



# LOVE only after classes



Need assessment  
on Sexuality  
education  
in Macedonia





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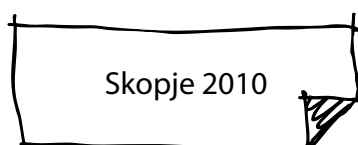
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X. E. P. A.  
македонски центар за сексуално образование и родителство

A Member Association of



IPPF  
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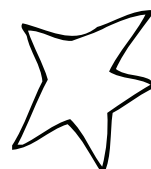
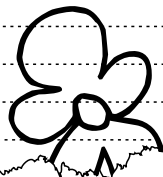
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# Abbreviations



**IPPF** – International Planned Parenthood Federation

**UN** – United Nations

**AIDS** – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

**SE** – Sexuality education

**STIs** – Sexually Transmittable Infections

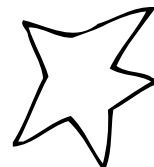
**SRH** – Sexual and Reproductive Health

**UNAIDS** – United Nations HIV/AIDS Program

**UNESCO** – United Nations Education, Science and Culture

**HERA** – Health Education and Research Association

**HIV** – Human Immune Deficiency Virus





# Executive Summery



In Macedonia there is a need for introducing sexuality education in schools.

This finding is a result of a research determining the needs of the parents, teachers and students, and reviewing the current school curricula.



Both parents and teachers agree on the introduction of sexuality education as a regular subject in schools. Such subject, among others, must develop the practical skills for protection from risks related to sexual activity. Besides the fact that both parents and teachers are insufficiently informed about each of the areas which should form part of a comprehensive sexuality education, both seem open to introduction of a model which will promote sexual diversity.

Teachers feel unprepared to teach a number of comprehensive sexuality education topics and fail to recognize each of the aspects of sexual privacy of students.



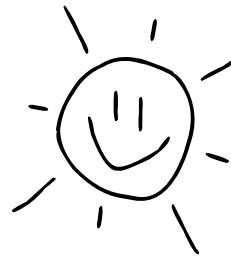
Students think that a comprehensive sexuality education in schools should form part of the official state school curricula. At present, they are not recognizing schools as institutions where responds to their questions and to sexuality related information in general, could be provided. Moreover, it was discovered that students have no positive attitude and values with regard to sexuality and that they, quite readily, adopt current prejudices and stereotypes. Nevertheless, while taught in school they fail to develop skills in order to make informed decisions regarding their sexual challenges. They are not informed about their right to sexual privacy and there are some indications that this right of theirs is often denied to them.



This insight into the curricula, i.e. the textbooks, shows that the Macedonian education system lacks professional and harmonized view of policy for provision of sexuality information, i.e. information on sexual and reproductive health and rights. There is no information on a number of topics which form integral part of a comprehensive sexuality education (condom use, living with HIV, sexual and reproductive health services, legal protection, masturbation, violence, rights and pleasure).

Information related to topics above, which are occasionally covered, are often scarce, insufficient and sometimes, false. In addition to this, the bulk of such information are not comprehensive and greater attention is directed to bio-medicinal aspects of sexual and reproductive health, lacking or completely failing to cover psychosocial aspects of sexuality. While, there is no harmonized approach on how to serve information for a particular topic in a particular curriculum, often times such a topic maybe setting double standards for example, in one and the same textbook. Some of the training materials promote stereotypes (for e.g. about sexual diversity, hormonal contraception, etc.) and negative attitudes about love and sexuality. The state-ran school curricula fail to provide acquisition of true knowledge and development of tolerant attitudes, as well as practicing safe sex, i.e. protection of one's sexual health and sexual rights.

The observed situation in connection with school syllabi discloses reasons for the problem faced by school workers and students, in terms of their awareness of sexuality education information.



# Introduction

HERA, a civil society organization, is concentrated with supporting activities which will provide enjoyment of human rights, such as the one on access of quality information and services in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

One of its main activities, since its establishment in 2000, is peer education for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which was primarily performed among high school students, and also on a number of vulnerable groups, as well as different age and professional groups. In the last 10 years this has been HERA's contribution to an informal sexuality education in the country, providing one portion of the information with regard to sexuality, for the population of Macedonia. While such an approach has many advantages, such as the possibility to respond to a communication, enhance the communication among the youth, develop creative expression in the youth, it has become more than clear that it is insufficient if it remains by itself<sup>1</sup>. In other words, peer education may play only an ancillary role in the formal process of attaining knowledge and will only play a supporting role in attaining skills, i.e. it stimulates the young to apply already acquired skills, in day to day life.

Nonetheless, during the course of HERA's work it has become evident that the supply of information regarding sexuality that is underlying only the risks and responsibilities, or is focused only on biological aspects of the sexuality will not contribute to achieving a significant change in the behavior of young people. A comprehensive approach which, at the same time, covers the emotional, psychological and social aspects of sexuality, i.e. an approach which does not exclude pleasure, sexual diversity and sexual achievement, seems to affect the youth to a greater extent. This is quite logical, since adults cannot expect young people to behave responsibly if the young are provided with some information regarding sexuality, and left to their own devices about the rest. Moreover, a comprehensive sexuality education does not neglect traditional or cultural values, nor does it advocate readymade set of values, on the contrary, it tries to encourage the youth to set their own values and to make their own decisions about their lives.

The HERA, during the next several years is revising its programs and will try to provide, as much as possible, a more comprehensive program and informal sexuality education.

<sup>1</sup> According to a 2006 Report from a bio-behavioral study in young people and most at risk populations for HIV infection in the Republic of Macedonia, conducted by the Ministry of Health and the National Health Protection Institute, only 21% of young people have received full information with regard to HIV/AIDS. On the other hand, according to another quantitative survey with regard to the level of HIV/AIDS related knowledge and students attitudes on the level of access to SRH education, only 16% of a high school population in the City of Skopje, have received full information regarding HIV/AIDS. Both surveys were performed in accordance with five key indicators identified by the UNAIDS for measuring the level of knowledge in youth aged 15 to 24 years.



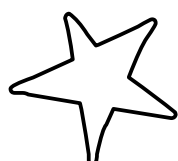
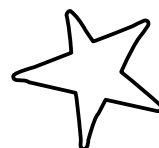
However, the fact remains that state ran schools will remain the only places which must play a crucial role in teaching sexuality education. Such schools, providing formal education will be most influential in the development of children, adolescents and the young, in general.

Therefore, during 2009, the HERA started its own initiative for introducing sexuality education in Macedonia.

This Needs Assessment explores the conditions in the country, thus providing a general picture of the situation in Macedonia with regard to this issue. We will remain persistent to prove that a constructive change will become possible only if a joint commitment persists among each of the relevant stakeholders in the country, such as those governmental, nongovernmental, civil society organizations and institutions. This is the reason why the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Center for Vocational Education, together with the Coalition for Protection and Promotion of Sexual Rights of marginalized Populations, were involved in the assessment of current syllabi.

Furthermore, the HERA being conscious that educational planning is not the sole responsibility of the institutions, has considered the needs of young people for the purposes of this survey, along with the ones of the teachers and the parents. While also considering traditional and cultural diversity of the communities of Macedonia, this survey was performed among the Macedonian, Roma and Albanian communities.

The forthcoming text will feature the results from this survey. This survey is entitled according to a statement of a focus group performed together with students. "Love – Only After Classes" which openly invites each state institution responsible for the education system in Macedonia, to take part in this initiative, as soon as possible and, according to their responsibilities, contribute to the introduction of a comprehensive sexuality education in Macedonia.



# What is sexuality education?



"All young people have the right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education and services, to be active citizens, to have pleasure and confidence in their sexuality, and to be able to make their own informed choices."<sup>2</sup>

The claims of the young throughout the world are more and more on the increase in order for them to be recognized as sexual beings with an explicit right to sexuality education. Those claims for education related to their sexual and reproductive health also relate to the commitments of different countries endorsed with ratification of international human rights conventions. UN Committees which observe the implementation of human rights conventions recognize the right of sexuality education in context of the provision of the right to health and often request from member states to implement sexuality education programs. For example, the Committee on the Convention for Eliminating all Forms of Discrimination against Women requested from our country "to implement education programs for sexual and reproductive health in women, men and adolescents in order to promote responsible sexual behavior and to discourage abortion as a birth control method."<sup>3</sup>

One of the usual suggestions issued on the part of the Committee on the Rights of the Child is "sexuality education to be included in school syllabi."<sup>4</sup> This Committee recommends to member states to provide their adolescents accurate and comprehensive HIV/AIDS related information, including information on the use of condoms in schools. Since 2000 the Committee for the Rights of the Child recommended Macedonia "to increase its efforts in promoting health policies for adolescents and to strengthen its education on reproductive health and counseling services, and among others, also in connection with HIV/AIDS, STIs, teenage pregnancies and abortion."<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the Human Rights Committee recommends the Ministry of Education to provide in school syllabi due and objective sexuality education.

<sup>2</sup> Sexuality Education in Europe, A Reference Guide to Policies and Practices, IPPF European Network, 2006, p.8.

<sup>3</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, "Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Thirty-fourth session, 16 January-3 February 2006, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> See example, Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Mauritius, 30 October 1996, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child :The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. 23/02/2000.

The recommendations issued by the UNESCO to world governments, including the Macedonian one, are in line with the introduction of sexuality education based on the Guidelines for Sexuality education.<sup>6</sup>

This document is based on the following premises:

- Sexuality is a fundamental aspect of human life: it covers physical, psychological, spiritual, social, economic, political and cultural dimensions;
- Sexuality cannot be understood if gender remains outside any consideration;
- Diversity is a fundamental characteristic of sexuality;
- The rules, under which sexual behavior is governed, are different culture-wide. Different behaviors are perceived as acceptable and desirable, and other behaviors are perceived as unacceptable. However it is not true that any unacceptable behaviors are not practiced in reality, and that they should be excluded from any discussions with regard to sexuality education.<sup>7</sup>

It is also important to underline linkages between a comprehensive sexuality education and implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) also endorsed by Macedonia. A comprehensive information sharing and decision making are in direct connection with the following:

- Exterminating extreme poverty and hunger – MDG 1
- Establishing a comprehensive primary education – MDG 2
- Promoting gender equality and support for women – MDG 3
- Improving the health of mothers – MDG 5
- Fight against HIV/AIDS – MDG 6<sup>8</sup>

What is comprehensive sexuality education?

A sexuality education targets the youth in order to help them understand the positive aspects of sexuality, acquiring such aspects by the use of real knowledge and life skills in order for them to make informed and right decisions about their behavior and sexual health, as well as their relations with other people, at present and in the future. At the same time, it should enable young people to explore their personal attitudes and to develop skills which will promote their right to choose and to have a safe and responsible sexual behavior.

**A comprehensive sexuality education is a lifelong process for acquiring information and creation of attitudes, beliefs and values about one's identity, relationship and intimacy.**

Therefore the term *comprehensive* includes sexuality education covering the entire array of information, skills and values which will enable young people to enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights and to make decisions about their health and sexuality. An entire array of information for this purpose is each piece of accurate information enabling them to choose what was best for them. Thus, we will not exclude such information connected with traditional family values, or sexual abstinence, on the contrary, such values form part of each of the different possibilities available to young people to make informed decisions in accordance with their needs.

<sup>6</sup>International Guidelines on sexuality education: an evidence informed approach to effective sex, relationships and HIV/STI education, UNESCO 2009

<sup>7</sup>IBID, p.2.

<sup>8</sup>Breaken D. and Cardinal M. "Comprehensive Sexuality education as a means of promoting sexual health", International journal of sexual health. 20 (1&2) 2008



Nevertheless, a comprehensive sexuality education is not solely concerned with biological aspects of sexuality or aspects as disease or pregnancy prevention. It includes each of the psychosocial and emotional aspects of sexuality, i.e.. it recognizes sexual rights, pleasure and diversity, as the basis of a successful sexuality education.

In general, a comprehensive sexuality education needs to undergo age-based and development-based adaptation in order to serve its target group. A sexuality education must not be conceived as isolated education or a sole alternative education, it should be used as a valuable tool in a variety of initiatives in order for the country's youth to be able to enjoy better health and wellbeing.

According to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), a comprehensive sexuality education must cover the following areas:

- Gender
- Sexual and reproductive health, including sexual rights and HIV/AIDS
- Sexual citizenship
- Pleasure
- Violence
- Diversity
- Relationships

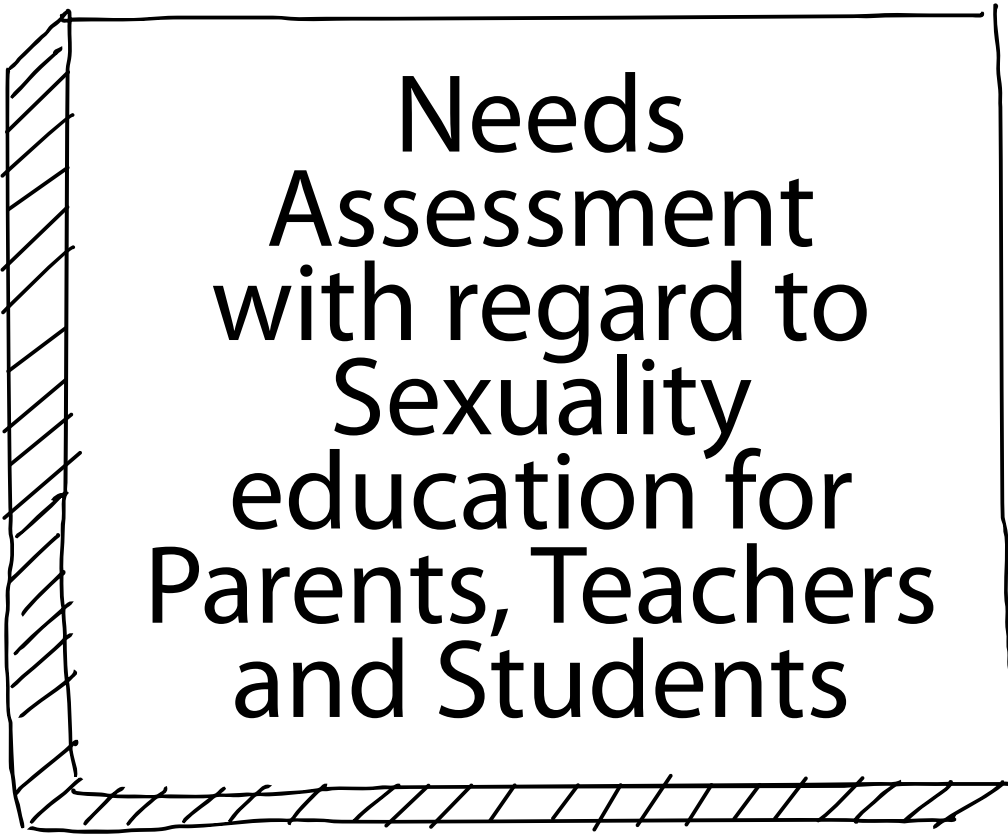
Such a framework was used in the survey of materials for sexuality education in the current state ran school syllabi in Macedonia. The framework is shown in Annex 1 at the bottom of this document.

There is a worldwide debate with regard to the strengths and the weaknesses of introducing a comprehensive sexuality education. The crucial issue that arises is whether or not sexuality education enables young people to practice informed decision making in terms of their sexual behavior, and how to protect their sexual and reproductive health, or on the other hand whether or not sexuality education initiates early sexual intercourse.

Research<sup>9</sup> and analysis of ongoing sexuality education programs in schools confirm that sexuality education contributes to the following:

- Postponement of sexual activity and decreasing the number of sexual partners in younger people;
- Effective sex and condom negotiation;
- Development of positive knowledge and developed consciousness about risk taking, values and attitudes.

**Such effects of sexuality education lead to healthy and responsible behavior in the youth and development of positive and tolerant attitudes to sexuality and diversity, existent in people, as well as their needs and rights.**



# Needs Assessment with regard to Sexuality education for Parents, Teachers and Students

## Introduction

During the course of 2009, the HERA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Macedonia, implemented a pilot assessment in order to identify the needs for introducing sexuality education within the framework of state-ran elementary and high schools. This review included students, teachers and parents from three high and three primary schools in Skopje and Tetovo. In order to collect qualitative and quantitative data from this survey, two methods were used: focus groups with students and administration of structuralized questionnaires handed out to parents and teachers.

The methodology, objectives, results and conclusions from the assessment are systematically divided into two types of findings: a) teachers and parents, b) students.

# A) Teachers and Parents

## Objectives

1. Identifying the perception and attitudes of teachers and parents in connection with the need to introduce sexuality education (SE) in the regular school syllabus.
2. Identifying the attitudes of teachers and parents with regard to the volume and the contents of the syllabi in terms of SE in schools.
3. Assessment of the preparedness of teachers to take active participation in SE programs in schools.
4. Assessment of expectations of parents regarding the effects from introducing SE in school syllabi.

## Methodology

The methodology used in the design of this assessment was conducted in several phases:

- Identifying where the survey will take place by a systematic selection process, covering Skopje (Karpoš and Šuto Orizari Municipalities) and Tetovo, in order to cover most represented ethnic population groups;
- Stratification of the statistical sample in 2 strata: stratum of teachers and stratum of parents;
- Out of the stratum of teachers a deliberate sample of teachers was formed for those teachers teaching subjects relevant to SE (Biology, Psychology, Gym classes);
- Out of the stratum of the parents a deliberate sample of parents was formed, based on their children's grade or year in school;
- Design of questionnaires<sup>10</sup> for teachers and parents according to reviewed relevant reference material<sup>11</sup> treating sexuality education, health promotion and factors which affect the development of sexuality in young people, in general;
- Testing the questionnaires and reviewing their content in order to achieve greater degree of comprehension of questions posed and avoidance of double meaning and suggestibility in such questions;
- Collection of data by conducting surveys for the attitudes and perceptions of parents and teachers by filling-in questionnaires for each statistical unit of the survey sample.

