The crucial thing is to teach them how to express pain if someone violates their autonomy or touches them in a private area. They need to know it's not their fault, and that they should tell an adult (Aswell, 2018).

Common Criticisms of Sex Education

Encouraging Sexual Behaviors

Criticism of sex education is from the argument that such learning promotes "immorality" among teenagers (Zimmerman, 2015). Sex education is seen as necessary to reduce risky behaviors such as protected sex and to enable individuals to make informed decisions when engaging in sexual activity (Leung et al., 2019). However, another view of sex education holds that the purpose of sex education is the liberation of individual control over one's own body and social control (Leung et al., 2019). Therefore, sex education can be used to provide individuals with the necessary knowledge to solve sexual repression caused by social organizations and encourage individuals to make their own decisions. For example, teenagers' self-control is less well developed, and sex education can increase the possibility of sexuality while satisfying their curiosity in safe ways.

Because the school is made up of people from different backgrounds, both religious and non-religious, schools must stand on a neutral position, embracing the cultural views of minorities and, more importantly, ensuring that these views do not over affect and limit the right to provide sex education to everyone in support of coexistence for all. Providing sex education in these conditions does involve moral judgments on the behaviors of learners, teachers, and other stakeholders (Rickard, 2016).

Sex information creates awareness of how adolescents can engage in sexual activities without facing negative consequences (Bridges & Hauser, n.d.). The adolescents get empowerment on how to manage their behaviors, and this encourages many teenagers to engage in sex. Noticeably, teenagers are at the age where they are curious, experimental, and unable to make mature decisions (Thomas, 2009). They can try to apply the information gained in real-life and end up engaging in sex or starting sexual relationships to see the outcomes and compare them with the theories learned in class (Little, 2016). Also, teenagers can use the information to lure peers into sex on the basis that it is safe to do so. If the learners lack the knowledge of safe sex, they can be scared by negative consequences to avoid sex activities. Hence, sex education provides information that encourages adolescents to practice sex as they can be safe from adverse effects.

Inappropriate Programs

Sex education in schools has faced criticism for failing to recognize the differences in the development of young people (Donovan, 2016). The learners get exposure to the same content despite them possessing varying capabilities to handle sex and sexuality information. The program followed in teaching the children relies on their age and class, which fails to recognize the different maturity levels among them (Ponzetti, 2015). Teenagers of the same age and in the same class can be at varying levels of development. They have different capabilities to process information, as seen through their academic performance. Noticeably, there various categories of educational content that address the needs of the learners that enable the teachers to reach their levels and nurture their skills successfully. It is not the same case for sex education, and the teachers provide a similar level for education to adolescents. Some are physically and psychologically ready for sexuality education, while others are not. Some adolescents experience puberty changes at an early age, while others may undergo these changes at a later age (U. S. Department of Education: Office of Communications Outreach, 2005). These disparities show that teenagers should get exposure to sexual content at an appropriate time when they are ready.

Sex education does not adequately embrace developmental variations, and this poses harm to adolescents (Kaltiala-Heino, Bergman, Työläjärvi, & Frisé, 2018). Some students are exposed to inappropriate sex information that is beyond their levels and do not utilize it positively. The teachings corrupt the minds of the students affecting their behaviors; thus, not developing smoothly in their sexuality. Given the sensitivity of the issue and impacts on the life of adolescents, sex education has significant effects on teenagers (Thomas, 2009). Elements of the inappropriateness of sex education is seen through increased sexual activities, pregnancies, and other consequences despite the teachers receiving knowledge to help students avoid these incidents (Kocsis, 2019).

CHAPTER 5

FACILITATION OF SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Stakeholders Engagement

Sex education is facilitated through the involvement of stakeholders to ensure there is the consideration of their interests to promote implementation. Sex and sexuality are a sensitive topic that divides different groups into supporters and opponents, each with various concerns. The government authorizes the education programs to be offered in schools, which include the plans of teaching sex education (Leung et al., 2019). Following this, the curriculum developers have the mandate to draft the formal sex education copies adaptable for implementation. The Department of Education has the responsibility to do this as the public schools fall under it. Experts at the Department bring together content taught to learners. They compile it to provide coherent information, ensuring the right standards are present and the information proposed is appropriate for the intended learners. Students in high levels of education can get exposure to comprehensive sex education while those in lower levels require basic knowledge. After the process is complete, the developers present the product to the government for launching and implementation distribution to the schools. For a sex education program to attain positive reception and successful implementation, stakeholders must be involved in the entire process (Marques & Ressa, 2013). Failure to do this can lead to resistance. Other stakeholders can oppose the document for not being involved in giving their input and understanding it in depth. Governments that have attempted to implement sex education programs without involving other parties have received opposition, with some having to halt the implementation process.

