

The Pros and Cons of Sex Education in Schools

Sex education in schools remains to be a controversial topic as various members of the community debate over its appropriateness. In theory, sex education aims at assisting children and youth in developing a positive view of their sexuality and gaining knowledge and skills that can help them to take care of their sexual health (Kirby 53). Hillier and Mitchell reveal that the contention around the issue arises as communities grapple over who should teach students about sex and how this learning should take place (211).

Its opponents express concern that comprehensive sex education may encourage pupils to become sexually active due to the exposure. Proponents of sex education, on the other hand, see factual knowledge about sex, contraception, and STIs as effective in delaying sexual initiation and reducing STIs. With these divergent views of sex education in mind, this paper will set out to highlight the pros and cons of sex education in school. The paper will authoritatively demonstrate that the merits of sex education outweigh its demerits.

Advantages of Sex Education

The spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in young people is mainly attributed to low rates of contraceptive use and the lack of information on safe sex practices. Juping reveals that school-based sex education has been documented to have some positive impact on knowledge of methods to prevent STIs and skills in using condoms by youths (188).

This revelation is corroborated by Hillier and Mitchell who acknowledge that prioritizing of sex education in Australia as a proactive response to the HIV pandemic has resulted in great success in deterring the spread of HIV (212). Sex education is therefore advantageous since youths who have it are less prone to HIV infection since they have the necessary information and skills to protect themselves.

Sex education offers practical knowledge such as how to use a condom and how to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Kohler, Manhart, and Yu Lafferty carried out a comparative study on the sexual health risks of youths who had received sex education with those who received no formal sex education (344).

The study revealed that while there was no significant reduction in the incidences of STIs in both groups, comprehensive sex education significantly correlated with fewer pregnancies. This is because sex education gives the youth the necessary skills on contraceptive use hence resulting in safe sex.

Sex education is structured in such a manner that it delivers factual information without instilling any moral values or judgments. A study by Vuttanont et al. on the sex education needs of teenagers in Thailand revealed that teenagers sought information on sex that was clear, non-judgmental and non-prescriptive (2078).

Such information is unlikely to come from traditional sources such as the family or religious organization. Sex education, therefore, gives the youth valuable and unbiased information which can be used to make complex choices regarding sex in the real world.

Sex education is essential for young people who come from cultures or families where the topic of sex is not openly discussed. Juping reports that sex is a topic too embarrassing to discuss at home in many cultures although the family is the primary means of the socialization of children and has a significant influence on adolescents (190).

Many parents are less likely to discuss sex-related topics in detail due to many factors including; limited sexual knowledge of parents, differing sexual values, lack of communication skills and parents not receiving sex education from their parents. In such a culture, the youth is forbidden to talk about sex and their only source of sexual information is their peers or television. For such youth, school-based sex education is a valuable source of sexual health and relationships information, and it will empower the youth to make good choices in the future (Selwyn and Powell 229).

Children and youth are curious and will want to gain knowledge about sex. Sex education provided in school is vital in addressing the knowledge gaps between different groups of young people with regards to matters of sex (Selwyn and Powell 219). Without this avenue, the young will resort to other sources of information which may not be as benevolent.

Vuttanont et al. theorize that Sex education is a useful tool for countering media and peer influences that otherwise shapes the youth's mind on the topic of sex (2073). Teenagers who gain information about sexual intercourse from friends are more likely to adopt liberal sexual attitudes. On the other hand, those who gained the same knowledge from parents and teachers are less likely to engage in sexual activities (Juping 192).

Disadvantages of Sex Education

A major demerit of sex education is that the material taught is mostly against the moral or religious beliefs that the students have been brought up with. As it is, sex education is provided within a secular context, and any moral or religious background of teaching is ignored. The reasoning behind this is that the role of sex education is not to instruct children not to have sex but rather to provide comprehensive and inclusive education on sex.

Religion plays a significant role in the lives of individual and research indicates that religious commitment and participation in religious activities results in sexual abstinence (Juping 191). Religion can, therefore, be seen to have a positive impact on sexual attitudes and initiation among the youth. Sex education, thus, undermines the influence of religious and moral values in guiding young people in matters of sex.

Sex education results in the acquisition of intimate knowledge on sex by youths who may up until then be uninterested or ignorant of the topic. For this reason, some of the conservative parents believe that there is no need for their children to understand sex until a definitive adult relationship is at hand (Vuttanont et al. 2078).

These parents think that sex education could indeed corrupt the student's moral standing and incline them to engage in sex. This assumption is supported by Vuttanont et al. who revealed that sex education programs give students information which may result in sexual ideas and experimentation among some students (2070).

A compelling argument raised by opponents of sex education is that the provision of too much or the wrong kind of sexual education can destroy the innocence of the youth.

This is not an unfounded fear since as Hillier and Mitchell concur; comprehensive sex education includes teachings on abstinence, safe sex practices, homosexuality and sexual diversity (212). Since sex education is provided in a value-neutral environment, the youths lack guidance on the matter and are left to do whatever they want with the information provided.

Sex Education Cons and Pros: Debate

As can be seen, there are many valid arguments both for and against sex education. However, most of the opposition to sex education is based on the assumption that once young people are made aware of sexual possibilities, they will immediately and without restraint indulge in sexual activities. Hillier and Mitchell note that this paternalistic belief has persisted despite being disapproved by multiple research findings. Research by Kirby suggests that sex education does have a significant effect on sexual behavior or outcome.

As such, the students are not at risk of experimenting with sex due to the sex education they receive (53). In spite of the disadvantages of sex education revealed herein, this education empowers the youth and helps them reach better decisions concerning sex. The discussed provided in this paper have demonstrated that sex education results in adolescents acquiring useful skills that help alleviate the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases as well as teenage pregnancies.

Sex Education Pros and Cons: Conclusion

This paper set out to discuss the pros and cons of providing sex education to students. From the discussions held herein, it is evident that sex education has advantages as well as disadvantages both to the individual students and society at large. However, this paper has demonstrated that the merits of providing this education far outweigh the demerits.

This paper has shown that the commonly held perception that sex education leads to sex is unfounded and should therefore not be used to justify objection to sex education. From this paper, it can be authoritatively stated that holistic sex education is crucial for the youth since it results in better choices on sex being made.

Works Cited

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