

What girls don't want, what girls desire: a systematic approach of sexuality education

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Objectives: Girls do not want an unintended pregnancy or abortion. Neither do they want an STI, including HIV, nor being sexually harassed or forced to (unsafe) sexual contact. Girls desire pleasure and safety in intimacy and sexual relationships. Boys too!

To design effective and comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents objectives need to be based on five concepts: adolescents development, behavioural (learning and) change, a sexual health promoting and supportive environment, a gender-based and a rights-based approach. Learning strategies and methods have to fit with the kind of objectives and being interactive they have to involve adolescents in their own learning process. Effective educators are neither experts nor authorities; they are person-centred, facilitators and process guiders.

Method: Research to behaviour as well as to determinants combined with a needs assessment deliver the main objectives of a sexuality education programme. Changeableness and priority have to be considered first. Then differentiation in objectives for different subgroups is needed: sexually active and not active adolescents, girls and boys, heterosexual and homosexual youth, high and low educated youngsters, migrant and native born youth. Having chosen the objectives, interactive learning strategies are designed, fitting with objectives of different levels, and - by checking in linkage boards - expecting to be implemented by intermediaries in the aimed setting. Finally, a pre-test and evaluation are conditional for diffusion on the basis of an implementation plan. Also this plan is based on the behaviour, determinants and needs of intermediaries and the setting.

Results: Only a few sexuality education programmes have proved to be effective at all the levels: knowledge, attitudes, social norm and self-efficacy. Long-term effects on behaviour are mostly lacking. However, criteria for an evidence-based approach are known. In general, the role of educators and the systematic approach of implementation are underestimated in their contribution to reducing teenage pregnancy, abortion, STIs, sexual harassment and abuse and last but not least, to increasing confidence and pleasure in relationships and sexuality.