One group that affects the adoption of sex education programs in public schools comprise the parents and guardians (Hall, McDermott, Komro, & Santelli, 2016). The groups are key stakeholders because they are the custodians of their children, with the primary responsibility of bringing them up to develop as human beings and obtain skills to be successful in life (Marques & Ressa, 2013). The parents pay the school fees for their children to enable them to complete their education. The guardians have an interest in the content taught to the adolescents to ensure they obtain the right knowledge, values, and behaviors to be responsible adults. Parents and guardians recognize that the teachers play an essential role in the development of the children and have to ensure the teachings in

schools appropriate. Following this, they have a voice in the contents of sex education programs as well as teaching methods.

Despite this, parents and guardians hold varying beliefs and opinions due to their diverse cultural backgrounds. Some support sex education, while others are against it. Parents have the right to choose schools that meet their values. However, at the national level, there is also a need to respect the diversity of values and to provide public services about sex and sexuality (to reduce unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and youth suicide) because young people need this information (United Nations Population Fund, 2018). The education policymakers need to balance the need to teach sex education for public purposes and satisfying the interests of the parents and guardians, certainly a tricky balance. For this category of stakeholders, the government needs to secure the majority support to allow the implementation of the program. If more people are against sex education, they can take actions, including demonstrations and legal resolution, that led to the scrapping of the program. Thus, the involvement of parents and guardians is crucial to address their concerns in developing and implementing sex education.

The second category of stakeholders affecting the sex education implementation is religious and civil groups. Religious groups have a direct and indirect influence on education matters. Religious groups have schools that follow the curriculum provided by the government besides adopting programs inspired by spiritual beliefs and teachings (Marques & Ressa, 2013). The adoption of sex education requires them to teach the content supplied to the teenagers. The religion does not support sex education in schools as there are programs for children to learn sexuality practices provided in the doctrines. Besides running schools, the learners, parents, and teachers are followers of the faith groups. The stakeholders believe in the values and positions of the religion and leaders in matters such as sexual education. The affiliation to religious groups influences their perceptions as they have to uphold spiritual teachings in supporting education programs for the children. Also, religion has a role in teaching adolescents the virtues, values, morals, and other guiding principles to grow spiritually. Therefore, schools should not only protect students' access to high-quality sex education but also recognize and allow the religious views of minorities, to balance sex education with religious freedom.

Contradictions between whether religious leaders should teach sex education in schools, especially on morality and social life, bring conflicts in the adoption of the education programs (Bouma, 2018). For these reasons, religion has a significant role in the adoption of sex education for teenagers. Other than faith groups, civic groups influence the adoption of education programs. They champion the rights of the adolescents in line with the law. Any violation can be prosecuted in the court of law to determine the appropriateness of sex education and processes followed to develop them. The stakeholder can invite the members of the public against government authorities to oppose undesirable sex education programs (Bridges, & Hauser, n.d.). The engagement of the religious and civil groups ensures the development of acceptable education programs that encourage success in the implementation phase.

The teachers and school administrators are vital stakeholders who need incorporation in the adoption of sex education to encourage success. The teachers are the people mandated to educate teenagers using the provided content provided by the government. How effective they do this determines the skills, performance, and development of learners. Sex education introduces new information to the existing programs, and this affects their teaching activities. The educators need to be involved throughout the process to give their input on appropriate methods of teaching, necessary skills, and other elements that can help to train the learners successfully (Marques & Ressa, 2013). The teachers interact with teenagers in classes and the school environment. Teachers are also responsible for what goes on in schools and are vital in developing sex education that meets the needs of adolescents. The government should utilize the teachers to ensure they have a full understanding and are motivated to teach teenagers. The government also needs to engage them by assigning responsibilities in their expertise areas. Apart from the teaching staff, the owners of schools and administrators have a role to play in the provision of sex education. They allocate resources and facilities to enable learning processes to run smoothly. The administrators create an environment for teachers to educate the learners, provide reading materials, and oversee all activities in schools. They lead institutions in acquiring new programs and addressing the problems that may arise to ensure success. They need to be involved in all processes to ensure they have a full understating of sex education is implemented. Failure to engage them can lead to poor implementation and

