

# Children's Sexuality Education Under Home-School Cooperation

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**Abstract:** In China, 'sex' has long been seen as a taboo topic. Most Chinese people are ashamed to talk about sex whether in private or in public. With the rapid development of society, the material need for children's growth have been met and the early puberty of children has turned into a global trend. Children's sexuality education has also become a challenge for educators. As the most important environments for children's growth, families and schools have to take more responsibilities. The author will combine the existing literature to discuss the problems of families and schools in children's sex education, and analyze the feasibility of the home-school cooperation model.

**Keywords:** Children; Sexuality Education; Home-School Cooperation

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## Introduction

Children's sexuality education is a relatively deficient part in China's general education system. Especially compared with developed countries such as Europe, America and Japan, the sexuality education of China remains at a very basic level, which indirectly contributes to more and more undesirable events like unintended pregnancy, assault, sexual transmitted disease, etc. Literally, the sex safety issue of child has been concerned by all sectors of society. It is crucial to take measures to strengthen children's sexuality so as to prohibit sexual abuse incidents and promote health and well-being of children.

When it comes to education models of sexuality for children, there are significant differences in various countries or regions with different culture. In the United States, children's sex education emphasizes the tripartite combination of family, school and society, and focuses on the ideas and measures of sex education, and regulates the right of each school district to conduct sex education through laws and policies<sup>[1]</sup>. Sweden is the first country in the world to set up a sex education organization and promote adolescence sex education. This is mainly due to its open and tolerant social environment, where there is less restrictions on sexual topics, and nude-style sculptures could be found easily. In the view of education development, Sweden has also experienced abstinence education and contraceptive education, but does not last long. In Asia, traditional culture of Japan and China have many similarities, being influenced by Confucianism. Japan even showed a firmly negative attitude towards sex education in the early days. Since the 1970s, Japan has begun to learn from European and American, and has integrated East Asian culture to formulate a school-based, family-assisted sex education system, which has achieved good results. For China, now combing schools with families to conduct sex education could be very effective, under the supervision of policies and regulations, according to the unique current situation and cultural characteristics of sex education in our country.

## 1. The Need of Sex Education for Children

In CNKI and Wanfang databases, searching with keywords such as 'children', 'sex education' and 'status quo', most of the literature shows that the problems of precocious puberty and shortage of sexual knowledge are common among children in China. Additionally, living in the information age makes children get easier access to all kinds of unfiltered information which has contributed to more and more bad behaviors and mental problems of the adolescents. Speaking from other countries' experience, the most effective method to settle this matter is to completely change the fixed ideas and attitudes, starting with sex education for school-age children, and then properly restricting their behaviors. Zhou Yuehong<sup>[2]</sup> demonstrated in her survey that normally, students in grades 5 and 6 may have latent sexual awareness and alienation from

the opposite sex. But this phenomenon has tended to be interrupted in recent years. Under this circumstance, children's innate sexual impulses could be released to varying degrees, with consciously generating the idea of communicating with the opposite sex. This is also the most typical sign of precocious puberty. In Ding Zhifang's<sup>[3]</sup> research, it summarized the current situation of Chinese children's sexuality that some primary school students in grades 3 and 4 will talk about adult topics in their communication with their peers. In the biomedical dimension, children's height increased a lot compared with the past. And the stage of sexual maturity will be extended accordingly. In this case, if a child has never got comprehensive sex education, his need for development will not be met. Therefore, conducting sex education in school or in family is in line with the current situation and objective needs of our country at this stage.

In addition, the increasing number of child sexual abuse incidents is also one of the main reasons for the urgent promotion of sex education. The report of Qiu Juhong<sup>[4]</sup> and others showed that more than 80% of child sexual assault cases were committed by acquaintances. It means that for safety education, simply educating children to be alert to strangers has certain limitations. With a full sex education, students will be able to identify the potential abusers around them and improve their awareness of prevention for assault. It is truly an effective way to make child sexual abuse less frequent.

## **2. Current Situation and Existing Problems of Children's Sex Education in China**

### **2.1 The current situation of children's sex education**

#### **2.1.1 The sexuality education system is not complete**

Starting from the founding of New China, children's sex education in China roughly went through three stages: the confinement stage, the budding stage and the preliminary development stage. In 1988, 2001 and 2008, China promulgated the 'Notice on the Development of Adolescence Education for Middle School Students', the 'Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China', and the 'Guidelines for Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools', which initially established the guidelines for preadolescence of all ages. However, a complete system has not yet been formed, and there is very short of relevant evaluation and monitoring standards. Generally speaking, children's sex education in China still stays in its infancy.

#### **2.1.2 Family sex education and school sex education have their respective limits**

Firstly, from a family standpoint, the development of sex education is linked to the economic and educational level of the region and generally the urban family does better than the rural family in sex education<sup>[5]</sup>. From the perspective of content, home-based sex education is more confined to the common gender differences and basic knowledge of physical health, hardly expanding more deep sexual knowledge. Sometimes it would even interfere with the relationship between male and female. From the school level, children of all school ages are facing heavy pressure to enter higher education under the strict selection rules. As a result, most schools don't have enough to give their students all-rounded sex education and almost have never taught anything about sexual morality, sexual psychology and sexual behaviors<sup>[6]</sup>.

### **2.2 The problem of children's sex education in my country**

#### **2.2.1 Constraint of conservative ideas**

With the advancement of globalization, people's minds have got liberated, but the influence of conservative ideas still exists. For example, Chinese teachers and parents are always ashamed to talk about sex topics as they influenced by traditional ideas. As the saying goes, "Superiors acting and inferiors imitating". When they deal with the questions raised by their children only through avoiding or scolding, sex education are unlikely to make much headway but would be counterproductive.

#### **2.2.2 Less qualified and poor execution**

The issue of children's sex education has always been one of the topics that the Ministry of Education concerns. In 2007,

the Guidelines for Public Safety Education for Primary and Secondary School Students clearly pointed that it is necessary to carry out the theme education about sexual assault prevention in primary and secondary schools across the country. However, the students' curriculum is over scheduled and there is seldom time for special sexuality course and the sex education is often conducted in the form of health lectures, which is not so effective. What's more, sex education should be a professional subject, with much higher requirement for teachers' knowledge of medicine, psychology and physiology. But in fact, primary schools in most areas of China cannot provide sufficient teacher resources.

### **2.2.3 The teaching content of sexuality is not deep and thorough enough**

Children's sex education materials in China are mainly concentrated in multimedia animations, which are not very formal and authoritative and so cannot meet the cognitive level of the children. Specifically, the content in these materials confine more to the knowledge of physical health, with almost no high-level things such as sexual law, sexual morality and sexual psychology <sup>[7]</sup>.

### **2.2.4 The educational environment isn't ideal**

China broke up the forbidden area of sex education in the 1970s, but until now, it still hasn't built up a sound policy system and lacks effective institutions for sex education. And as losing supervision on sex education implementation, a great amount of pornographic information is flooded in related resources such as audio-visual products, magazines, and online materials <sup>[8]</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

The fundamental purposes of children's sexuality education include meeting the basic cognitive needs of their development, improving self-protection awareness and ability, and greatly reducing any sex incidents. Under the current institutions, schools and families are important places for children's sexuality education. Teachers and parents are the people that children trust most. Therefore, it is a practical way to solve the problem of children's sex education through the home-school cooperation. On this basis, the resources of all sides have to be integrated through getting supports from the authorities, to ensure the education works effectively. Based on the current situation of our country, it will take time to fully achieve this goal. However, with increasing attention of governments and schools, we believe that children's sexuality education in China will see further improvement in the future.

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