<sup>10</sup>Multiple choice questions in conjunction with open end questions.

<sup>11</sup>(CCPES et al., 2000; Clément, 1998; Kehily, 2002; Teixeira, 1999; Vaz et al., 1996; Walker et al., 2003)



**Table 1.** Basic Characteristics of Respondents (number of surveyed teachers and parents and division according to gender and place of living)

City/Town	Teachers		Parents	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Skopje	3	20	15	22
Tetovo	9	4		21
Total	12	24	15	43

This survey covered a total of 36 teachers and 58 parents.

**Approach of Analyzing Data**

For the purposes of processing the survey questionnaires the EPI INFO software was used. The analysis procedure was divided into the following steps:

- Development of specifically coded database for processing data received from questionnaires
- Data input
- Descriptive analysis of data received

**Ethics dimension in the use of data**

In order to maintain the ethics dimension, a number of procedures were performed:

- Acquiring a license for performing a survey prior to fully informing the respondents what are the objectives of the survey and the manner of use of the collected data;
- Anonymous filling in of questionnaires and excluding personal data as name, surname or address of respondents;
- Providing privacy while respondents fill-in questionnaires.

**Bias and limitation**

In this survey a number of biases and limitations of possibilities for generalization of results were observed as a result of the specificity and sensibility of covered topics in the survey itself.

The first bias identified with reference to the design of the selection framework and the manner of selecting the sample of respondents. The sample has not been assigned randomly, however we were careful to select a sample which would be most appropriate to represent the targeted population, as much as possible. Hence, separate samples were set according to each of strata of respondents, meeting the criteria set by the survey team. Such data were thought by the team to provide much and most relevant pieces of information. In addition to this, three ethnic groups living in Macedonia were covered.

The survey team is of an opinion that respondents lack sensitivity with regard to a number of topics covered by the survey, especially in terms of the psychological aspects of sexuality, thus the results themselves show certain inconsistency in responds of this sort. This is why this study will serve as basis for our initial findings, leading to further deeper assessments and surveys.

# Results

## 1 Identifying the perception and attitudes of teachers and parents in connection with the need to introduce sexuality education (SE) in the regular school syllabus.

According to statements given by parents, high priority problems faced by young people are insufficient access to information (51,7%) and the early start of sexual intercourse (43,1%). In addition to this, high percentage of those surveyed parents (69%) thought that provision of highest attainable level of sexual health for young people requires access to information. Pursuant to this (91,4%) parents choose information about the sexuality of young people to be attained within the framework of their regular schooling or more precisely only 1,8% of respondents stated they are against the introduction of SE.

Teachers (69,4%) stated that promotion of sexual and reproductive health may only contribute to positive changes in students' behavior. Most of them (44%) understand sexual rights as sexuality education.

Out of the total number of respondents in this survey, only 11,1% of teachers stated a concern about introducing sexuality education in schools or no need for such a subject in the syllabus. In relation to the period for introduction of SE in official syllabi, almost 2/3 of parents and teachers felt it should be initiated as early as in the syllabi for elementary schools. Merely 5,5% of teachers and 10,7% of parents stated that SE must be introduced in high school curricula.

**Table 2.** Percentage of participation and responses of parents and teachers with regard to the period of introduction of SE in schools

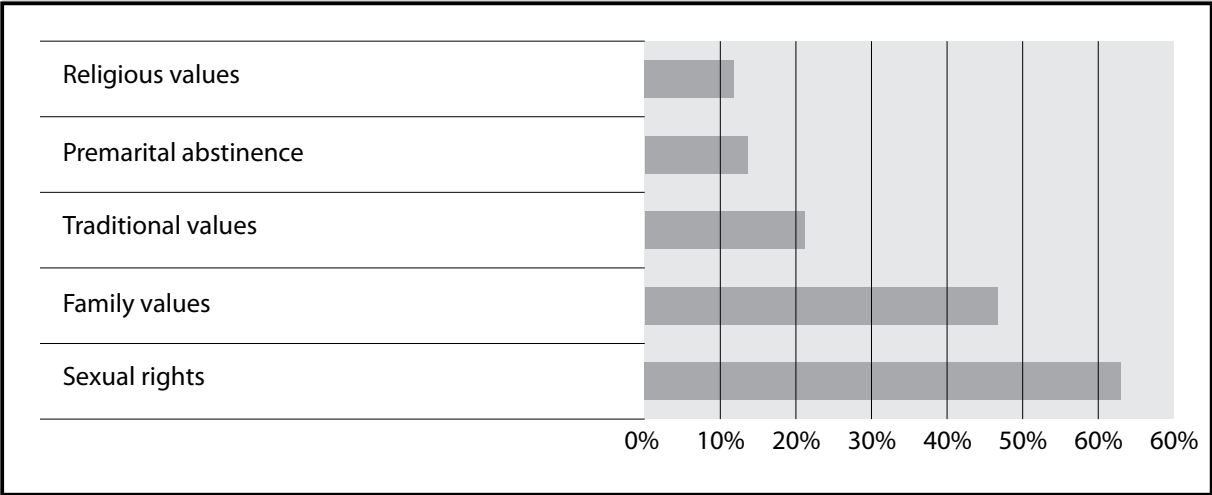
Period of introduction	Teachers		Parents	
	% of positive responses	Total	% of positive responses	Total
5 grade	22.8 %	77.1 %	16.1 %	82.2 %
6 grade	22.8 %		37.5 %	
7 grade	20 %		12.5 %	
8 grade	11.5 %		16.1 %	
In high school	5.5 %	5.5 %	10.7 %	10.7 %
Does not know	5.8 %	5.8 %	5.3 %	5.3 %
It must not be introduced	11.5 %	11.5 %	1.8 %	1.8 %

# 2 Identifying the attitudes of teachers and parents with regard to the volume and the contents of the syllabi in terms of SE in schools.

## 2.1 Parents Considerations relating to the SE syllabus.

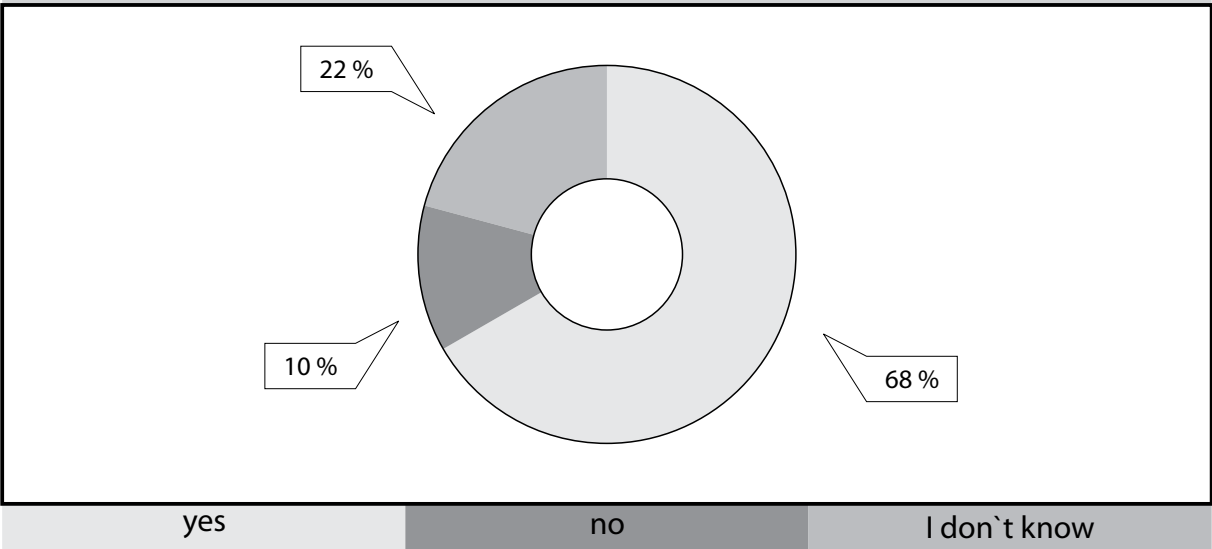
Parents were observed to have given an almost unanimous answer to the question whether or not girls and boys equally need sexuality education. For most parents sexuality education covers: the respect of sexual rights (62,1%), respect of family values (46,5%) and traditional values (20,7%), abstinence from pre-marital sex (13,8%), respect of religious values (12,1%), see Picture 1. Out of the eight parents who decided that pre-marital abstinence is necessary, 70% were women.

Picture 1.: What do Parents Perceive as Sexuality education



In terms of the question whether or not an SE syllabus should include such topics as sexual diversity, sexual orientation and sexual identity, 67% of parents gave a positive response, 22,4% did not have any attitude about this and 10,3% were against such topics (see Picture 2).

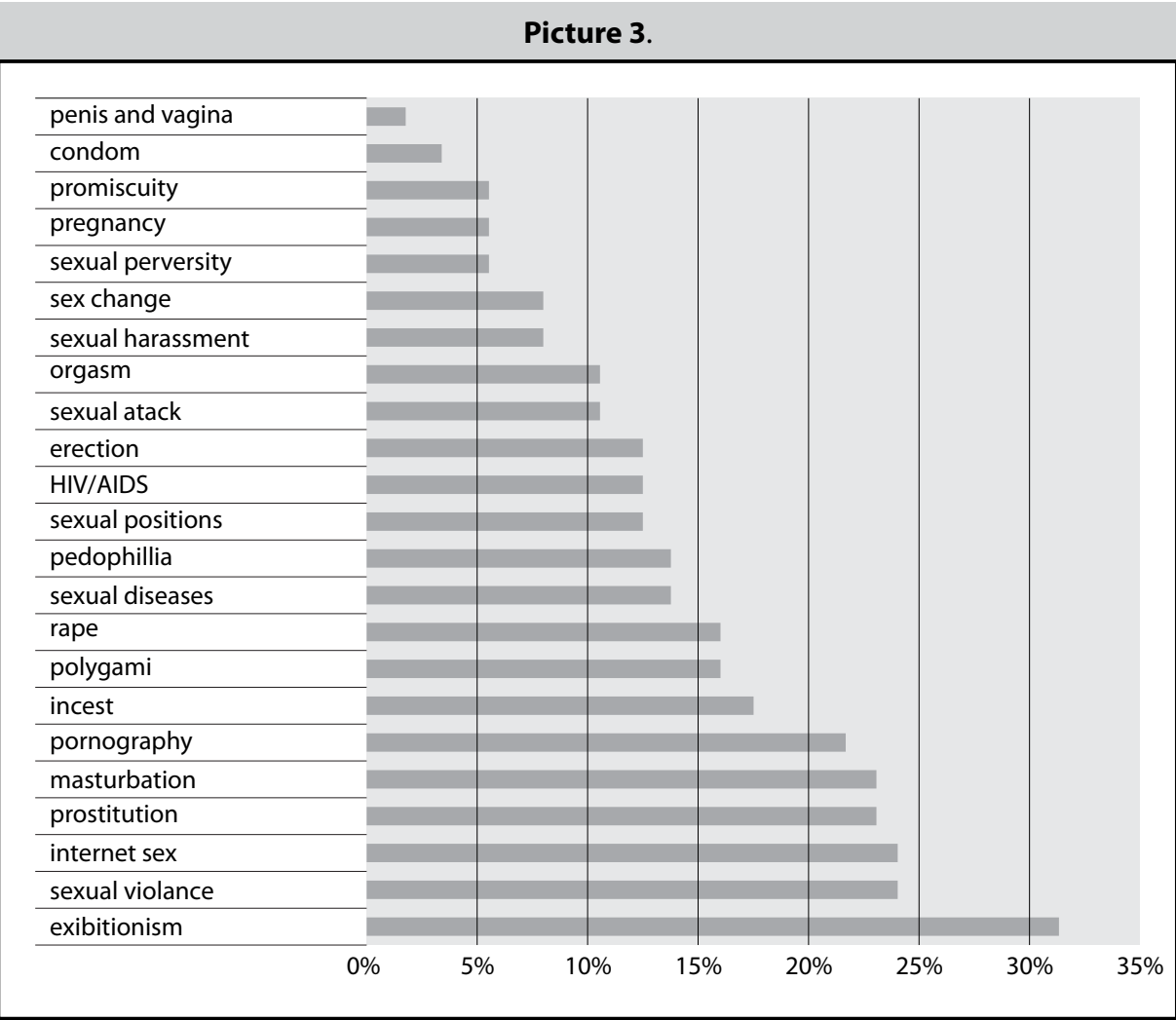
Picture 2.: Parents: sexual diversity, identity and orientation in SE





Parents were asked which topics should or should not be discussed during SE classes, by selecting a multiple choice answers. While, no topics were identified by parents to be completely excluded, most of them stated that SE classes should not discuss exhibitionism (31%). Furthermore, data shows that one portion of parents feel that in class there should be no mention of sexual violence and internet sex (24,1%), masturbation and prostitution (22,4%), as well as pornography (20,7%).

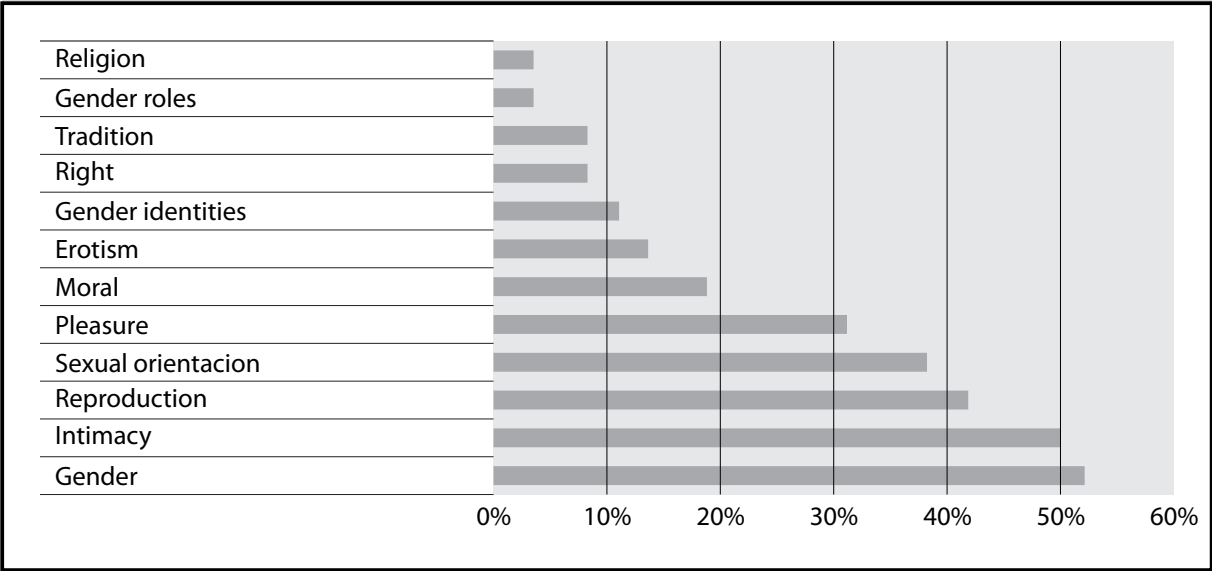
Only small portion among the parent respondents refused HIV/AIDS as discussion topic in class (12,1%) and pregnancy (5,2%). All responses are represented graphically in Picture 3.



2.2 Teachers' Considerations Relating to the SE Syllabus.

According to teachers, sexuality education knowledge is information about gender characteristics, intimacy and reproduction. (Picture 4).