undesirable outcomes. Hence, governments have to recognize the input of teachers and school administrators in the implementation of sex education programs to promote success.

An effective way to involve stakeholders in the adoption of the sex education program is through their representatives. The government and education department need to form a team comprising the individuals selected from different parties. The leaders represent the interests and views of their respective parties, thereby enabling the utilization of their input. Following this, the many groups, especially the main stakeholders, can welcome and support the implantation till it achieves success. Teams of representatives ensure healthy debates by sharing their concerns and different opinions (Marques & Ressa, 2013). As they do this, they facilitate the talks and the process of developing a program that could be accepted by all parties. The representatives voice out issues that need a change for the product to be acceptable by respective parties. Some opinions can be against those of others, and the team can find out ways to compromise and reach a common position. As many parties have reservations about the provision of comprehensive sex education, the team can limit the information offered to teenagers to ensure they are not exposed to content beyond their levels that can negatively affect their development and behaviors. For instance, more parents support the provision of sex education as their children are more vulnerable to negative consequences. At the same time, the religious groups are totally against the programs (Bridges, & Hauser, n.d.). They can share concerns that can help to minimize undesirable impacts of sex education.

Addressing these issues at the development stage of the sex education program is desirable to reduce resistance in the adoption and implementation stage. The parties also learn the perspectives of others on the topic and understand more about the need for providing sex education to adolescents, which encourages favorable reception. Therefore, the active engagement of the education stakeholders with varying interests helps to develop a more appropriate sex education program for the teenagers that many parties can support in the implementation stage to accomplish success.

Localized Practices

Another aspect of facilitating the adoption of sex education is by taking the issue to the local areas and territories. The grassroots are where much politics and reactions to education programs occur. It is also where the implementation of sex education takes place

to contribute to the adoption in the entire country or many regions. The local governments, such as the states, are responsible for the knowledge of the areas. The government has the power to decide the curriculum taught to children and adolescents (Trust for America's Health, 2016). As such, they have control over the process of developing and implementing sex education. The state government decides on the adoption of the programs and faces the issues of the locals on this topic. As such, regions are responsible for the approval or rejection of sex education programs (Trust for America's Health, 2016). For instance, state governments control smaller areas as compared to the national one. The perceptions of the people take shape based on the regions they come from, and this has implications in the provision of sex education. Some parts are more receptive to sex education in schools as a way of protecting children from the negative consequences of sex and sexual behaviors (Leung et al., 2019). Others are against sex education in schools. The accommodation of these differences is possible by allowing the locals in different regions to decide for themselves, instead of adopting a national position on the issue. Excellent response to the interests of groups is by developing sex education inspired by local practices of the people. States that register success in implementing sex education in their schools can influence the adoption of similar programs in other countries. In the end, many states can offer plans to adolescents in their jurisdiction areas, leading to success in the nation.

One benefit of localized practices in the adoption of sex education is the freedom to develop customized programs. The locals contribute the content to be provided to the learners (Leung et al., 2019). As such, state governments that have adopted sex education have significantly different material for the children. These variations have implications on the levels of information passed to the teenagers. States with more liberal populations are likely to implement comprehensive sex education programs (Kantor & Levitz, 2017). Following this, adolescents can gain full detail on their sexuality and sex practices. The teaching methods also are more explicit, and this influences how well the learners grasp sexual content.

In contrast, the states with more conservative people are hesitant to adopt sex education in their schools. Those that implement these programs ensure the content is sensitive to the values of the people. As such, the schools do not teach full information on the topic to the adolescents. The teachers use less explicit modes of training that influence

the levels of skills passed to the teenagers. Also, the methods of teaching are such that the provision of sex education causes minimal or no effects in the erosions of the cultural values of the local people and groups. Thus, the localized practices in education administration enable the development of customized sex education programs that meet the needs of adolescents, and the people in local areas.

