

ENOC 21'st Annual Conference

**“Relationship and sexuality education:
Implementing the right of children to be
informed”**

Erinda Ballanca

People's
Advocate of
Albania

What is sexuality education?

UNESCO Definition: *“an age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sex and relationships by providing:*

- *scientifically accurate, and*
- *realistic, non-judgmental information.*

Value:

Sexuality education provides opportunities:

- *to explore one's own values and attitudes (character forming),*
- *to build decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills about many aspects of sexuality (important input for democratic and responsible citizenship),*
- *avoid negative health consequences,*
- *respect others' right to bodily autonomy and*
- *Show dignity and respect for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.*

Information on sex and sexuality should:

- be easy to access and age-appropriate for children and young people of all ages,
- be available to all whether they are sexually active or not and whatever their sexual orientation,
- give them the skills to make decisions about, and discuss, their sexual choices and safer sex,
- must reach young people in and out of school and especially the most disadvantaged young people.

Legislative and institutional framework

Role of authorities

- Information and education
- Harm Prevention and Protection
- Promotion of human and children's rights

- Legislative framework:

1. Constitution of Albania,
2. Law on Child's Rights,
3. Law on Pre-university education
4. Penal Code, Civil Code and the Family Code
5. Law on the People's Advocate
6. A multitude of by-laws

- Institutional Framework

1. Ministry of Education
2. Ministry of Welfare (unclear due to latest government changes)
3. Ministry of Justice, Interior, Health
4. Municipalities (1 person for 3000 children)

Situation to date in the school curricula

Survey by People's Advocate on human and children's rights in textbooks revealed:

9 year system:

- Human and child rights taught from grade 1 to 9 as part of the subject of civic education
- Focus on co-existence, healthcare, rights and obligations, gender equality; racial, disability and other differences.
- Sexuality and sex relationship mentioned sporadically under such topics as HIV/Aids protection and sexually transmitted diseases.

Secondary system:

Biology subject

- One chapter on reproduction organs, sexual maturity and pregnancy, puberty characteristics, in grade seven.
- One chapter on reproductive health, contraceptives and sexually transmitted diseases in grade eleven
- No elaboration and treatment of sexual relationship although various surveys show students sexually active at this age

Survey Findings in Teacher training faculties: BA, MA, MSc

- Human and children's rights only insufficiently covered with the exception of Programs in Civic Education.
- At best, knowledge present 20% of programs (BA180; Professional Masters 90; and MA/MSc 120 ECTS).
- At worst 10% of programs (ECTS same as above).
- Professional Masters and MA and MSc programs contain less human and children's rights than BA programs.
- Some Masters programs contain no knowledge at all on human and children's rights.

Issues with sexuality education in Albania

Problems at society level:

- closed, conservative, homophobic to LGBTI people
- Patriarchal, no gender equality
- Religious beliefs
- Teachers see themselves as guardians of society's moral, not challengers
- Professionalism in teaching sexuality is lacking

Problems at system level:

- Optional or compulsory subject
- Separate subject or integrated
- If integrated: healthcare/science knowledge or civic education
- Scientific research on development of educational programs on sexuality education is almost missing.

Problems in the system (continued)

- Communication between the teachers and students about sexual education topics is not satisfactory and in cases when there is communication, it is built on the foundations of morality.
- The communication methods used about sexual education topics do not offer clarity but ambiguity on connotations of each word on which an open and democratic sexual communication is launched.

Advantages of sexuality education

- Informs young people about a very important part of life which forms the basis to lasting relationships and strong and responsible parenthood.
- Teaches them to protect their health, their well-being and dignity.
- Advances gender equality and other basic rights.
- Enables young people to become tolerant and cooperative, ultimately responsible citizens.

APPROACH BY THE PEOPLE'S ADVOCATE

- OPEN UP DEBATE
 - With sociologists, educationalists, sexologists, healthcare professionals, NGO-s, authorities
 - Parents, teachers,
 - Students
- Urge authorities to launch sexuality education
- Include sexuality information in the various youth information, education and communication strategies
- Make special reports on each sexual abuse instance in schools, and care providing institutions.

THANK YOU!