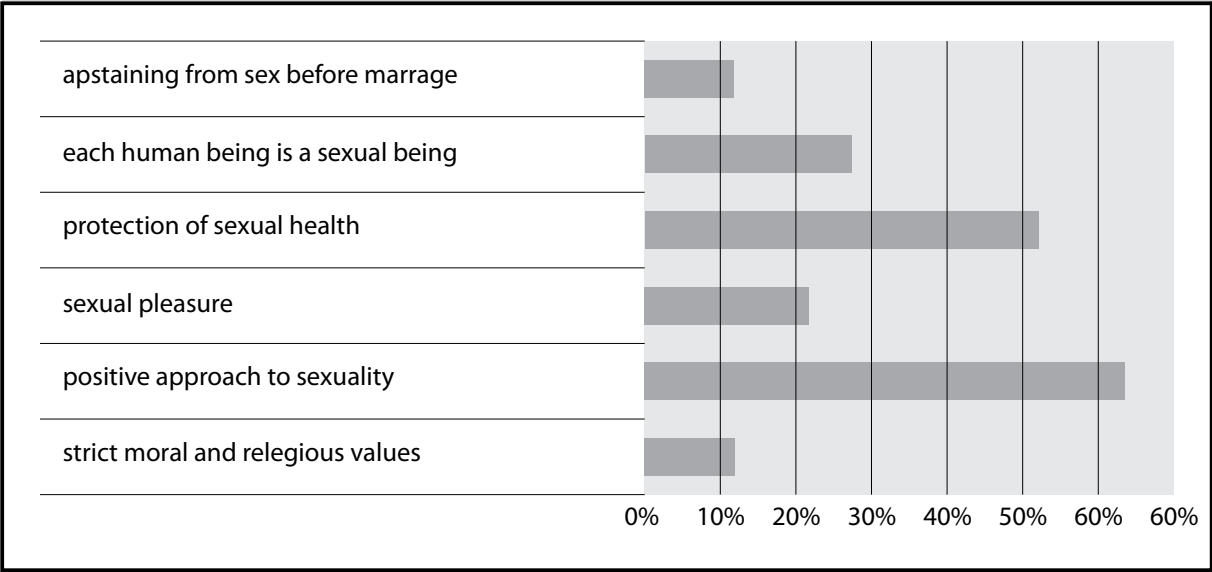
Picture 4.: Teachers: Knowledge about Sexuality



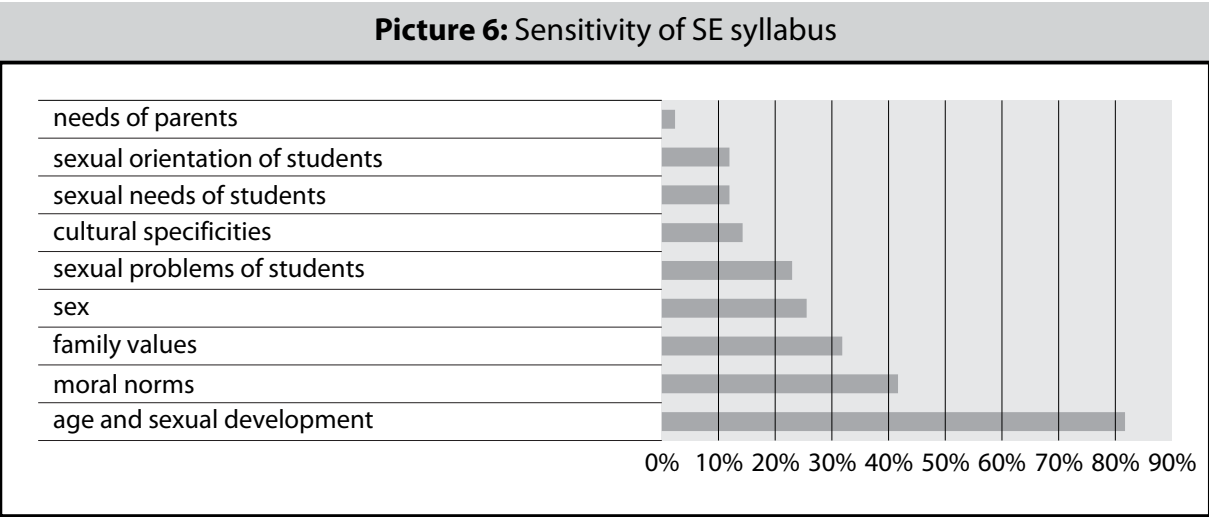
Nevertheless, in order to receive the entire picture of attitudes of teachers, related to the wider concept of SE, teachers responded to the following question: “Whether or not an SE syllabus should be based on the principle of sexual diversity and sexual orientation.” 61,1% of respondents consider that SE should be based on such a principle, while 38,9 % were against it.

In this context, the majority of surveyed teachers should concentrate their efforts for a SE based on a positive approach to sexuality (63,9%), however such approach should provide for the protection of sexual health (52,8%). Conversely, only 22,2% of parents feel that SE should be based on an approach which includes sexual pleasure and 11,1% of them feel that such SE should direct children to abstain from sexual intercourse previous to marriage. Each of these responses are depicted in Picture 5.

Picture 5: What sort of approach should an SE employ?



The majority of respondents (83,3%) answered that an SE syllabus must empower women to protect themselves from sexual diseases and unwanted pregnancy. In addition to this, 77,8% of them consider sexuality education as something which will provide information to students, depending on the different needs of women and men. Namely, teachers thought that SE must be more age and sexual development sensitive (80,6%), than moral norm sensitive (41,7%) and family values sensitive (30,6%). It is interesting that only 11,1% of respondents felt that an SE syllabus must be sensitive to the sexual needs of students, as well as their sexual orientation. Teachers fail to recognize the needs of the parents, i.e. only 2,8% denoted identical needs. The review of the responses is given in its entirety in Picture 6.



Teachers were also asked whether or not an SE should be specifically targeted to abstinence from sexual intercourse, as a single method for preventing unwanted pregnancy. In response to this, one third of answers given by teachers were in disagreement with such a method, another third agrees with it, and the final third is undecided.

Responding to a question: “What should SE promote?” respondents had an opportunity to choose from a number of possible questions. Respondents stressed topics about sexual responsibilities (50%), avoiding sexual risks or sexual rights (44,4%). A few of them decided to respond in favor of diversified sexual expression (25%), and even less of them were inclined of traditional family values (13,9%) and religious values (5,6%).

Identical to the responses collected from parents and teachers emphasized topics which should be avoided in SE classes. As the parents, most of the teacher-respondents were against discussions about exhibitionism (38,9%). The same percentage of such respondents rejected pornography as topic of discussion and approximately 30% of them were against masturbation, sex change, dual marriages or discussions about sex positions. In comparison with the surveyed parents, a similar portion of teachers (22,2%) considered that SE should not cover topics in the realm of sexual abuse (violence).

The attitudes of teachers relating to student skill acquisition were also assessed within the framework of a SE syllabus. The greatest emphasis in terms of this was put on HIV/AIDS prevention skills and other STIs (85,3%), followed by skills for preventing unwanted pregnancy (61,8%) and skills on how should students talk to their doctor about their sexual



health (50%). Teachers, at a lesser degree, stressed the need of introducing skills which will enable students to address social (peer) pressure to start sexual relations (26,5%) and pre marriage abstinence skills (17,6%).

### 3 Assessment of the preparedness of the teachers to take active participation in SE programs in schools.

An assessment was made of the level of preparedness of teachers to discuss with students topics in the area of sexuality. Responding to the question: "Whether in SE classes students should or should not be given an opportunity to speak openly about topics relating to sex, love and sexuality" 54,3% of teachers answered positively, 34,3% of them partially positive, while 11,1% were against such an effort.

Furthermore, teachers had an opportunity to identify topics related to sexuality for which they are prepared to speak openly with students. Most of the respondents stated they are prepared to discuss HIV/AIDS related issues (63,9%), love related issues and relationship issues (58,3%). In addition to the 50% of respondents who felt ready to discuss puberty related issues, at the same time only 5,6% of teachers might discuss hygiene issues about menstrual periods in girls. Furthermore, while the need of discussions related to pregnancy was identified in 44,4% of the cases, contraception related discussions were only identified in the responses of 5,6% of observed teachers.

A very low percentage of those teachers who took part in the survey, amounting to just 16,1%, responded they felt prepared to discuss STIs protection in classes. Also, a few of the teachers said they might discuss menstrual hygiene issues or contraceptives. A sheer few of the teachers (2,8%) expressed their preparedness to discuss issues related to sex and gender in humans (see Table 3).

**Table 3.:** Topics teachers are prepared to discuss with students (most frequent positive responses)

Topics	
HIV/AIDS protection	63,9 %
Love and relationships between partners	58,3 %
Puberty	50 %
Pregnancy	44,4 %
Menstrual period in girls	38,9 %
Condom use	36,1 %
Sexually transmittable diseases	30,6 %
Anatomy and physiology of reproductive organs in boy and girls	30,6 %
Sexual Intercourse	27,8 %
Abortion	25 %
Sexual rights and liberties	19,4 %

**Table 3.:** Topics teachers are prepared to discuss with students  
(most frequent positive responses)

\* in continuation from previous page

Topics	
Protection from STIs (prevention)	16,7 %
Masturbation	13,9 %
First sexual intercourse	13,9 %
Rape and sexual violence (sexual abuse)	13,9 %
Sexual abstinence	13,9 %
Orgasm	11,1 %
Erection and ejaculation	8,3 %
Sexual equality	8,3 %
Sexual privacy	8,3 %
Legal prohibitions in relation to sex and sexuality	8,3 %
Sexual stereotypes	8,3 %
Contraceptives	5,6 %
Hygiene during periods in girls	5,6 %
Homosexuality	2,8 %
Sexual orientation and sexual identity	2,8 %
Sex vs. gender	2,8 %

In addition to this, a number of teachers were asked about their understanding of sexual privacy in young people. One half of interviewed teachers stated that obstruction of a consensual intimate relationship and sexual intercourse is a disturbance of sexual privacy. Nonetheless, the percentage of those teachers, who think that gossiping about one's sexuality in front of others is insignificant (27,8%) or those who think obstructing public manifestation of one's sexual identity (16,7%) is abuse of one's sexual privacy.

**Table 4.:** Most frequent reasons for disturbing individual sexual privacy

Reasons	
Obstructing consensual sex	52,8 %
Obstructing consensual love/intimate relationship	52,8 %
Unauthorized access to medical data connected with sexual and reproductive situation of an individual	36,1 %
Unauthorized access to or disclosure of personal data connected with the sexuality of the individual	36,1 %
Obstructing masturbation (self-satisfaction)	30,6 %
Recording or showing intimate recordings without consent of the individual in question	30,6 %
Gossiping about one's sexuality in front of others	27,8 %
Obstructing public manifestation of one's sexual identity	16,7 %
Lack of intimate space for sexual intercourse or masturbation	5,6 %

# 4

Assessment of the expectations of parents regarding the effects on youth, from introducing SE in school syllabi.

74,1% of parents stated young people should have social support for attaining the highest possible level of sexual health, actually referring to provision of access to reliable information. Contrary to teachers, the bulk of interviewed parents (79,3%) expect SE classes to provide ground for open discussion about sexuality. 80,7% of them think that such discussions must be adapted to the age and gender of young people, and approximately an equivalent portion of them (79,3%) think in such classes information should be given about what is “normal” and what is “abnormal” sexual behavior.

65,5% of parents believe that the respect of sexual rights serves as basis for a responsible sexual behavior in youth, 15,5% disagree with this attitude, while 19% of them failed to provide an answer to this question.

According to parents participating in the survey, the syllabi should mostly respond to the needs for skill acquisition for prevention of STIs/HIV/AIDS (79,3%), unwanted pregnancy (53,4%), selection of best-suited contraceptives (31,9%), and less, to such issues as negotiation with the partner (15,5%) and abstinence from sexual intercourse (10,3%).

**Table 5.:** Which skills should students acquire in SE classes

Skills	
How to protect themselves from STIs and HIV/AIDS	79,3 %
Protection against unwanted pregnancies	53,4 %
How to select the best contraceptive	31,9 %
How to handle pressure for early start of sexual intercourse	29,3 %
How to face unwanted pregnancy	25,8 %
How to achieve self-esteem in relationship with the partner	17,2 %
Partner negotiation skills	15,5 %
How to abstain from sex prior to getting married	10,3 %

In addition to this, two-thirds (61,4%) of parents think that “the SE teachers must observe the values of their students, restrain from any form of prejudice or instilling their own attitudes and views relating to sexuality”. One-third (36,8%) partly agrees with this point of view and only 1,8% disagree.



# Conclusions

## **Both parents and teachers agree that sexuality education should be introduced in schools as a regular subject.**

Parents do emphasize the fact that young people are faced with shortage of information relating to sexuality and that the provision of access to information on the part of the Government will play the most significant supporting role for better sexual health in young people. Merely each of the interviewed parents agree that sexuality education should be introduced in regular school curricula, starting from more senior classes in the state-ran primary education system.

2/3 of teachers think that promotion of sexual and reproductive health is the basis for making positive changes in the behavior of students and one-half of them understand sexual rights as sexuality education. Approximately 90% of teachers are in favor of introducing sexuality education as early as in the seventh grade primary school.

## **Both parents and teachers agree to have SE which promotes safe sexual behavior and a large number of them, an SE education which also covers sexual diversity.**

Parents are unanimous in their attitude that SE must be equitably adjusted to the needs of boys and girls. They stated that SE must be based on sexual rights, without avoidance of diversity and sexual orientation. There is no unanimous attitude for topics which should be excluded from discussion in classes, for e.g. the bulk of respondents felt that exhibitionism should be excluded and at the same time, there is a lesser degree of agreement of excluding sexual perversion from the topics.

Nonetheless, in conclusion, parents are interested in bio-medicinal aspects of the sexual behavior of their children, i.e. the anatomical features of sex organs, condom use, promiscuity and pregnancy.

While teachers concentrate their efforts in favor of introduction of sexuality education, providing information on bio-medicinal aspects of sexuality, for example the sex organs or the reproduction process, nonetheless, a number of them are conscious of a need for discussing intimacy and sexual orientation of students.

As in parents, 2/3 of teachers said they would concentrate their efforts in favor of sexuality education which would promote sexual diversity and sexual orientation. A sexuality education must advocate a positive approach to sexuality, but at the same time, guide students to be able to protect their sexual health, avoid risk taking, leading to taking sexual responsibility, i.e. develop skills in order to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and STIs and unwanted pregnancy. A few teachers favor keeping up with religious and traditional values.



In addition to the need of an SE, which would take into consideration both males and females, more attention should be concentrated on protection of women.

Teachers agree that syllabi should be sensitive to the developing capacities of youth, as well as to different sexual problems and sexual orientations. Also they fail to recognize the needs of parents as significant to the SE of children.

Teachers failed to unite in terms of their attitude in favor of a sexuality education based on premarital sexual abstinence.

Identical to those attitudes of interviewed parents, teachers discard exhibitionisms as a topic to be discussed in class, however they fail to recognize topics relating to menstrual periods in girls as good for discussion in class. On the other hand, they did not have anything against a discussion about homosexuality or bisexuality.

### **Teachers feel that they are not ready to teach most of the topics in a comprehensive sexuality education and fail to recognize each of the aspects of sexual privacy of their students.**

Only one-half of teachers are prepared to openly discuss each topic relating to issues such as love, sex and sexuality, in general. Even so, they feel prepared to discuss HIV/AIDS related issues, along with relationship, puberty and pregnancy related ones. A raised concern was observed in data showing that only small proportion of them are ready to speak with their students about STIs, menstrual periods and prevention of unwanted pregnancy or contraceptives, which form part or are in connection with HIV/AIDS related issues, puberty and pregnancy. The information showing teachers unprepared to discuss sex versus gender related issues, also raises our concerns.

### **Teachers, except with regard to distraction of consensual love relationship, are virtually insensible to other forms of distractions of sexual privacy among students.**

Parents expect a sexuality education which provides comprehensive response to practical skills, respecting the values and needs of their children.

Parents would like to see sexuality education classes introduced in schools providing ground for open discussion about sexuality and sexual rights, enabling students to learn what normal sexual behavior is. To a greater extent, parents expect teachers to respect such values or at least not judge sexuality of their students, or not to instill their attitudes about sexuality. Yet again, student skill acquisition must be practiced in order to enable students to protect themselves from STIs and HIV/AIDS and prevent unwanted pregnancy.



## B) Students

### Objectives

Considering the obligations of the Republic of Macedonia in terms of providing due and objective sexuality education in its syllabi for adolescents, for the purposes of this research the following objectives were set:

1. Identifying the perception and attitudes of students (high and elementary school) in connection with the need to introduce sexuality education (SE) in the regular school syllabus.
2. Identifying the attitudes of students (high and elementary school) with regard to the volume and the contents of the syllabi in terms of SE in schools.
3. Assessment of the preparedness of teachers for students to take active participation in SE programs in schools.
4. Identification of main problems and needs in students for accessing a high quality sexuality education.

### Methodology

After the selection of Skopje and Tetovo as sites for conducting this survey, because of their multiethnic role, the authors decided to focus their attention to senior high school students and 8th (final) grade pupils from the primary state-ran school system (in order to use their experience from previous years of schooling, as much as possible).

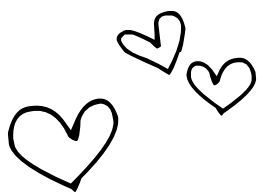
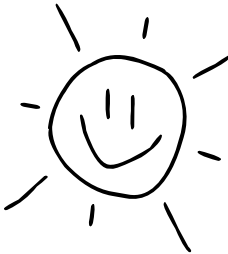
The selection of focus groups, as a key method for data collection (the groups were facilitated by previously trained peer-educators, using predesigned questionnaires), was made under the presumption that students will be more eager to speak openly about their personal needs and problems, as well as to speak about their attitudes and perceptions in front of their peers (peer groups of 1 boys and 1 girls only group and mixed groups), instead of speaking face to face with interviewers.

After the design of the questionnaire for high school students (senior or 4th year) and the one for primary school pupils (8th or final grade) the research team proceeded with the selection of facilitators for the focus groups and their assistants (minute takers) which attended a special training course for application of the questionnaire, as an instrument for moderating a focus group, as well as an instrument for data input.

**Table 1.** Number of focus groups and attending student in Skopje and Tetovo

	High School			Primary school		
City	Male groups (no. of participants)	Mixed groups (no. of participants)	Female groups (no. of participants)	Male groups (no. of participants)	Mixed groups (no. of participants)	Female groups (no. of participants)
Skopje	2 (16)	2 (16)	2 (16)	2 (16)	2 (16)	2 (16)
Tetovo	1 (8)	1 (8)	1 (8)	1 (8)	1 (8)	1 (8)
Total	3 (24)	3 (24)	3 (24)	3 (24)	3 (24)	3 (24)

Such a division of focus groups was expected to provide identification of differences in perceptions, attitudes and gender, age and place of living based needs.