Training of Educators

Training of teachers is vital in the quest to provide sex education to adolescents. Before the introduction of the programs, the teachers have to experience training in career-focused content to the learners. The educators are aware of the methods that can pass knowledge contained in reading materials and other relevant information to ensure the adolescents succeed in their future careers and life. Teachers are specialists in their subjects and have the motivation to inspire learners interested in the fields. The introduction of sex education brings in a new perspective to the teaching staff that has implications on the roles of the educators. In particular, this form of training fails to cannot mainly focus on academic success for adolescents (Trust for America's Health, 2016). It involves providing information and skills for the social and personal development of the learners. Sex education is also a sensitive topic that attracts opposing views from different parties (United Nations Population Fund, 2018). Teachers are brought to the spotlight as they are people providing skills to the students. The judgment of educators relates to the outcomes of the learners, and undesirable results put the teachers at odds with other stakeholders such as parents, religion, and activist groups. For instance, sex education can lead to increased sexual immorality among adolescents (Sears, 2013). Teachers receive blame as they are involved in proving the sex education. The teachers are responsible for what becomes of the teenagers and have faced criticism from those against the programs.

The implications of the teaching practice necessitate the provision of more training for the teachers to handle sex education with wisdom that it requires to avoid undesirable effects. The educators require understanding the local cultures of people and their beliefs that influence the levels of skills to pass to the teenagers. Besides, the teachers need training on the appropriate methods for use to convey the intended information to adolescents (Breuner et al., 2016). As a subject, sex education takes place alongside other academic courses, though there may be inadequate teachers specialized in sex education. Most

teachers are simply not trained in issues related to sexual health, at least not as a specialty. Striking a balance between academic and sex content is necessary to ensure the students gain optimal skills for their development (Bridges & Hauser, n.d.). To address these issues, the education department has to empower and support teachers to deliver on the sex education programs without negatively affecting the academic performance of the adolescents. Various methods are used, including seminars and short-term programs. These training activities are provided by various policymakers at the Education Department (Trust for America's Health, 2016). Teachers obtain much-needed guidance on how to teach sex education to pass the right knowledge to teenagers from these events. The tutors can also seek for more information during these forums to ensure they remain prepared and understand how to implement sex education to realize desired goals. Therefore, training of the teachers is necessary to promote the adoption of sex education for adolescents.

Supportive School Environment

A conducive learning environment in schools is critical in the adoption of sex education. The politics surrounding the provision of sexual information to children threaten to cause conflicts among stakeholders in schools. Implementation of programs with resistance from different groups can incite people to take actions such as demonstrations to paralyze learning and ensure the students are not taught sex education. Following this, the school management has to create a favorable environment where all interested groups can participate in determining the skills and modes of training for the children (Leung et al., 2019). The administrators need to ensure parties have access to schools, sex education programs, and other relevant information used in the implementation. At the same time, the schools should uphold peace and co-existence of people with different opinions to allow learning to take place. Those supporting sex education have a place as their opponents.

The school administration strives to bring harmony among them by considering their concerns and creating a neutral environment. The teachers and students interested in sex education should be safe to go on with the learning activities (Trust for America's Health, 2016). Those opposing these practices should also get a guarantee of their safety and welfare. The teachers and students have to interact freely despite their diverse backgrounds and opinions on sex education. Issues of discrimination, victimization, and other violations are disallowed in schools to provide a level ground for all parties to

participate in sex education. The school management provides the necessary resources and support to ensure the training takes place smoothly. These practices create a conducive school environment that promotes success in implementing sex education for adolescents.

Evaluations and Reviews

Another practice that influences the provision of sex education in schools is the utilization of appraisals and reviews to improve the programs as may be necessary to enhance learning outcomes. Appropriate programs allow for assessments of their effectiveness and modifications to improve the undesirable elements and overcome challenges faced (Leung et al., 2019). The controversies surrounding sex education warrant regular reviews on the plans to determine whether the development of adolescents is acceptable to all parties. The government and scholars play a significant role by carrying evaluations. They research by surveying stakeholders such as adolescents, parents or guardians, teachers, religious leaders, and others to test their satisfaction levels and their suggestions for improvement. Evaluators also study the conditions in schools and how the teaching takes place versus the purposes of education and expected learning-outcomes (Sears, 2013).

Sex education intends to address sex and sexuality issues among adolescents such as pregnancies, the prevalence of STDs, utilization of preventive measures, mental health, education completion problems, sexual activity, and involvement in irresponsible sexual behaviors, among others. The impacts of sex education on these elements are a measure of the effectiveness of the programs. Positive results, such as the reduction in adolescent pregnancy rates or new incidents of STDs, indicate the efficiency and the need to embrace the program. Of course, a good sex education program will also engage with broader issues of gender and gender relations, including a rich discussion on affirmative consent. Evaluations also involve the gathering of views of different groups to utilize their ideas in strengthening sex education.

Moreover, evaluations are critical to learning the usefulness of sex education to cope with changes in the environment and social life (Leung et al., 2019). Events taking place in the lives of people influence their practices, and there is a need to prepare children for these transformations. Following this, the policymakers have the responsibility to

initiate changes in sex education programs to reflect the trends in society (Bridges & Hauser, n.d.). Toward this end, the issue of LGBTQQ has emerged as an essential aspect of any good sex education program. Members of this marginalized group are getting recognition around the world. Fifty states in the United States have passed laws to recognize them and protect their rights, like in the case of other groups (Gay Marriage, 2017). LGBTQQ topics revolve around the sexuality of persons and is a relevant issue for consideration in sex education systems to enhance awareness and integration. Of course, topics that are related to issues of sexual identity include discussions around gender as a social construct itself. In the later grades for example, discussions around homophobia and how it limits and restricts the lives of boys. There is increased sensitization of the LGBTQQ group in public places and spaces, but it has not been adequately incorporated sex education at this point in time. It faces similar challenges as the introduction of sex education in schools and requires facilitation to promote the rights of the members to be at par withholding other sexual orientations.

CHAPTER 6

FACILITATION OF LGBTQQ-INCLUSIVE SEX EDUCATION

LGBTQQ-Inclusive Sex Curriculum

One way to facilitate the adoption of LGBTQQ sex education is by developing or modifying the school curriculum to include issues affecting this group. States offering sex education in the U.S. lack the LGBTQQ-inclusive curriculum to guide the teaching practices in schools. The local governments need to come up with a new curriculum that recognizes issues of the LGBTQQ group and how members can manage them. To achieve this, the Department of Education should engage the LGBTQQ stakeholders and sexuality experts in the formulation stage to get an in-depth understanding of the suffering and other issues facing the adolescents (Trust for America's Health, 2016). Other parties can become sensitive and include content that speaks to LGBTQQ teenagers. As such, new or revised curriculum comprises a material for both the LGBTQQ and heterosexuals should be available for schools. For instance, examples of same-sex relationships can be included and be presented in a positive light like the heterosexual relationships. The syllabus is then distributed to schools where teachers can develop customized programs for their students (Sears, 2013). The curriculum ensures that teachers and students can access information on LGBTQQ lives and communities to help fill the gaps in the current programs. Hence, an inclusive curriculum is vital to enable US schools to implement LGBTQQ education.

Teacher Training

Another action is training teachers who offer sex education to youth. Many teachers do not possess adequate or specialized knowledge on sexuality matters (Breuner et al., 2016). They are less knowledgeable and are less motivated to provide broad information that covers the needs of LGBTQQ youth (Breuner et al., 2016). There is a need to train them to incorporate LGBTQQ-inclusive sex curriculum appropriately for the benefit of the learners. Teachers require professional training for teaching students with different sexual orientations with the need for professionalism (Breuner et al., 2016). With this knowledge, they can approach the LGBTQQ issues positively and avoid prejudice towards students who may be members of this group. Teachers play a vital role in shaping the behaviors and attitudes of learners. Those who teach sex education professionally and with the same

enthusiasm for LGBTQ issues as for the heterosexual matters can change the perceptions of the learners to treat all students with respect or dignity (Trust for America's Health, 2016).