# Results

## **1.a. Perception and attitudes of students (high school) in connection with the need to introduce sexuality education (SE) in the regular school syllabus.**

The absolute majority of high school students participating in the survey stated the existence of a need for introducing sexuality education as separate subject in the regular school curriculum. An insignificant minority of students felt SE is to be introduced as elective or subject of choice for students. Some high school students stated that sexuality education training should be introduced for adults (their parents) as well. One student came with a proposal for SE to be introduced as a "seminar giving an opportunity to parents and teachers to speak their mind."

## **1.b. Attitudes of primary school students in connection with the need to introduce sexuality education (SE) in the regular school syllabus.**

The majority of primary (elementary) school students stated there is a need for introducing SE as a separate subject in the regular primary school curriculum. Only a few of them stated no such need because they would be uncomfortable to learn about sexual topics.

## **2.a. Attitudes of students (high school) with regard to the volume and the contents of the syllabi in terms of SE in schools.**

High school students have different opinions in terms of the period of introduction of SE. Some of them feel that as early as in the junior or second year high school classes such education should be introduced, others that it should start in 7<sup>th</sup> grade primary school (when most children begin to go into puberty), as well as such who think that 8<sup>th</sup> grade is most suitable time for this, etc. The male group from Tetovo considered 3<sup>rd</sup> or senior year of high school as best period for introducing this subject. Most respondents stated that such subject will be best covered in 2 classes per week or 1-2 classes per week.

The students themselves proposed the following topics for discussion, responding to a question "What contents would you like to see covered in SE classes?" Student who responded with "love," "beauty and all about sexuality," "sex, consequences of having sex, what is the intercourse, falling in love, love and abortion," "sexually transmittable diseases," "how to use a condom," "frustration," "when is the best time to start having sexual intercourse," "general information about sex, how to protect yourself, how to satisfy your partner," "from love to pregnancy," "sexual orientation."

In terms of proposed discussion topics the students have been unreserved that the following topics should also be discussed: Sexual Development, Puberty, Sex Organs, Sex and Reproduction, Sexual Rights and Obligations (one focus group from Skopje considered this to be the most important topic to be discussed), Sexual Health, Sexual Risks, Pregnancy, Protection against Unwanted Pregnancy, Sexual Intimacy and Privacy, Sexual Discrimination and Violence, Protection from STIs and HIV/AIDS.

Two of the focus groups from Tetovo designated as most important topic to be marriage, family, parenthood, for which some of the high school students from Skopje were reserved. Most reservation was stated with regard to topics such as Sexual Abstinence and Abortion (in one of the male groups from Tetovo). To a less extent, students stated their reservation for topics such as Falling in Love and Love, Love and Sexual Relationships, Sexual Orientation and Sexual Identities and Sexual Myths.

### **2.b. Attitudes of primary school student with regard to the volume and content of the syllabi in terms of SE.**

Primary school students also have different attitudes in terms of when should an SE be introduced. The majority of respondents preferred introduction of SE in the seventh and the eighth grades primary school (with an average of two classes per week), however there were a number of students who thought that such education should be introduced in the fifth or sixth grades ("The earlier, the better"). In two focus groups in Tetovo an attitude that SE should not be introduced at all in primary school, was observed, however it was suggested that it should be introduced in the second year of high school.

Different groups were differently reserved with reference to whether or not SE should be a regular or optional (elective) subject. A number of students also stated they prefer SE not to be mandatory subject, since they would feel ashamed to discuss lectures connected with sexuality.

Responding to a question "What contents would you like to see covered in SE classes?" the students proposed topics for discussion, such as What is love?, When is sexual intercourse possible? (Female, Istikbal – Tetovo), How, when and why do you have sex?, What is AIDS? (mixed, Istikbal – Tetovo), everything regarding sexual diseases and how to avoid sterility (male Istikbal – Tetovo); "to learn about positions, history of sex, STIs, how to protect ourselves" (male, Karpos – Skopje), protection, pedophile victims, contraception, abortion, sexual orientation, How does a sexy girl look like?, When is best time to have sex? (female, Karpos – Skopje); Diseases, consequences, protection, pregnancy (mixed, Karpos – Skopje); First wedding night, getting pregnant, abortion, HIV/AIDS (male, Braka Ramiz i Hamid – Skopje); Protection from diseases and unwanted pregnancy (female Braka Ramiz i Hamid – Skopje); Unwanted pregnancy (female, Braka Ramiz i Hamid – Skopje) and STIs protection (male, mixed, Braka Ramiz i Hamid – Skopje).

Regarding proposed topics, students did not have any reservations on covering the following topics: sexual development, puberty, sexual organs, sex and reproduction, falling in love and love, marriage, family, parenthood, sexual health, sexual risks, sexual myths and getting pregnant.

### **3.a. Assessment by students on the preparedness of teaching staff for active involvement in sexuality education programs in schools**

Most high school students have the impression that many of their teachers are not prepared to elaborate on sexuality related topics. Teachers either do not want or they do not allow speaking about sex at all ("there is no sex in their world" – male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo). Some are afraid or embarrassed to talk about sex and sexuality. Rare exceptions, fail to change the predominating perception in high school students that initiation of any communication with teachers with reference to sex and sexuality is extremely difficult.

Most students wish to have communicative and open personalities as sexuality education teachers ("open individuals who would understand us") and some insist on young teachers, but also males consider relevant the sex of the teacher. Some males from Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje would like to have a female teacher, since "if we have a male teacher, we will feel like faggots". Some propose alternate shifting male and female teachers (male focus-group Orce Nikolov – Skopje).



### **3.b. Assessment by primary school students on the preparedness of teaching staff for active involvement in sexuality education programs in schools**

Most primary school students have the impression that many of their teachers are not prepared to elaborate on sexuality related topics. Many (particularly from Tetovo) have stated that teachers skip these topics and ignore the needs of students for information on sexuality. Some students are afraid of sanctions if they ask an 'inappropriate' question ("when we asked about condoms, the teacher threw the student out of class, so the next time, the student had to come with their parent" – female, Istikbal – Tetovo).

Some teachers have no capacity to discuss the topic of sexual violence, discrimination and social exclusion. When several students argued a problem of a female student, who was a victim of sexual violence, the female teacher forced upon girl "that is enough, you are the problem of all things that happen in this school" (female, Istikbal – Tetovo). In addition, teachers who do address the problem of sexual violence, lack to do it in a proper way. When a student became a victim to sexual violence by kidnapers, "teachers gave only this case as an example for things that should not happen in our town" (male, Istikbal – Tetovo). Personal and problems of social exclusion of the student were not addressed by teachers: "this student, due to mental pain, began to dress, talk and act like a faggot, and therefore we avoided him ever more" (male, Istikbal – Tetovo).

Primary school students from the Braka Ramiz i Hamid Primary School from Suto Orizari reported highest preparedness of teachers to elaborate certain sexuality related topics.

Most primary school students wished their sexuality education teachers to be communicative and young individuals, who would be able to understand their problems and needs.



# Identified problems

## **Problem 1.a.: Sexuality is still a taboo for many high school students.**

High school students rarely talk about love, sex and sexuality with their teachers, due to shame (shyness) and inconvenience, but also for the fear of possible sanctions. Most students get informed about love, sex and sexuality from their friends, close relatives, internet, films and magazines. Some are informed by their parents (mostly the opposite sex parent), some by teachers (mostly younger ones and female class head teachers), as well as by civil associations that deliver school workshops.

Many students reported they never talked about love, sex and sexuality with their teachers. Some emphasize that “it is out of the question to talk in front of the teacher”. Some consider that “it is not forbidden, but you cannot talk” and “there is no ban to talk, but there is embarrassment” particularly with girls. However, some students fear reprisal or sanctions if they ask sexuality related questions.

Also when talked about in class, it is rare that sex and sexuality related topics are positively discussed. Mostly they are discussed at biology classes (commonly in abstract terms, only within lessons set, not more than that) and in Macedonian and Albanian Language and Literature classes, sociology classes, introduction to law classes and in classes with head teachers. In Tetovo sexuality is the least talked about topic, and students reported they discussed this topic only once, “yes, we talked about it once, while we were analyzing a novel in Albanian language class. But, the discussion was not precise, only that sex should be practiced after marriage”.

Most students feel inconvenient to talk about sexuality with teachers (“it is not logical to discuss sex with teachers”). Some of them are afraid to ask their parents (If we dare ask about sex, we are doomed” – male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo). Merely asking a sex related question is considered a great sin in some traditional families (“Grandma and grandpa think we have sinned if we ask...” – male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo).

## **Problem 1.b.: Sexuality is a taboo for many primary school students**

Most primary school students get informed about sex and sexuality on the internet, porn magazines (“expert literature”), older friends and non-governmental organizations. Many of them are ashamed (shy) or afraid to ask teachers or parents to inform or advise them on sexuality (“it is most inconvenient to ask our parents, since we cannot tell them, we might get beaten and we are ashamed and afraid”). Sexuality topics are mostly discussed in biology classes and Macedonian/Albanian/Roma language classes.

**Problem 2.a.: Most high school students have not been introduced to basic sexuality and sexual health related information and terminology**

Most high school students cannot differentiate between sex and sexuality, and many even between sex and gender. Some identify sex as sexuality or sexuality as sexual orientation. Most students have learnt about changes in puberty in biology classes ("Except with biology teachers, which is logical, you cannot talk about organs with other teachers" – male, Orce Nikolov – Skopje). A few have learnt about changes of sexual organs ("We have not talked about sex organs about the way they change... this is shameful, we will get thrown out of class" – male, Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje). In many cases menstruation lessons were only taught to girls.

Teachers have hard time to deal with such topics ("Everybody laughs and is ashamed to ask, teachers are also ashamed" – mixed, Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje; "it is very embarrassing, particularly for teachers to talk about puberty in front of girls in the class, they (the teachers) blush" – Tetovo, male). Teachers frequently skip lessons related to sexual health and sex organs, or they leave the students to talk about it themselves ("teachers do not want to teach lessons on sex" – female, Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje; such lessons are taught by students" – female, Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje).

**Problem 2.b.: Most primary school students have not been introduced to basic information and terminology related to sexual development, puberty and love**

The reason for this is that most teachers cannot "break the habit" of being ashamed, shy or experience inconvenience and laugh at, which are most common reactions of students when taking about topics related to sexuality ("when we learnt about sexual reproduction, the teacher only pronounced the first four letters of sexual and male students started shouting, so the teacher took the class log and went outside, he did not continue the lesson.").

Many primary school students have the impression that love is not a desirable topic for conversation with teachers, "they don't talk about love, if you ask them they would make you a fool and look at you as if you were insane"; "teachers are embarrassed, they think we are too young" (female, Karpos – Skopje).

Sexual organs are a taboo for many teachers, "we noticed that the teacher consciously skipped the words penis and vagina as part of the lesson, and nobody dared to react, since we knew we would end up in detention and school counselor would call the parents (male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo).

**Problem 3.a.: Most high school students have not been introduced to information regarding the 'first sexual intercourse' and 'safe sex' by their teachers**

Many high school students have never talked about 'love', 'love relationships' and 'first sexual intercourse' with their teachers, "the word love does not exist with us" (male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo); "they skip those topics, they remind us not to drink, smoke and take drugs" (mixed – Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje); "there is fear and inconvenience to discuss such topics" (male – Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje). Some teachers avoid love related topic by saying – "love after classes" (female, Orce Nikolov – Skopje).

Some students have a feeling there is an informal ban to talk about topics such as the 'first sexual intercourse' with teachers, "it has not been said precisely as a ban, but as a rule of silence or it is a prohibition. We know that if we talk about this we will have problems. There is fear of the teacher" (male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo). Most students are not knowledgeable on when can they freely start having sex.

Sex, masturbation and erection are improper topics for discussion at school, "females don't know what masturbation is, although boys mention the word all the time in class, while teachers act as if they haven't heard anything" (female, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo). There are student who don't know what the word masturbation means (mixed, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo), even though they have done it (male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo).

Most students perceive sex as forbidden fruit, “we know about sex from family education and that we should not have sex before we get married” (male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo). Some perceive it as a danger, “it is harmful for your health without wearing a condom”, and even as something unhealthy, “as much as it is healthy, it is also unhealthy” (mixed, Orce Nikolov – Skopje). Teachers who have positively described sexual relations as “a beautiful feeling, mutual satisfaction” are rare (mixed, Orce Nikolov – Skopje).

Some students have never been introduced to information by teachers on how one gets pregnant, “some teachers think that are we are not mature enough and other think we know everything, so it is us students that teach each other” (female, Orce Nikolov – Skopje). Some students have the impression they receive selective and censored information, “the sperm joins the ovum and they form a zygote that splits further more to become a fetus first, and then a baby. They have not said more than that. Neither had they said about sex that is essential for getting pregnant, nor how or where does the baby get out from.” (male, Goce Stojceski – Tetovo). Teen pregnancy is an embarrassing topic for some teachers, “isn't it shameful for her to be pregnant now, and shame on you for writing such things” was a reaction of a teacher, after he read out loud a private note (female, Orce Nikolov – Skopje).

Information on safe sex is provided to students by lectures from nongovernmental organizations, brochures, television, experienced friends, and rarely by their teachers, usually in biology classes.

### **Problem 3.b.: Most primary school students have not been introduced to information regarding a 'first sexual intercourse' and 'safe sex' by their teachers**

Most primary school students from the eighth grade have no information on when they can freely start having sex. Primary school students need answers to questions such as “When can one have sex?”, “How, when and why do you have sex?” they are not allowed to ask their teachers. These questions are popular in environments where girls “are afraid to have sex so that they don't lose their virginity”.

Most primary students have no sufficient information on how to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (“Girls want to learn more about pregnancy in order to avoid it if they have sex in a non-serious relationship, whereas males want to learn more about protection from STIs”, mixed, Braka Ramiz i Hamid – Skopje). A few students have received relevant and practical information by their teachers on what safe sex is. Instead of information on means to protect oneself from unwanted pregnancy and STIs, some students get incorrect patronizing lessons “safe sex equals family”. In most cases eighth grade students are discouraged from having sex, without providing them with convincing reasons, except that they are young for that. Even when faced with a real possibility of sexual relations of eighth grade students, some teachers do not provide advice on using protection, “in math class we had temporary advice – not to make stupid things at the upcoming field trip, so that we won't have any baptizing in nine months”, female, Karpos – Skopje.

Students have not received relevant information on fundamental protection (“have not been shown a condom” – female, Karpos - Skopje). Some students could not recognize at all how a condom looks like, when their friends took it in class secretly in order to play, making difference between condoms and balloons, “some students didn't even know it was a condom, and they took it and blew in as if it was a balloon, others played football with it” (male, Istikbal – Tetovo).

**Problem 4.a: High school students are insufficiently informed about their right to sexual privacy, no matter the fact many of them are aware that rights are often denied to them in school.**

Some of the high school students stated they have been informed about their right of sexual privacy, however a number of them have not been informed at all: "No teacher has informed us what is sexual privacy and there have been cases when co-students have been denied such privacy." (male group, "Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje"). Each of the focus groups point out numerous cases of denial of privacy of high school students on the part of their co-students, as well, but much more on the part of their teachers:

- Reading private writing in note books and grade books
- Reading private notes aloud
- Public reading of SMS messages: "A teacher has confiscated a mobile phone from a school girl and read the messages in front of us" (female group "Orce Nikolov – Skopje"; "There is fooling around with teachers. It happened that a telephone was taken from a student so that messages could be read just for fun" (female group "Zdravko Cvetkovski – Skopje").
- Bugging private electronic communication ("They follow what we write on MSN at the central computer" – mixed group "Orce Nikolov – Skopje").
- Abuse of mobile phones: "In a Physics class a friend of mine was writing a message and the teacher took his phone and added something to the message," "My phone was ringing and a teacher took the phone and talked to the caller."

A number of students had a sense of someone spying on them and teachers following their intimate relationships: "They are just like spies, they know everything, who is dating whom, etc."

**Problem 4.b: Primary school students are insufficiently informed about their right to sexual privacy, which often is denied in schools**

A few of the students have received by their teachers information with regard to their right to privacy ("They stressed not to get into contact with the grade book because it is private information" – male group – "Karpoš – Skopje"). Each of the focus groups mentioned the existence of many examples of denial of the right to privacy of students on the part of teachers:

- reading private letters: "the headmistress took the letter and gave it to the headmaster and then he summoned the girl's father" (female group "Braka Ramiz and Hamid" – Skopje)
- interception of intimate messages on pieces of paper and reading them aloud by teachers: "the boys wrote to the girls in class and then dropped the piece of paper, the teacher then caught one of the notes and read it in front of everyone" (males "Istikbal" – Tetovo);
- dispossession of mobile phones and reading intimate SMS messages: "they also take our phones, they inspect our SMSs, everything..." (females "Istikbal" – Tetovo); "the teacher took my phone, read all of my messages and kept it, then he called my parents and told them: look what she is doing in class (females "Karpoš" – Skopje)
- checking school bags and confiscation of make-up: "very often teachers check what everyone has in their bags in order to inspect if anyone carries a knife, but we know that they are doing that because of the make-up we carry" (males "Istikbal" – Tetovo).



Primary school students stated they experienced situations when a teacher was suspended for denial of the right to privacy, acting on complaints on the part of students and parents: “a girl wrote a letter and a teacher took it and read it in front of the class. Then the girl went to the headmaster and complained and the teacher was summoned to explain herself (mixed group “Ramiz and Hamid Bros” Skopje); “a teacher confiscated a letter of a friend of mine and read it in front of the class... then the boy got angry and called his mother and his mother got into a row with the teacher (males “Ramiz and Hamid Bros” – Skopje).

A few of the examples only concern the denial of the right to privacy perpetrated by students themselves: “I read somebody else's diary, the girl started to cry, she did not report it to the teacher” (mixed group “Karpoš” – Skopje). Students also described a case of denial of sexual privacy and then threatened to disclose recordings from a mobile phone: A student threatened another co-student or family (recordings where a girl kisses another boy) and managed to get blackmail money from her, which she took from her father without his knowledge (males “Istikbal” – Tetovo).

**Problem 5.a: Teachers most often ignore problems relating to stigma, social exclusion and gender related discrimination, as well as discrimination against the looks or sexual orientation of students.**

One part of high school students did not receive any opportunity for acquiring information on sexual orientation or the existent sorts of sexual orientations. To a great extent, high school students are aware they will be punished if they use intolerant or “vulgar” speech, especially if it is directed towards their teachers: “We had a case when two school friends talked to each other in such a speech, then when the teacher got in class, she thought the words were directed to her. The whole matter got to the ears of the headmaster and one of the students was expelled from school” (mixed group “Gjoce Stojcevski” – Tetovo).

Nonetheless, certain types of intolerant speech is ignored by teachers: “When we say faggots they perceive us as making fun” (females “Orce Nikolov – Skopje”). Sexual problems of students are also ignored in terms when students are victims of sexual offending: “They offend him, teachers are also aware, but they react as if they do not know” (mixed group “Orce Nikolov” – Skopje).

Homophobia and sexism are raising a concern, particularly in high school populations who have not receive an opportunity to become aware of the topic of sexual orientation. Homosexuals are victims of social exclusion since homosexuality is not perceived as normal behavior: “We avoid all homosexuals, because we think that is not normal,” (males “Gjoce Stojchevski” – Tetovo). According to high school students homosexuals are either “sick” or they should be pitied: “The ones who make themselves homos consciously are sick, and those who were born with extra female hormones are to be pitied” (males, “Gjoce Stojcevski” – Tetovo).

Among high school students there is greater tolerance for sexual diversity (“We have an older friend who likes both females and males” – females “Gjoce Stojceski” – Tetovo), however there is greater feeling among them that they are victims of discrimination based on gender and looks, exhorted by their teachers. “When girls wear something more fancy, since they like that, the teachers give them detentions, they expel them from class or give them worse grades” (females, “Gjoce Stojceski” – Tetovo).

**Problem 5.b: The teachers often ignore discussing topics such as sexual orientation and problems with stigma, social exclusion and discrimination based on one's gender, looks or their sexual orientation.**

Most of the students have not discussed with their teachers topics such as sexual orientation and they are not aware what that means: "we do not know" (mixed group Tetovo); "we have not discussed that with our teacher" (males "Istikbal" – Tetovo); "half of them do not know what sexual orientation is" (males "Karpoš" – Skopje).

Some students have started discussions on homosexuality: in Macedonian Language classes "we have chosen an essay topic ourselves and we spoke for ourselves" (females "Karpoš" – Skopje); "in a Macedonian language class we debated on the topic of homosexuality and most of the people were against it" (males "Karpoš" – Skopje). The teacher did not speak about his personal attitudes at all, during the debate.

Other students are afraid to speak out about homosexuality: "we were afraid that this could happen to us, if we speak about such things" (males "Istikbal" – Tetovo). Male students have a tendency to avoid "any kind of friendship with other males who have higher pitched voice and specific looks" (males "Istikbal" – Tetovo); "if a friend is gay, if I am friends with him others will think I am gay too" (mixed group "Karpoš" – Skopje).

A "cultivated" homophobic environment exists in the observed schools, especially among some males who are blamed to have had some other sexual orientation, and thereafter they are publicly disclosed and become subject to abuse: "On St. Valentine's Day students read something about the gay boy on the public speaker system and then they made fun of him" (mixed group "Karpoš" – Skopje). There are different teachers which participate in such "jokes": "On St. Valentine's Day they put two boys next to each other, the teacher laughed, and one of the boys was embraced" (females, "Karpoš" – Skopje).

However, there is an impression that one part of students use the word "faggot" as slang which has no negative connotation "among us we use "faggot" as making fun with our friends, and we are not offended among ourselves" (males "Istikbal" – Tetovo).

A number of other students complained that they are not only discriminated against by their teachers (because of the ban to wear makeup), but by co-students: "Our peers discriminate against us saying 'you tried to have sex' 'you are not a virgin'" (females "Istikbal" – Tetovo).

**Problem 6.a: High school students need additional information and open discussion about the problems they face in terms of sex and sexuality, which their teachers fail to address.**

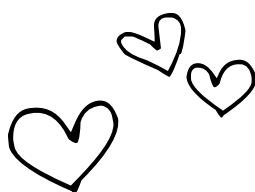
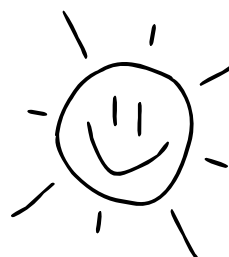
Most high school students state the need of additional information about sex organs, what is going on during sex and sexual intercourse: "What is happening during sex, sexual intercourse" (females "Zdravko Cvetkovski" – Skopje), "What is the entire procedure of having sex" (mixed group "Gjoce Stojceski" – Tetovo), "What is going on during the intercourse itself" (females "Orce Nikolov" – Skopje). Large number of students wishes to receive more information about STIs and the right use of contraceptives. A number of high school students are particularly concerned with their lack of liberties to speak up, and the fact that they cannot wear what they like and the fact that they have to hide any attraction to someone else (females "Gjoce Stojceski" – Tetovo).

**Problem 6.b: Primary school students need space for open discussions regarding their sex and sexuality problems, which their teacher fail to address.**

Such students feel insecure to address their sexual problems in any of the classes ("one time during a class with the head teacher, when a friend mentioned his sexual problems, he was not listened to and got a detention.") Students have an impression that their teachers are only interested how well they behave in school: "Teachers say: do what you want to do, but do it after classes." Students are morally discouraged to pose questions for any topic in connection with sexuality "if you ask too much, you will stay unmarried" (mixed group, "Istikbal" – Tetovo).

Primary school students stated a number of problems they and their peers face, particularly in terms of lack of information: "what is sex, what happens the first time someone has sex, how do we protect ourselves," "How safe is sex, relationships, general questions about male and female sex, AIDS and infections, or sexually transmitted infections..."

Some of the problems young people face are determined by traditional prohibitions of their community (environment), particularly in terms of the cult of virginity in girls: "Love relationship and sexual intercourse with a partner, if he requests it, because in our environment there is no such thing" (females "Ramis and Hamid Bros" – Skopje); "When I get married, how could I know whether my wife has been spoiled, in order not to have her hanged afterwards" (males "Istikbal" – Tetovo).



# Conclusions

The vast majority of responses received from high school students state a need for introduction of sexuality education as a separate subject in the school curricula. Student had different opinions in terms of the period of introduction of such a subject. In addition to this, students without reservation towards any of the proposed topics of a comprehensive sexuality education, were most interested about practical skills which they might use in terms of their sexuality. The most prevalent impression in a large number of surveyed high school students' statements, was that of their teachers not being well prepared to discuss topics about sexuality.

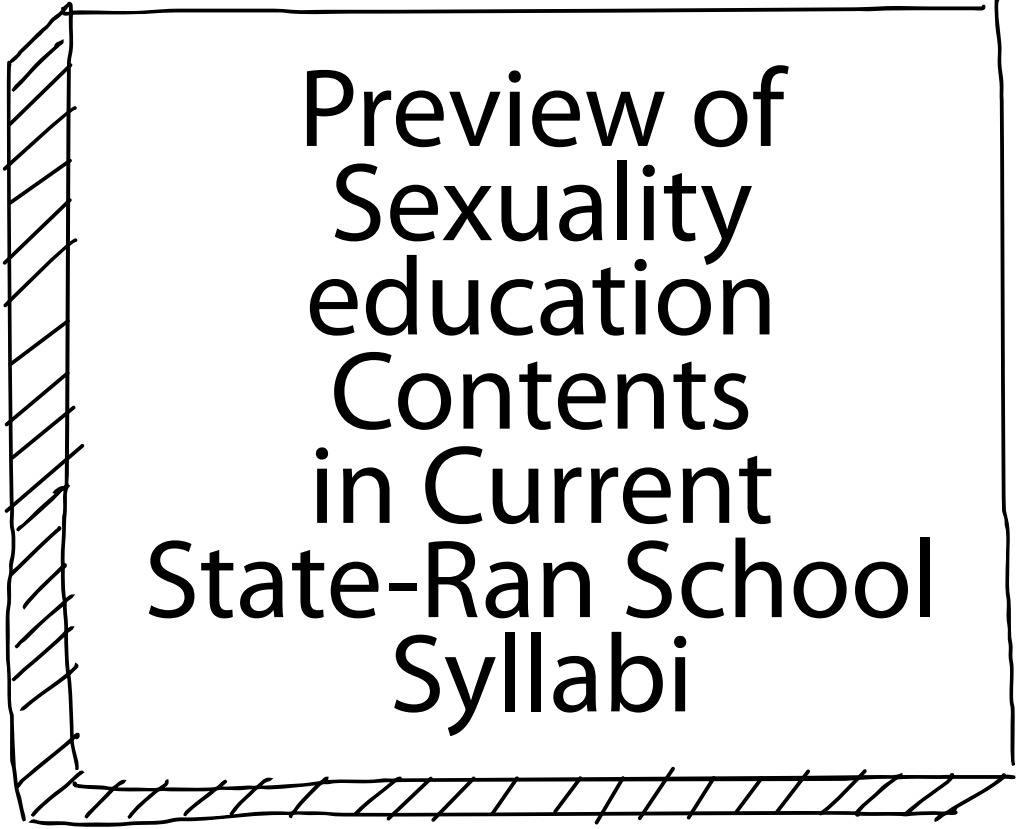
The majority of surveyed primary school students could not exercise their right of having due and objective sexuality education within the framework of their current school syllabi and with current staffing in schools.

## Situation Analysis:

**1 Lack of Information:** A large number of students does not receive appropriate information from their teachers with regard to sexual and reproductive health, sexual and reproductive rights and responsibilities, nor does it receive information which will enable them to identify or reject any sexual myths, stereotypes or bias.

**2 Lack of life skills:** Ongoing curricula and practices fail to provide development of life skills necessary for prevention of unwanted pregnancies and STIs, as well as nurturing responsible sexual behavior in adolescents. Many students have no developed basic communication skills, as well as skills for questioning necessary information or problems they are faced with, since sexuality is still considered as a taboo for their teachers. The majority of students have no capacity for critical thinking and discussing topics in terms of their sexual health and their sexual rights. Most students lack skills for making their own decisions in terms of sexual challenges they are faced with and most of them are unprepared to undertake their own responsibility for such decision making.

**3 Lack of positive attitudes and values:** Ongoing curricula and practices fail to provide upbringing of positive attitudes and values in terms of sexuality, sexual health and sexual rights, particularly with regard to sexual minorities. Majority of observed teachers did not succeed in promoting their students' pleasure and confidence about student's sexuality, as well as to prepare students to be able to make their own informed choices.



# Preview of Sexuality education Contents in Current State-Ran School Syllabi

## Introduction

During the second phase of this SE research, the HERA initiated establishment of a Working Group consisted of representatives from relevant State Institutions and Ministries, along with civil society organizations and human rights experts, in order to produce an analysis of the existence and the quality of topics related to sexual and reproductive health in state-ran school syllabi and school curricula in the formal primary and secondary schools.

Herein we enclose the review of the used bibliography for this analysis.

## Specific Objectives:

- To analyze the contents of school syllabi and textbooks, in terms of accuracy of information contained therein;
- To analyze contents of school syllabi and textbooks, in terms of the comprehensiveness of information contained therein;
- To analyze the contents of school syllabi and textbooks, in terms of developing positive or negative aspects and stereotypes in students.

## Methodology of Research

**Design of a study:** A transversal, qualitative study was performed using two types of questionnaires developed for this purpose: a questionnaire for analyzing school syllabi and a questionnaire for analyzing textbooks used in schools.

**Subject matter of the research:** school syllabi in the state-run formal high and primary schools, as well as texts books used in such schools identifying the existent topics relevant to a comprehensive sexuality education.

**Instrument of this research:** As a research instrument specially developed questionnaires were used: a questionnaire for reviewing school syllabi (see Annex 1) and a questionnaire for reviewing the text book content (Annex 2). Both questionnaires had as subject of review the following 7 topics: *gender, sexual and reproductive health, sexual citizenship, pleasure, violence, diversity and sexual relationships*. Each of the topics was further subdivided into ancillary questions and subtopics in order to conduct an in-depth and structural analysis of the existence and quality of current SE content. The selection of topics and subtopics, subject of this analysis, was in accordance with the framework of the International Planned Parenthood Federation's Comprehensive Sexuality education. (see Annex 1).

The research was performed in several phases:

1. Analysis of school syllabi in state-run primary and secondary education and identification of syllabi and text books used in state-run schools relevant to a comprehensive sexuality education.
2. Analysis of content of text books which contain topics relevant to a comprehensive sexuality education.
3. Drafting of a report with the findings from the research.

**Inclusion criteria:** In this study we selected each school syllabi and text books which contained any sort of topics relevant to a comprehensive sexuality education.

**Exclusion criteria:** In this study we excluded from analysis information and educational materials such as guidebooks for sexual reproductive health produced by public health care institutions and civil society organizations, since we have not identified a consistent pattern of their use in schools, nor did we identify their use country wide. Also we excluded from our analysis the "Life Skills" program which forms part of the state-run school curricula, because the process of introduction of this program is ongoing.



# Results

## Topic 1: Gender

### a) Exploring gender roles and attributes

In a text book entitled "Citizen Education" (subchapter "Men and Women" p. 45) results from scientific researches are promoted, according to which "a key role for the appearance of differences between the sexes is the socialization." According to this, children learn how to behave as "boys and girls." In a subchapter of this text book entitled "Gender Differences" a traditional role of women is claimed in a statement reading: "they are preparing for bringing up children and for maintaining the home" and men are "preparing for professions having political or military character" and that men and women are "not equitably respected in society" and that "men enjoyed greater esteem in society and played a dominant role within the home, as well as in society, in general."

In a text book used in state-run schools, entitled "Sociology" "the identity of the gender" and gender roles are explained as being built upon previously learnt behavior: "People are born as females and males, however they learn how to become girls and boys when they become grown up women and men" ("Sociology" p. 112) Gender roles are described as culturally and societally causative relations: "Gender roles of women and men vary significantly from culture to culture, as well as from one to another social group in one and the same culture..." (p. 114)

### b) Understanding perceptions of masculinity and femininity within the family and across the life cycle

In the same text book entitled "Sociology" (chapter "Gender and Sex," subchapter "Gender and Biology") sexes are described as constituted, defined as "conditioned by their cultural, societal or political status which is attributed to political beings" (p. 109) A distinction between gender and sex is given, according to which with the term gender "the characteristics of men and women which are socially determined is described, in comparison with the biologically determined ones." It is interesting that transgender issues are not even mentioned, in addition to trans-sexuality and intersexuality. According to the author of this text book, difference between sex and gender "is made in order to stress each action men and women take and each action which is expected from them, except their sexually determined differences (giving birth and breastfeeding), is maybe reformed and it really does change during a lifetime and in accordance with the changes of different social and cultural factors" (p. 112)

In the text-book "Citizens Education" (subchapter "Men and Women" p. 45) the following distinction between sex and gender is provided: "When we distinguish according to sex, we think about the biological and anatomic differences between men and women. When speaking about the gender, than we are thinking about the psychological, societal and cultural differences between them." According to the authors of this text-book "sexual differences, which are subject of the science of biology, are evident," however, such

differences are not preconceived by such different roles in social life, as much as the process of socialization. The perception of differences is address in several questions: "Whether men's nature is to be a hunter or a warrior, and is the nature of women to be housewives? Whether men's nature is to be active, and women's passive? Whether the nature has endowed men to be rational, and women emotional? "Each of these questions are not provided with an affirmative answer, but it really suggests that "the characteristics of men and women differ from the established and widely accepted picture about them."

### **c) Changing society's values and norms**

In the "Citizens Education" text-book (subchapter "Societal Efforts for Equity of Gender" p. 47) it is pointed out that "our society struggles to make conditions for equality between genders." It falsely provides for a "constitution and laws in the country which govern such equality" (in the Constitution of Macedonia there are provisions for equality of sexes only, but no provisions with regard to gender equality). Instead of illustrating the changes of values and norms, the following superficial conclusion is drawn: "Nonetheless, the traditional values are still powerful enough in order to overcome the issue of inequality."

In a text book entitled "Pedagogy" the trends of democratization of the relation between men and women in the family are explained in the following citation: "... democratization of the relations between men and women is a direct consequence of the alterations in the economic status and employment rates of women, who, with the crystallization of their economic independence in the family, are more and more inclined to provide themselves an equal position to the one of the men..." (p. 140). Instead of promoting a fight against gender inequality, this text-book portrays women as causing the "disorganization of family:" "In some families, the efforts on the part of women to attain equal position in the family causes arising of fierce conflicts, even disorganization of the family."

### **d) Stereotypes. Inequality**

In the same text-book "Pedagogy," (11.2 Education for Acceptance and understanding of Differences between People), a very confusing definition of "stereotypes" is given, namely "...the differences between people are also called stereotypes" (p. 185). In the very next paragraph it becomes more apparent that stereotypes are not actually "differences between people" but, "relatively more simplified and stern understandings of specificities of members of separate social groups."