The teacher should also speak against unfair treatments such as bullying or discrimination directed towards LGBTQ learners. Training is also necessary to help the teachers learn the methods to use to pass the right information to all adolescents. For instance, they need to use neutral pronouns and identities to avoid bias on people who do not identify with the established male and female genders. Thus, training of the teachers is necessary to empower them to educate learners with professionalism and create a favorable environment in classes.

Supportive Environment and Inclusive Culture

The provision of LGBTQ education requires a supportive school environment. The sensitivity of the topic requires school administrators to adopt measures that guarantee peace and safety from physical and emotional harm for all students and teachers (Slater, 2013). Currently, LGBTQ people do not feel safe and free to go about their daily activities at schools (GLSEN, 2016). They are targets for bullying, victimization, discrimination, and other maltreatment. The administrators have to ensure that school rules and regulations are followed. They can also create new ones that foster the teaching of sex education to emphasize the protection of people, teachers, and learners, regardless of their sexual orientation (Trust for America's Health, 2016). Leaders should set an example for others to emulate in dealing with issues affecting the LGBTQ members. For sustainable practices, school management should create a culture that upholds inclusivity and diversity. They can include these aspects in the core values and ensure people observe them. For instance, the heterosexuals should interact with the LGBTQ persons freely to create close relationships that bring a sense of cohesion, love, and understanding. These elements lead to the development of a friendly culture in schools that goes a long way into supporting LGBTQ-inclusive sex education.

Increased Funding

Successful implementation of LGBTQ education in schools requires increased budget allocations to register success. Currently, funding mostly goes to programs that

target heterosexual groups. Many initiatives are in place for students to seek assistance to manage issues related to their sexuality (Trust for America's Health, 2016). For instance, they can approach teachers and counsellors in schools and ask questions on personal matters not addressed in class. The LGBTQQ colleagues do not have access to these services and suffer in silence. Schools need to provide more resources to hire professionals who can offer specialized knowledge on broad topics of sex education, including LGBTQQ issues. Funds are also necessary to buy reading materials for adolescents to access and learn more information on their own (Sears, 2013). Quality books and other materials can be expensive, and schools should invest in them to benefit the students. Besides, the schools need to set aside funds to organize forums and invite guests who can provide more information on sexuality and LGBTQQ issues. Learners can ask more that may not be covered in the curriculum. Thus, increased budgets are necessary to support the adoption of LGBTQQ-inclusive sex education for adolescents.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up, sex education for adolescents provides valuable information for guiding one's sexuality and behaviors. It involves teaching various issues related to human sexuality, and by engaging in inclusive, consenting sex education and emphasizing all the ways sex affects the body and mind. Sex education can help youth make informed decisions and share this information with peers to avoid the negative consequences of irresponsible sexual behavior. Schools adopt sex education curriculum to the needs of their students, and different level has different educational content about sex. In particular, LGBTQQ education is barely provided in US schools to the disadvantage of adolescents with this sexual orientation, although perhaps this is changing. Most often though, schools rely on sex and health information designed for heterosexual adolescents. It goes without saying, LGBTQQ youth are under served in schools today. There is a need for facilitation efforts to encourage the teaching of LGBTQQ education in sex education to promote the wellbeing of this group. Practices that have been utilized in providing sex education have had positive outcomes and can be implemented in the provision of LGBTQQ education.

Various factors encourage the adoption of sex education and are useful in facilitating the LGBTQQ education. They include risks for STDs, unwanted pregnancies, technological and Internet influence, peer influence, dysfunctional religious teachings, and others. Informed by these factors, the current sex education programs are facilitated through the engagement of stakeholders, provision of a conducive environment, training of educators, and regular evaluations to guide reviews. In my point of view, from the positive outcomes registered in providing sex education, similar strategies can be useful in promoting the adoption of LGBTQQ education in schools. The education sector and schools can achieve this through measures such as the development of LGBTQQ-inclusive sex education curriculum and programs by involving stakeholders from this group to provide the right content of teenagers. Teachers require training to gain competence for teaching different sexual orientations to ensure professionalism and attainment of goals. Schools need to create a supportive environment and an inclusive culture for learners and teachers to participate in LGBTQQ education fully. Administrators and organizations need to allocate more resources to promote LGBTQQ education as programs are underfunded.

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