One of the tasks of junior school teachers is to "be persistent in avoiding possibilities to create or support stereotypes, carried by the child from its family or from other influential factors" (p. 186) When listing the sorts of differences, this text book fails to make a mention of differences according to one's sexuality, but it only says there are differences according to one's sex, listing only male and female sex. In addition to this, the junior school teachers are also consulted in order "to break stereotypes referring to the traditional role of the sexes in a family (by playing games, showing pictures)" (p. 186)

Section 11.4 Intercultural and Multicultural education, giving a pleonastic mention of "respecting cultural differences," the author lists only differences as "... language, values and personal religion, ethnic background" (p. 191), failing to include sex, gender and sexual differences, reducing the concepts of multicultural education and cultural pluralism. Other than that, students are also offered a seemingly reduced concept of tolerance (only in the form of respecting the opinions of others p. 187). There is no addressing, what so ever, of the relationship between differences, stereotypes, prejudices and inequalities.

The concept of "equality between sexes" is promoted in Chapter "11.5 Education between the Sexes" when the author lists the basic elements of education between sexes: "respect, friendship and equity of sexes" (p. 198). As precondition to love the author lists "mutual honesty, respect and equality between the sexes" (p. 199). Such an understanding of love and

equality, only in terms of "equality of the sexes," excludes any love between people from the same sex and promotes the inequality between heterosexual love and other types of love. A positive value provided, in the text-book on "Pedagogy," is the gender equality between partners in marriage, a precondition for a healthy and functional family, as well as a psychological, social and emotional, healthy development of children.

A text book entitled "Sociology" promotes the "clause that all people are equal, without regard to their race, sex, denomination and social background." The author of this book quotes UN statistics on inequality and relations of power between men and women.

The topic "Equality between genders" is being exploited in previously mentioned text book "Citizens Education". There are a number of areas which are listed under gender inequality: limitation of social space ("The woman, to a great extent is limited within the confines of the home and the neighborhood"); limitation of education; selection of profession ("establishing a cultural sample, makes a difference between male and female occupations and professions," in which the latter "are less paid jobs than male jobs"); inequity of labor market (the difference between employment rates of men and women are "significantly greater in societies in which the general unemployment rate is generally high"); inequity in the professional ladder in a organization ("rarely does a woman occupy an executive position in economic industries"); and political inequity (women representation in politics is still unfavorable" p.47).

#### **e) Manifestations and consequences of gender bias**

In the analyzed text book "Sociology" (subchapter "Gender socialization") different forms of socialization are listed, which impose norms and supported "stereotypes and schemes," such as, e.g. "some activities are just for men and other ones are just for women (e.g. cooking, washing, child care, etc. are exclusively female jobs), also specific professions are a privilege for the male sex (doctors, engineers, miners, etc.) and that the attitude of pater familias is imposed and that the man in the family has the last word is also imposed and accepted" (p. 113)

As a consequence of such norms, based on "stereotypes and schemes," "for years and years women lived in the chains and under the boot of men, without any right to make decisions, and all this was accepted by women, since they were brought up in such a fashion."

In this text book the stereotype of the biological division of labor between the sexes is also addressed: "Although, some try to understand the division of labor as "natural" or as having "biological" feature, experience shows that such a division differs based on its dependency with the culture and it is changed with the passage of time" (p. 111)

The author of this text book, states in conclusion that today "thanks to long-term and persistent fight, above all, of women's movements," much of the norms have been changed, as well as the process of socialization, in which "there is no imposition of male and female roles and efforts are made so as to raise the dignity of women and overpass all attitudes which discriminate against the female gender." (pp. 113-4)

#### **Conclusion:**

*The information are detailed and generally accurate, however the comprehension of the contents raises our concern, particularly in terms of introducing the difference between sexes and genders and addressing gender stereotypes. A number of information may cause negative attitudes, such as the one that the fight for gender equality may be a cause for "disorganization of the family." The material is not written as to develop skills for overcoming gender stereotypes and prejudices, in order to recognize sex and gender based discriminations and to actively include each participant, be it a man or a woman, in the fight for establishing gender equality.*

## Topic 2: Sexual and Reproductive Health

**a) The anatomy and physiology** The anatomy and physiology of sex organs is represented in a number of syllabi: Anatomy for junior year high school students in the vocational medical high school education, Physiology (for junior year vocational high school students – medical profession), Biology for third year high school students and in the eight grade primary school curriculum in Biology.

With regard to the *anatomy of sex organs* the information are detailed and generally accurate from a professional bio-medicinal point of view. The functions of male and female sex glands is described in detail, the effect of secondary sex features and menstrual cycle.

The principle of comprehensiveness of contained information is not fulfilled in its entirety which is evident in the fact that in certain text books sex organs are not completely described. In the Anatomy text book for first (junior) year students attending medical vocational high school, only male internal sex organs are mentioned, while exterior ones are only illustrated in a picture. The female exterior genitals (outer and inner lips) are just listed, without any supporting text which would explain their function, while the clitoris is not mentioned at all as forming part of female genitalia, and they are not mentioned in the narrative part, nor in the pictorial representation. (16).

In terms of the *function* of sex organs, each of the analyzed text books, without regard whether their end-users are vocational or general high school students, a dominating feature is a simplified approach in the description of the function of both male and female genitals, diminishing their value to mere maintenance of human kind by reproduction, often avoiding the use of such terminology as “sexual intercourse” (“The Sex Organs..., are used for impregnating an ovum and the genesis of a new individual” *Anatomy, lecture on Reproductive System*, p. 152) and, “The vagina is used for receipt of the penis during ejaculation and impregnation with sperm” *Biology, for Eight Grade Students, primary school, Sexual Features of Humans and Sex Organs* (p. 105))

In places where sexual intercourse is mentioned, the sexual reproduction is diminished to a mere act of the ovum connecting with the sperm and the creation of a zygote “Reproduction in humans begins with a sexual intercourse. Then through the male genitalia, the penis, millions of sperms are ejaculated in the vagina of the woman... This is internal reproduction and production of a zygote.” (*Biology for Eight Grade Students, Sexual Intercourse, Reproduction and Embryo Development*, p. 107)

The in existence of an elementary humanistic dimension is evident in the description of fetus development or delivery. “The delivery is imitated by rhythmic contractions of the uterus. After the emergence of the fetus there follows the ejection of the placenta, by which the delivery process is complete,” (*Physiology for First Year Students, Physiology of the Reproductive System*, p. 234)

Certain information, on the other hand, gives further rise to stereotypes in terms of males being superior, both physically and psychologically, in comparison with females. “Men are physically stronger and psychologically more endurable, while women are gentler and more sensitive.” (*Biology for Eight Grade Students, Reproduction of Humans, Sexual Features of People and Sex Organs*, p. 105).

### **b) Understanding STIs and HIV, what they are and how to prevent them**

STIs are covered in the curriculum in two subjects entitled Hygiene and Physiology (both mandatory in medical vocational high school, during junior year), as well as in Biology in final year primary school and in biology in third year general high school education.

It is noteworthy that some inconsistency in the use of a unified terminology for STIs in

Macedonian does exist, such as the use, in different text books, of terms such as "contagious diseases transmitted by sexual intercourse," "disease of sex organs" "sexual diseases," "infectious disease of sex organs" which seems to introduce some degree of confusion as to the accuracy and the understanding the term STIs, which is also abbreviated in Macedonian. Inconsistent definitions may be found with regard to STIs ("Venereal Diseases are transmittable diseases which often are transmitted with intimate contacts – sexual intercourse," Hygiene of Sex Organs). In terms of the division of different types of STIs, a variety of definitions do exist in text books, whereas different text books give different differentiations without grouping them according to the cause of the infection. A text book entitled Hygiene provides the following division: colpitis, syphilis, gonorrhea and AIDS, while another text book entitled Physiology for First Year Students attending vocational high school – medical skills, groups the STIs as leucorrhea and venereal diseases. In a number of text books leucorrhea is laid out as sexual disease, although it maybe only a symptom (Biology for Third Year Students, secondary education, Physiology).

As **way of transmission**, each text books gives a main reason to be sexual contact (without listing particular types of sexual contact), while other means of transmission are either missed or not clear at all – ("Syphilis is a contagious diseases which is transmitted by sexual intercourse, but it may be also hereditary"), thus, the mother-to-child mode of transmission is not clarified, therefore the term "hereditary" maybe perceived as a hereditary disease (Hygiene, Most Frequent Sexual Diseases and Diseases Transmitted by Sexual Intercourse, p. 31). "Gonorrhea may be transmitted to a newborn child during delivery" (Biology for Third Year Students, general high school system, Sexual Diseases and Their Prevention, p. 212)

Except by having sexual intercourse other ways of transmission is by means of use of someone else's personal hygiene kit (Physiology, p. 237)

**The symptoms** are just partially listed ("pain in the urethra, possibility of getting an abscess or urethral secretion, if the condition worsens and is extended in interior sex organs, which could in turn cause sterility in men") thus, not in each case, does a clear division exist among symptom and consequences: pain and sterility (Physiology, p. 237). In some of the text books more significant symptoms of some STIs are provided in a boxed space of a Lesson – it may contain a picture from a flyer (Hygiene, picture 12, p. 31), which certainly aims at drawing the attention of the student in order to provide information in a unique way, however considering the blurriness because of the use of a small letter type, it plays more of a role of an example about a layout of an STI prevention flyer, instead of being used as source of information. In none of the text books there is no stress that STIs often provide none or very mild symptoms. In listing the consequences, a partly inaccurate and not clarified data may be read, as in the following: "Classical venereal diseases are the syphilis and the gonorrhea, which cause most of the consequences."

As **prevention**, most stress is put on personal hygiene as in the following: "Preventive measures for easing the inflammation of sex organs is made by regular personal hygiene, decreasing the number of abortions, etc." which, on one hand is not simply misleading and does not provide a complete picture of preventive measures, but it gives inaccurate information and not evidence based ones (in "decreasing the number of abortions"). The other ways of prevention are partially given, however in a pictorial presentation of a flyer, with each of its strengths and weaknesses when using such illustration (Hygiene). "The complication of the diseases (meaning HIV/AIDS) is very much influenced by the frequent change of partners, promiscuity, prostitution..." not referring to practicing unsafe sex as the key reason for the transmission of STIs, without any regard to the characteristics of the sexual behavior or a clause which makes impression that, .e.g. a heterosexual monogamous relationship does not pose risk for contracting STIs. All the arguments speak about a need to maintain good hygiene and care of sex organs in both males and females. (Biology for Third Year Students, Sex Organ Diseases and Prevention, p. 213) None of the text books provide the

most important way to prevent STIs, except with the use of protection, and that it is, the right selection of a partner, and the timely diagnosis and treatment of both partners.

In the majority of text books significant space is given to HIV/AIDS where, most frequently, a satisfactory amount of information is provided. Some omissions have been observed in terms of listing only the ways of transmission of HIV, but not mentioning the way the infection is not transmitted, which is particularly important for decreasing the stigma against HIV infections. The way of transmission is not always clearly conveyed, as in the following quote: "AIDS and the virus leading to it (HIV), are both transmitted during sexual intercourse or by injecting drugs with non-hygienic needles," thus not clarifying the term non-hygienic needle (Hygiene) which basically means unsterilized needles. Information are generally partially accurate or inaccurate, non-comprehensive, and many pieces of unclear and incorrect information may be found, such as the following: "AIDS is incurable and the protection from the infection is by use of condom during sexual intercourse with unfamiliar people" – (Biology for Eight Grade Students, primary school system, p. 112). According to this a student can conclude that sexual intercourse with "familiar" persons is safe and does not pose any risk upon his own health. "It is more easily transmittable from men to women than vice-versa. That is why the use of a condom is recommendable when having sexual intercourse." This argument also remains unclear to students why the way of transmission from men to women is more likely and why should they use a condom. With regard to **prevention** this text books states that it is necessary to "use a condom, not to change partners, to get recent and up-to-date information on preventive measures, etc." without clearly listing the other ways for HIV/AIDS prevention (Hygiene, Hygiene of Sex Organs, Most Frequent Sex Organ Diseases and Diseases which are Transmitted with Sexual Intercourse, p. 33).

In some text books different STIs are not mentioned at all, besides the fact they present a large public health problem in the country, such as Chlamydia or Human Papilloma Virus infection. The majority of information is provided in such manner creating stereotypes and misperceptions, claiming that only people from lower social levels, in extraordinary life circumstances, and those who have an unacceptable sexual behavior are susceptible to the malevolent sexually transmittable infections, strengthening the existent stigma against STIs which is the most important barrier for due and timely visit of a student to a doctor. ("The spread of sexual diseases arises when partners are often changed, during prostitution, migration, bad social and hygienic conditions..." Physiology).

### c) Pregnancy options and information

This sub-topic is covered in several curricula: first in Physiology and Hygiene for first year vocational high school students – medical profession, and in the curriculum in Biology for eight grade primary school students, biology for third year general high school students and in surgery and gynecology and obstetrics for senior medical high school students.

In terms of meeting the principle of **accuracy** of the information, the text books reviewed are in some measure accurate, as well as inaccurate and there are also some unsalaried and not scientifically based data. Such case was observed in a text referring to hormonal contraceptives: "if they are administered in a longer term, there is a chance of weight gain, however they also have cancerous effect" (Physiology for Junior Medical High School students, Lesson about Protection from Unwanted Pregnancy – Contraceptives). Without stating any of the advantages, the (possibility of) harm is the only thing which is underlined, without previously explaining in which cases adverse effects may arise, thus producing more prejudices in terms of the use of hormonal contraceptives, contrary to WHO recommendations about the usefulness of hormonal contraceptives for women who wish to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies. Also inappropriate terms are used about

certain types of methods of protection, such as: "the protection without using any means of protection" (Biology for Third Year general high school students, Family Planning, p. 210) instead of saying natural methods, or "artificial sterility", instead of sterilization.

In none of the observed text books an accurate, internationally accepted differentiation is provided with regard to contraceptives, instead most often there is a provision of inappropriate division of such methods as in the following quote: "Contraceptives are divided into: local (physical and chemical) and oral tablets..." (Hygiene, Health Aspects of Contraceptives and Sexual Intercourse). In this quote there is no order in the listing of methods in groups to which a contraceptive belongs to. The intrauterine spiral is listed under the group called "mechanical protection" besides the fact that it is a contraceptive of special kind which is not globally listed under the group of barrier methods of contraception (Biology for Third Year General High School Students, Family Planning, p. 210)

Also the effectiveness of different sorts of methods is not entirely explained, by which the authors are running a risk of transmitting information to students which might be harmful and stimulate unsafe behavior, such as the following one: "Coitus interruptus is a method for interrupting a sexual intercourse. This is one of the oldest methods which is also successfully used nowadays by a large number of partners." While reading such a statement a person may get an impression that this method is very successful, failing to understand that such a withdrawal of the penis before ejaculation is not really a method of contraception and that it should be avoided (Hygiene, for First Year Medical High School Students, Health Aspects of Contraceptives and Sexual Intercourse, p. 30) "However, the most powerful method for termination of pregnancy (abortion) is still frequent and most risky way for preventing unwanted and unplanned pregnancy..." qualifying the abortion as a method of contraception, against the fact that abortion is treated as method for termination of pregnancy (Biology for Third Year General High School Students, Family Planning, p. 210) On the positive side this text book stresses other benefits from the use of prevention against unwanted pregnancy, that being "the enabling and heightening erotic pleasure (love without fear)" (Biology for Third Year General High School Students, Family Planning, p. 210)

Some information in a number of text books are incomprehensive, scarce and not clear enough, thus they are insufficient to the student in order for him/her to acquire minimum level of knowledge on family planning, which in turn will help him/her to preserve his/her sexual and reproductive health: "Oral Contraceptives – are used only with a consult of a gynecologist" (Hygiene, Health Aspects of Contraceptives and Sexual Intercourse). "Pills are taken, spirals are installed and condoms are for the penis" (Biology for Eight Grade Primary School Students, Sexual Intercourse, Reproduction and Embryo Development, p. 108) The texts are very often supported with pictorial illustrations in which students may observe some contraceptives, however such pictorials could not compensate the lack of information. In addition to this, such pictorials seem sometimes extracting the attention of students or depict the contents in a terrifying fashion, such as the example where intrauterine spirals are shown, where the size in contrast to other pictures is exaggerated and such size may seem terrifying to girls. (Biology for Eight Grade Students, p. 108)

Fully provided information with regard to the existing contraceptives was not observed in any of the text books in terms of the action they produce and the manner of preventing pregnancy. In some of them, only the place of application is listed as in this example: "The spiral maybe made out of plastic or metal, installed by a gynecologist in the inner part of the uterus" not providing any details about how it stops pregnancy in women Hygiene, Health Aspects of Contraceptives and Sexual Intercourse pp. 29-30).

**Information are provided in a way as to develop stereotypes in students**, e.g. a child has to be raised by both of his parents, putting the single parent families in a inferior position: "By planning the family, which forms the elemental cell of society, the right of the newborn to be loved is realized, as well as its right to live and grow in plenty, surrounded by love and care by



both of his/her parents" (Biology for Third Year General High School Students, Family Planning, p. 210) From time to time the author imposes his own, ungrounded attitudes about the ingredients of a happy family and gives suggestions on the number of children needed in a happy family, by which he is imposing a fierce pro-natal policy: "A family should be planned according to the financial possibilities for provision of right development of children, conditions for schooling and fortunate future. It is estimated that five member families are happiest..." (Biology for Eight Grade Primary School Students, Sexual Intercourse, reproduction and Embryo Development, Family Planning, p. 108)

In a text book entitled "Gynecology and Obstetrics for Fourth Year Medical High School Students" there are certain incorrect information which are not in accordance with scientific knowledge and recommendations of the WHO for the use of hormonal oral contraceptives, serving as a barrier for their administration in certain categories of women, especially young women. "In practice, it is important, such a method, (implying to hormonal oral contraception) "not to be used by young girls and women prior to their menopause not to disturb the normal "adaptation, i.e. cessation of ovarian function."

#### **d) How to use condoms**

In spite of the fact that the use of condoms is identified as important way for protection against STIs, there is no particular place in text books about the right use of condoms, neither narratively, nor pictorially, where all the steps of aright setup of a condom would become evident to the student.

#### **e) Sexuality and the life cycle (i.e., puberty, menopause, sexual problems)**

The text book in Biology for eight grade students (Post Embryo Development, p. 110), reserves significantly small space for issues connected with puberty, defining it as: "a period featured with new psycho-physic characteristics, feelings of love, arts, music, poetry or some inner unrest, over sensitivity, bad moods, feeling of defiance." Thereafter follows: "the period of maturity of the post embryo development, which commences around the age of eighteen, the action of sex hormones and the functions of the body are stabilized and the human is prepared to make love and establish a family."

In a text book on Gynecology and Obstetrics for Fourth Year Medical High School student (in a lesson entitled Lifespan Periods of Women in terms of the function of ovaries), the following sub-issues are covered: puberty and adolescence, premenopausal, postmenopausal. Generally, accurate information are given, however the principle of comprehensiveness is not met, since the texts only focuses on purely biomedical aspects of puberty and the pathological occurrences during a lifespan of a person. Just a small proportion of text books cover the sub-issue on menopause, devoting very scarce information to it (Physiology), thus the entire text is reduced to several sentences describing the physiological facts according to which a menopause is a "cessation of the menstrual period in women" and "atrophy of the ovaries," strengthening the stereotyping of the menopausal people, as aging progresses, which is really is discriminating against women of this age group (Physiology, a lesson on Sex Glands, p. 237) A more in-depth text about the menopause in women is given in a Biology text book for third year high school students, where, except for the most frequent symptoms of menopause, also "psychological issues" which arise are being described (Menopause, p. 210)

## f) Living with HIV

This topic does not exist in any of the analyzed text books.

## Conclusion

*In terms of the sub-topic on the “**Anatomy and Physiology of Sex Organs**”, most of the information are assessed as accurate, except for the over-simplification and reduction to minimum of some of the data, which will not serve to the enhancement of knowledge and increasing information at the disposal of students. With regard to the contents, certain pieces of information seem to be missing, failing to meet the principle of comprehensiveness of SE, thus contributing to incompleteness of contents, accordance to set objectives, in the curriculum. Biomedical aspects are overemphasized and the focus is directed on per organ basis, which seems understandable, when considering the fact that syllabi or curricula have no intention of improving SRH, but mastering experiments and professional knowledge for students. The only exception in the curriculum map for Hygiene which aims at “... identifying the causes of unsuitable maintenance of personal hygiene, sexual diseases and ignorance about contraceptives.”*

*With regard to the subtopic “**Understanding STIs and HIV**”, no unified approach exists in terms of the order of appearance of information, which must be met when talking about STIs (division of causes, symptoms, ways of transmission, ways of prevention and treatment), as well as use of inconsistent terminology, use of non-comprehensive information, certain STIs are not mentioned at all, although nowadays they seem to have become significant public health issue. Not all ways of transmission are elaborated, (the mother-to-child transmission is missing, i.e. breastfeeding and skin-to-skin transmission), a number of symptoms are not mentioned at all, nor does the fact that STIs very often seem asymptomatic or they are accompanied with mild symptoms, which adds more obstacles to their due and timely detection, treatment and spread. In another example no information on consequences from STIs are listed. Information are partially redundant and not up-to-date, failing to correspond to new scientific knowledge. The information may stimulate development of stereotypes and prejudices against STIs, especially against HIV positive people and different population groups (drug users, people from more impoverished social levels), which provides a significantly negative effect, since the stigma against STIs is one of the more important barriers for right and timely protection and seeing a doctor.*

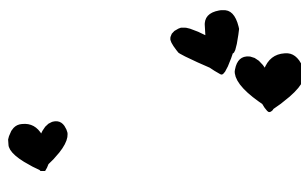
With regard to the subtopic of “Pregnancy options and information contraception” a positive feature seems to be the fact that such an important topic is included in various curricula, as well as the fact that in each of the analyzed text books there is a clearly recognizable positive attitude of the authors to the use of contraceptives being key to the health of women. Nonetheless, there are some inconsistencies, primarily in terms of insufficient systematization and scarcity of information, the listing of inaccurate divisions of methods, no presentation of the manner of use and ways of action of contraceptives, while a number of methods are not mentioned at all. Incorrect and not scientifically backed data is presented, especially with regard to the harm of hormonal contraceptives, imposing personal attitudes contributing to possible development of prejudices, which in turn might be transferred to other peers. This maybe partially explained by observed negative attitude among students who are against hormonal contraception, as well as the low percentage of use of any contraceptives, in general, especially the modern ones, as well as practicing dual protection contraception (using both condoms and hormonal contraception), as a safest method for preventing unwanted pregnancies and STIs. It is particularly noteworthy that none of the observed text books provide practical information about condom use (e.g. what is a condom, types of

condoms, use of condoms, how to get a condom), since the condom is the only contraceptive which, at the same time, protects from STIs and unwanted pregnancy, which is particularly important for young people practicing safe sex.

*In connection with the subtopic **“Sexuality and the life cycle (i.e., puberty, menopause, sexual problems)”** very little space is given to the rest of the changes that appear during a lifetime (emotional, social), while giving descriptions to physical changes only, in a way which may only contribute to strengthening current gender stereotypes.*

*In terms of the subtopic **“Living with HIV”** no attention is provided with regard to psycho-social and health aspects of people living with HIV and AIDS and there is no discussion about exposure to stigma and discrimination against people of this group, which would stimulate the development of tolerance towards such marginalized populations. HIV/AIDS issues are generally considered from a medical point of view, leaving out any social approach to the virus and the syndrome, disabling the students to build positive attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS.*

*The majority of analyzed text book materials are laid out in a way to increase the level of information in students, primarily with regard to their knowledge about the physical alterations and biomedical aspects of the SRH, but also to assist them in acquiring skills which will enable them to face and enhance their SRH in general (critical thinking skills, negotiation skills for introducing contraceptives in their sex lives, decision making skills, skills for strengthening their self-esteem, developing responsibilities, developing empathy, respect, skills for seeking help on time, etc.) The manner of presentation of the material, the focus on providing information, the volume of information, punctuality and relevance of the material (none of the text books uses reference materials, nor do they give a list of useful bibliography,) makes the contents generally insufficient for a student to acquire necessary knowledge and skills which will enable him/her to preserve their sexual and reproductive health during the course of their lives, when such information is of paramount importance. Great concern is raised by a possibility for developing wrong knowledge and understanding, as well as the introduction and strengthening of stigma and gender stereotypes.*



## Topic 3. Sexual Citizenship

### a) Knowledge of international human rights and national policies, laws and structures

The text book on "Citizens Education," Chapter "3.3 Basic Rights and Liberties of People," does not refer to the right to health, besides the fact it lists a number of "Economic and Social Liberties and Rights (p. 55). As a key body in the UN the Commission for the Status of Women which oversees the enforcement of the Convention against the Discrimination of Women" is mentioned. (p. 54)

In a text book on "Ethics" (for second year high school students), in a chapter entitled "Democracy and Human Rights," there is a reference to UN documents and UN bodies, as the UNICEF and UNCESCO. Also references to some of the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are provided, among which the right to education. We observed almost insignificant attention given in this book, to the concept of nondiscrimination. Different sorts of rights are not covered, including the right to sexual and health rights, contrary to the provisions of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which is referred to and cited. There is no reference to the declarations and conventions governing women's rights. In places where the rights and liberties for all are mentioned, no matter their status, no single reference could be found to gender, along with the different statuses which are listed, as well as the sexes or the sexual orientation of people. This text book fails to provide information related to the Macedonian reality in terms of issues such as democracy, human rights and nondiscrimination.

In another text book on "Pedagogy," in a separate chapter on "Education between the Sexes" (better known as "humanization of relations between sexes and sexuality education" p. 193) there is a missing aspect on sexual rights, forming part of the human rights on sexuality.

### b) Available services and resources and how to access them

In the "Pedagogy" text book, in a chapter entitled "Protection from Sexual Diseases and Unwanted Pregnancy," no practical information is provided in connection with existent SRH services and no information about their access.

In the "Ethics" (for second year high school students) text book, in a chapter entitled "Health Ethics," sexual health is not affirmed in the enlisted "Elements for Good Health." Detailed information on existent services in the country are also absent, however it is interesting that there is a reference to "behavioral principles" where a statement exists which says that "If there is even a smallest doubt for infection, you should never treat any disease by yourselves! Always ask assistance from a medical doctor" (p. 183). In another chapter of this text book, entitled "Infectious Diseases" AIDS is referred to as the "most recent misery of humankind," along with a reference to "different herpes, Hepatitis C, African sleeping sickness, Ebola Fever..."

### c) Advocacy

None of the analyzed text books provide information about the challenges and the strengths of advocating in favor of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), or which organizations in the country advocate for SRHR for young people and what role should they undertake.

#### **d) Choice. Legal Protection**

In the above text book "Citizens Education," chapter "3.3 Basic Human Rights and Liberties" in a sub-chapter "Economic and Social Rights and Liberties," a mention of a "right to free decision making of having a child or not" is provided (p. 55). In the rest of the analyzed text books such information about the right to choose in terms of one's sexuality, reproduction and SRH is missing.

In the text book "Citizens Education," emphasis is put on "State Administration Bodies which are responsible for the protection of the rights and liberties of its citizens," listing a number of state institutions. According to the author, when citizens are denied the enjoyment of any of their rights or liberties, "first they refer to a regular court, and thereafter to all other bodies, by lodging complaints, appeals or law suits, etc." (p. 56).

#### **e) Consent and the right to have sex only when you are ready**

In the text book on "Pedagogy" love is defined as "an issue faced by children during puberty," which is basically untrue, because it causes them "headaches" (p. 196). In a subchapter in the same book entitled "Starting Sexual Relations – When, Why and with Whom?" (p. 200), the following answer to the question "when should you start with sexual intercourse" is given "only when love exists..." However this is immediately followed by a question "whether or not young people are capable to assess what is true love?" suggesting a negative answer for young people aged 15 to 18 years. According to the authors of this text book "the teacher must recommend that during this period children are not capable to truly love." The authors also negate that adolescents have sexual needs: "In upper classes students may start with their sexual life, not because they feel a need for such a thing, but because of curiosity and to prove that they have become grown-ups." According to the authors love and sexuality are exclusively reserved for adults.

#### **Conclusion:**

*Those information provided are incomplete and partially inaccurate. The right to health is underestimated when talking about human rights. The concepts of sexual health and sexual rights are also underestimated, as well as the fact that rights related to sexuality do not refer to children. Information on human rights and nondiscrimination in a Macedonian context is missing. The principle of nondiscrimination based on gender, sex and sexual orientation is not reaffirmed. No information is provided about existing services in the country for SRH and how to access them. Wrong information is given with regard to AIDS which is characterized as a "most recent misery of human kind," along with a reference to "different herpes, Hepatitis C, African sleeping sickness, Ebola Fever..." No information is provided with reference to organizations which advocate in favor of sexual and reproductive health and rights for young people. There is lack of information on the right of choice in terms of sexuality, reproduction and SRHR, and how and where such rights may be protected.*

*A number of information may cause negative attitudes with reference to love and sexuality in adolescents, particularly the piece of information that children 15-18 years of age are incapable of experiencing true love and the opposition to the reality of such children having sexual needs. The concepts of consent and age of consent are not reaffirmed, nor are the right to have sex when ready to do so. The material is not laid out in a manner that would enable skill development in students in order to prepare them to face each of the challenges related to their sexuality, as well as how to protect their sexual rights and enjoy their sexual rights.*

## Topic 4.: Pleasure

### a) Understanding that sex should be enjoyable and not forced

When analyzing the detailed changes during puberty ("Pedagogy" p. 197), there is no mention of sexual wishes, fantasies, contemplations about the sexual act, as an act of pleasure. When discussing the topic "conditions for love," there is a reference to honesty, respect and equality between sexes, however there is no reference to pleasure and absence of forced sex. The contents in this text book do not provide for definitions about sexual satisfaction and sexual pleasure, nor do they mention phenomena such as "sexual arousal", "ecstasy," "orgasm," or "ejaculation." The topic of sex is avoided by stressing that "young people during puberty are still immature!" suggesting that sexual closeness would require reaching due maturity of personality.

In this text a restrictive and ambiguous definition is provided as in the following quote: "love between the sexes" which allegedly may be identified "in the literature," as the ratio between the inclination of the subject towards the object of the opposite sex. Love in mature personalities, which refers to a "sexual unification," is reaffirmed as a "precondition for a marriage" (p. 200) "Mutual enjoyment and satisfaction" are aspects of "love between a man and a woman (boy or girl)," described as "indivisible organic connectivity of the body with the soul" and "inclination to a particular object... a feeling which leads to unification with it."

The text on "Psychology" in its chapter "Emotional Life – Definitions and Terminology," fails to refer to terms such as pleasure, love or jealousy. They are only mentioned in picture 11 "Order of Appearance of Emotions in Children," from which we may conclude that dissatisfaction appears before satisfaction, followed by love of the young and then love of the adults. In subchapters "sentiments and complex feelings" and "different types of sentiments" this book fails to give a mention to love, although it refers to "feelings of mischief, greed, jealousy and evil." Nonetheless, in another section "questions and exercises," the students are asked to "Describe the sentiment of love."

### b) That it is much more than intercourse

Immediately after the reaffirmation of "the sexual life of people" as a "normal natural phenomena, without which humans cannot naturally develop and live in a right way" the text cautions the reader that the wish of young people "to start with their intimate relationships is a natural one," only if "young people decide to marry and to establish their own family." Starting from the fact that young people "cannot do that before they turn 18" (where the authors fail to notice that in the country it is permitted to get married with a permission of the parents from 16 years of age,) the authors send a message to the readers that a wish to have "intimate relation" prior to 18 years of age is something unnatural.

### c) Love, lust and relationships

In the text book on "Pedagogy" the reality of love in children is entirely ignored, as well as the love for persons from the same sex. Without giving any reference to it, the text book provides the following definition about "love between the sexes": "In literature love between the sexes is defined as a multitude of phenomena in people (the subject) who is inclined to another person from the opposite sex (the object), who tend to achieve a spiritual closeness and bodily unification by means of joint sensation" (p. 200) With such a definition the author refuses the right to love to all persons who fail to be "inclined" to particular persons from the same sex. At the same time, by defining the "persons from the opposite sex" as objects, a

reaffirmation of the problematic framework of subject-object is reinforced, subtly proving the loved male/female as "objects."

The students are sent a message about their being too young and immature to love and to have love relationships: "It takes two emotionally mature partners for love," (p. 200) Love relationships seem to be a privilege to two emotionally mature partners from the opposite sex. Thus, students are cautioned and intimidated with statements such as the following: "the inexistence of maturity in both sexual partners leads to harsh consequences of the psychological and physical health of young people."

#### **d) Masturbation**

Masturbation is not mentioned at all. It is not referred to when changes during puberty are described, nor is it mentioned descriptively when talking about pornography as a "sexually deviated improvisation of life of two or more actors, which is devised for commercial reasons..." ("Pedagogy," p. 202)

#### **e) Sexuality as part of everybody's life**

On one hand, the authors of the "Pedagogy" text book say that "sexual life of men and women is normal natural phenomena, without which he/she cannot develop naturally and live." On the other hand, "sexual drive, which among the others, is only a physical one, is abnormal to humans, and it is featured in animals, for the purpose of their reproduction" and a "sexual act without love in humans is not a natural way of bodily unification of two persons of the opposite sex.." (p. 201)

Such a limited understanding of sexual life, reducing the "sexual act" and making a causative connection with the existence of (love), fails to reaffirm sexuality as part of the living of each individual.

#### **f) Gender and Pleasure**

Gender perspective is lacking in the approach, except for boys, whose behavioral changes are privileged during puberty. There is only a single mention that "Boys are fond of amusing themselves when watching pictures of naked women," without referring to what girls are amused with. When talking about "negative features of the sexual life of humans," the first place is reserved for "prostitution," which is falsely defined as a "form of sexual exploitation of women to have sexual intercourse for money."

#### **e) Diversity of Sexuality**

The principle of sexual diversity is not reaffirmed at all in the so called "education between the sexes." The authors of the text book on "Pedagogy" give a negative concept with regard to "sexual determinants" in a section of the book discussion solely about "the other side of sexual life." This section in addition to issues about "prostitution" also discusses "homosexuality and lesbianism" putting them together in line with the vices such as "alcoholism" and "drug addiction," which are also treated as "negative phenomena of the sexual life of humans" (!) Believe it or not, one of the tasks of such an "education between sexes" is the "development of consciousness about the consequences of sexual determination" (p. 195).



## **f) The first sexual experience**

In the "Pedagogy" text book the word sex is avoided. Instead of posing a question "When to start having sex?" another question is raised which is "When to start 'genital relation'?" The answer to this question is "only when love exists." However, love is not recognized for young people "between the age of 15 and 19 years" and it is claimed that "it would not make sense to have an intimate relationship the young people in that period of life would not really appreciate." The authors also fail to describe what they mean under "intimate relationship," making an impression that such term is used as synonymous to the previous "sex organ relations."

### **Conclusion:**

*The contents fail to introduce enough information on what sexual pleasure and sexual enjoyment means and they fail to mention phenomena such as "sexual arousal, ecstasy, orgasm and ejaculation." The contents fail to provide, explicitly, understanding of sex as something which one should take pleasure in, without being forced into it.*

*There is full opposition of existence of love in adolescents and love towards people of the same sex. A more delimiting definition is being favored about "love between the sexes." Students get a message from the texts that any wish to start "intimate relations" before they turn 18 is unnatural and that they are too young and immature to love and have "intimate relations." Love relationships are described as a privilege between two emotionally mature partners from opposite sexes. Students are warned and intimidated that "inexistence of maturity between two sexual partners leads to severe consequences to the mental and physical health of the young."*

*3Masturbation is not mentioned at all. Sexual drive and sexual act in absence of love is degraded. Gender perspective lacks in the entire approach. The principle of sexual diversity is not reaffirmed at all and it is reduced into so-called "education between sexes." The word sex is being avoided and instead of speaking about sexual intercourse the authors speak about "intimate relations."*

*Wrong and limited information and concepts are prevalent with regard to sex and sexuality, and exclusionist hetero-patriarchal values are promoted. The contents do not lead to skill acquisition in order for students to learn how to safely face challenges about sexuality and fail to develop a positive approach to enjoyment of the right to sexual pleasure, as one among other sexual rights of adolescents.*

## **Topic 5.: Violence**

### **a) Exploring the various types of violence towards men and women, and how they manifest**

The violence against women is only mentioned in a context of the "gender and biology." "Even in modern societies pressures exist and are manifested as violence, either with sexual or abusive character, even fright of being murdered, of course, by men" (Sociology, p. 110). Also, only partially, women are portrayed as being denied of their right to "control and take care of their health and their body, since in many countries, through rituals women's bodies are mutilated, besides the fact that international human rights documents prohibit cultural activities which harm women..." (Sociology, p. 115)

## **b) community norms (power, gender) and myths**

Sexual violence, family violence and sexual harassment are not subject of discussion as separate gender-sensitive topics, even when the authors of text books talks about “areas of gender inequality” (Citizen-centered Education, p. 47), as well as when talking about family or school behavior, or when talking about “education between sexes” (Pedagogy).

Violence is only mentioned in a context of “negative procedures,” being defined as “use of force in order to overcome the other” (Ethics, p. 78), however there is no separate analysis in terms gender and sexuality. In a chapter entitled “Love and Ethics” there is emphasis on “nobody should ever be injured,” “this is most undesirable to be used against a person which is an object of love and who enables the enjoyment of love” (Ethics, p. 132). For certain forms of “violent behavior between partners” such as “sadism and masochism,” as well as “rape” (violent sexual abuse) there is a discussion “negative forms of behavior in a love relationship” are listed and “immoral actions,” such pedophilia – “distorted love for children” (Ethics, p. 136). Certain forms of sexual violence (“adultery, rape, incest, instigation to perform sex work, or mocking one’s shyness” (?!)) are mentioned when analyzing family violence as “one of the most disgraceful phenomena of human savagery and immoral behavior.” (Ethics, p. 142)

In one rare case in a topic entitled “Television and Violence” it is stated that “it must be stressed that TV films, with criminal contents, as well as ones with adventurous content and those which show pornography have a negative influence...” (Sociology, p. 189)

## **c) Rights and Laws**

A very few of the analyzed materials point to rights and laws in terms of violence, sexuality and gender. The Pedagogy text book is the only one that refers to rape as “the most distributed bad side of sexual life,” “a phenomenon which is equal to committing a crime” (incidentally, rape actually is an act of crime in Macedonia, so the words “equal to committing a crime” may be misleading).

In the Ethics text book certain crimes are mentioned just as “immoral acts” (rape and incest) and for pedophilia it is claimed that it is “one of the worse human passions and criminal sex behaviors” (Ethics, p. 136). The Ethics text also refers to a law which “clearly states that juvenile persons, those under 18 years of age, do not possess a capacity to differentiate good from evil with regard to sexual issues, and they must be protected from avail intentions of psychologically and morally degenerated older persons which tend to have sex with very young persons (Ethics, p. 136)” The authors refers to “the law,” although the Criminal Code of Macedonia fails to prescribe a prohibition of pedophilia (medical diagnosis), but it prescribes a ban on sexual attack on juveniles younger than 14 years of age.

## **d) Prevention. Appropriate referral mechanisms for survivors**

Within the framework of the analyzed contents no information has been identified for the prevention of sexual and gender based violence and no information about caring for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

## **Conclusion:**

*Violence against women is only mentioned incidentally. No terms such as gender-based violence, sexual violence and sexual harassment are discussed and family violence is just partially analyzed. There is a lack of relevant and comprehensive information for “criminal acts against sexual moral” as well as penalties, such as “performing prostitution.” Students receive wrong information with regard to “pedophilia,” instead of receiving relevant ones about “sexual attack of a juvenile*

*youngster 14 years of age." Students also fail to receive information and skills in order to protect themselves from sexual and gender-based violence, where to report such a violence and what sort of care should be provided to victims of violence.*

## **Topic 6.: Diversity**

### **a) Recognizing and understanding the range of diversity in our lives (e.g., faith, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability/disability, HIV status and sexual orientation)**

In the Pedagogy text book in two of its sections, first one being "Education for Acceptance and Understanding Differences between People," where the authors list "the differences of people according ethnic background or religion""differences according to sex" (or male and female sex), "differences according to one's age" and "differences according to one's race." Sexual differences are not mentioned in any separate chapter in the intercultural and multicultural education, which aims to "maintain individual specificities and ethnic diversities," "the stimulation of integration," "learning to live with different habits and understanding..."(p. 191)

However, if one skips several pages forward in the book, in a section entitled "Negative Aspects of Sexual Life," it becomes evident that homosexuality is listed under such things as prostitution, sexual diseases, sexual abuse. According to the authors, homosexuality and lesbianism are "bad sides (...of sexuality)" and "the participants in such degenerate, unnatural and, so to say abnormal sexual life are persons with psychological difficulties..."(p. 203)

The same text book offers discriminatory perspective against persons with different sexual orientation and such information develop negative stereotypes and stimulate the spread of homophobia among students.

According to the authors one of the objectives of the "education between the sexes" is "to assist the young to chose the right path to love and relationships between the sexes, as well as in the marital relationship and life in general, to enable the young in such terms to behave in a manner which will be useful for them, for their marriage, their offspring, i.e. the entire community they belong to"(p. 193). Such a vision of the "education between the sexes" only confirms the exclusionist hetero-normative matrix and does not leave any space for active respect of sexual differences and freedoms.

In the Citizens Education text book, in a topic entitled "Societal Deviations" as an example of "different ways of behavior connected with the day-to-day life of people," this is what is listed "rude behavior, homosexuality, homelessness" (p. 26). As a prototype of deviant behavior a photograph of a young man in lather jacket is given, with a punk hairstyle. The persons with "deviant behavior" are warned that sanctions may be imposed for such behavior (by harassment, getting a detention, but also with their exclusion).

The Ethics text book (for second year high school students) lists "different types of immoral activities in sexual ethics: voyeurism, sadism, masochism, sodomy (sexual errors – making love in extraordinary way or having sex with animals)..." (p. 136). With the introduction of the definition of "sodomy" as a "sexual error," not only "making love with animals," but as "making love in an extraordinary way," the author suggests that making love in an extraordinary way is an immoral action. In addition to this, the author fails to explain what is meant by "making love in a usual way." The moralizing tone of the language and the rigid demagogic approach (which often prescribes strict and traditional borders between the concepts of "good" and "evil" or the "healthy" and "ill," the "acceptable" and "inacceptable," etc.) are incompatible with the principles of sexual ethics which strives to promote concepts of sexual diversity, sexual freedom and responsibility and sexual autonomy.

## **b) a positive view of sexuality and diversity**

There is a lack of reaffirmation of the comprehensive concept of sexuality because of refusing to accept the words sex and sexuality and also because of prejudice against sexuality which necessitates sexual intercourse. Instead of such reaffirmation of sexuality, love is reaffirmed, as well as "relations between the sexes" and "intimate relations." For example, even when speaking about erotic love (as "something most beautiful and most important in the world") the erotic feelings and "passion of love" ("particular inclination towards the partner"), the words sex and sexuality are being avoided. (Ethics, pp. 128-9)

In certain contexts, even love during puberty becomes a problem, "basically it is untrue (love)" and causes "headaches" in children (Pedagogy, p. 196). Without love "the sex drive" is abnormal to humans and it is only a feature of animals which use it as means of reproduction" (Pedagogy, p. 201)

## **c) Recognizing Discrimination, its damaging effects and being able to deal with it**

In the textbooks there is no information on how to recognize sex, gender or sexual orientation based discrimination or discrimination based on other status (for example, sexual and health status). Except for the textbook in "Psychology" (p. 169) where discrimination is correlated with negative attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes, sexism is considered as a discriminatory behavior directed to people from one sex.

### **d) Developing a belief in equality and equity**

Equality is reaffirmed as "great benefit of modern civilization and democracy" (Citizen Education, p. 55), where only a number of grounds for equity and equality are quoted from Article 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. There is separate chapter for "Equality between Genders" (Citizen Education, p. 45), however this text book does not give a mention about sexual equality. When discussing minority communities, no sexual minorities are mentioned.

Tolerance is reaffirmed as "harmony of diversities," and dialogue as a "method for interchange of experiences and attitudes of two equal persons" (Ethics, p. 101). Nonetheless, the author fails to respect sexual differences, especially when it puts among "immoral actions of sexual ethics" sodomy as a "sexual error – making love in an extraordinary way..." (Ethics, p. 136)

The topic of social exclusion based on sexual orientation, gender, health or other status is also underestimated. The topic of social exclusion is discussed in context of poverty in the textbook in "Sociology" (for third year high school students), without referring to information of social exclusion in Macedonia. In this textbook the authors state that "different ethnic and minority groups maybe collectively excluded from main stream society," and factors influencing "the impossibility of building and maintaining social contacts according to the needs of the individuals" are the "ethnic background, race, sex." Here sexual orientation is not mentioned at all, neither as a factor for social exclusion, nor as grounds for discrimination.

## **Conclusion:**

*Even though the general principle for respecting the differences is generally reaffirmed, there is absence of conciseness about the need for respecting sexual differences. Students are directed to think that each time there is "extraordinary making love" this is an immoral action, also that homosexuals are "participants in abnormal sexual life" and "individuals with psychological difficulties or deficiencies." Most textbooks do offer discriminatory perspectives for persons with diversified sexual orientation and also the information offered seems to develop negative stereotypes and stimulates the spread of homophobia among students.*

*Awareness seems not to be raised among student with regard to the fight against discrimination, negative stereotyping and prejudices, as well as social exclusion based on sexual orientation, gender, health or other status. Students seem not do develop skills for recognizing discrimination and negative stereotyping, as well as prejudices.*

## **Topic 7.: Relationships/Relations**

Different types of relationships (e.g., family, friends, sexual, romantic, etc.), emotions, intimacy (emotional and physical), rights and responsibilities, power dynamics, and recognizing healthy and unhealthy or coercive relationships. Almost all reviewed school books take into account hetero-patriarchal links and relations. Defining a family as a “relation of a man and a woman, with a goal of living together” (Ethics, pp. 138) excludes not only other possible family members, but also the possibility for a family consisting of same sex individuals. The text is dominated by a perspective that puts the family exclusively as a heterosexual unity, mainly based on marriage.

Also in Pedagogy the family “is based on heterosexual relations”, with a comment that “it should be noted that in some countries, marriage is allowed also in cases of homosexual relations” (Pedagogy, pp 137).

In Civil Education, several forms of marriage are listed, such as polygamy, cohabitation, singles life (!), childless marriage, homosexual/lesbian couples (pp 39). Students are asked to think about the question “How can you explain the growth of homosexuality in the modern age?”.

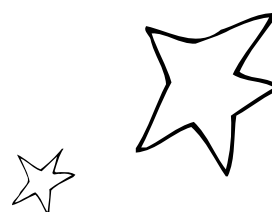
In Ethics, the chapter Ethics in Love, choice is promoted in love, friendship and love as “ethical unions”, respect as “ethical rule in love”, care as “sign of love” (pp 133-134). The missing topic is sexual ethics, which would affirm concepts of sexual health, sexual rights and sexual responsibilities.

### **Conclusion:**

*The curricula fail to provide understanding of varieties of sexual links and relations, and the different relations in family and among friends. 'Intimacy' is talked about only in the context of 'intimate relations'. The criteria for recognizing healthy and unhealthy links/relations are discriminatory. Students fail to acquire skills on how to recognize forceful/voluntary links/relations. The approach of information and knowledge transfer is not based on terms related to sexual rights and responsibilities, hence students fail to acquire information and skills on how to exercise and protect their sexual rights, nor have they raised awareness on sexual responsibilities*

# List of Textbooks

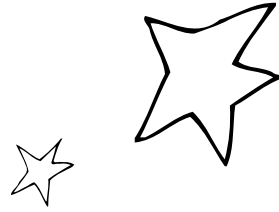
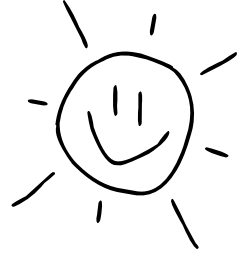
1. **Slavica Videska.** *Human Anatomy for First Year Medical School*, Skopje, Prosvetno delo, 2006.
2. **Slavica Videska.** *Hygiene and Health Education for First Year Medical Vocation School*, Skopje, Prosvetno delo, 2006.
3. **Suzana Dinevska – Kovkarovska.** *Biology for Third Year Reformed Secondary Education*. Skopje, Tri, 2003.
4. **Dobrivoe Gjogjevik.** *Physiology for First Year Secondary Health Vocation Education*. Skopje, Prosvetno delo, 2007.
5. **Marija Kostova.** *Pedagogy for Third Year Secondary Education*. Skopje, Prosvetno Delo, 2005.
6. **Dimitar Mircev.** *Civil Education for Secondary Vocation Schools*. Skopje, Office for Education Development, 2002.
7. **Lulzim Murtezani.** *Psychology for Fourth Year Secondary Education*. Tetovo, Cabej, 2005.
8. **Gligor Palcevski.** *Gynecology and Obstetrics for Fourth Year Health Vocation Education*. Skopje, Prosvetno delo, 2004.
9. **Stefan Sidovski.** *Philosophy for Forth Year Reformed Secondary Education*. Skopje, Prosvento delo, 2009.
10. **Branko Simonovski.** *Biology for Eight Year Primary Education*. Skopje, Albi, 2009.
11. **Nelko Stojanovski.** *Sociology for Third Year Reformed Secondary Education*. Skopje, Prosvetno delo, 2004.
12. **Kiril Temkov.** *Ethics for Second Year Reformed Secondary Education*. Skopje, Prosvetno delo, 2004.
13. **Kiril Temkov.** *Ethics for Third Year Reformed Secondary Education*. Skopje, Prosvetno delo, 2005.



# Annex 1:

## IPPF Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality education

Seven Essential Components of Comprehensive Sexuality Education	
1.	<b>Topic:</b> Gender – exploring gender roles and attributes; understanding perceptions of masculinity and femininity within the family and across the life cycle; society's changing norms and values; manifestations and consequences of gender bias, stereotypes and inequality
2.	<b>Topic:</b> Sexual and reproductive health –understanding STIs and HIV, what they are and how to prevent them; pregnancy options and information; sexual response; living with HIV; how to use condoms; anatomy; sexuality and the life cycle (i.e., puberty, menopause, sexual problems)
3.	<b>Topic:</b> Sexual citizenship – knowledge of international human rights and national policies, laws and structures; understanding that culture is dynamic; available services and resources and how to access them; participation; practices and norms; advocacy; choice; protection; consent and the right to have sex only when you are ready
4.	<b>Topic:</b> Pleasure – understanding that sex should be enjoyable and not forced; that it is much more than intercourse; sexuality as part of everybody's life; the biology and emotions behind the human sexual response; gender and pleasure;masturbation; love, lust and relationships; interpersonal communication; the diversity of sexuality; the first sexual experience; consent; alcohol and drugs and the implications of their use
5.	<b>Topic:</b> Violence – exploring the various types of violence towards men and women, and how they manifest; rights and laws; support options available and seeking help; community norms (power, gender) and myths; prevention, including personal safety plans; self-defence techniques; understanding the dynamics of victims and abusers; appropriate referral mechanisms for survivors
6.	<b>Topic:</b> Diversity – recognizing and understanding the range of diversity in our lives (e.g., faith, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability/disability, HIV status and sexual orientation); a positive view of diversity; recognizing discrimination, its damaging effects and being able to deal with it; developing a belief in equality; supporting young people to move beyond just tolera
7.	<b>Topic:</b> Relationships – different types of relationships (e.g., family, friends, sexual, romantic, etc.),emotions, intimacy (emotional and physical), rights and responsibilities, power dynamics, and recognizing healthy and unhealthy or coercive relationships.







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\*  
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