

Education in Human Sexuality in the Protestant Schools of Québec



E3S9
C66
E38
1978
A
QCSE

993946

E389
C66
E38
1978
A

Education in Human Sexuality in the Protestant Schools of Québec

(Guidelines issued by the Protestant Committee
for school programmes in Sex Education.)



Why sex education?

Sex education is a term which frequently evokes a negative response from parents and educators alike. It is a term which may imply nothing more than a limited field of knowledge, systematically organized and transmitted to students as a subject divorced from all others in the curriculum. Many parents and teachers feel that to restrict the aims of sex education to the transmission of a specific body of content is to suggest that the human personality can be made whole by taking it apart and putting it together again. Education of this kind, if indeed this can be called education, is so divorced from reality that it is both unrealistic and potentially harmful.

Sexuality has to do with much more than the acquisition of a clearly - defined body of knowledge. It has to do with being and becoming. Therefore, whether or not the school should provide sex education is purely an academic question. In fact, the school can no more refrain from education in this area than it can prevent the physical growth of the child. Attitudes and values are being shaped, and knowledge is being transmitted by the school milieu, whether the school makes a conscious effort in that direction or not. Indeed, sex education seen in its broadest sense should more appropriately be termed «education in human sexuality» for it is involved essentially with the quality of the transition from male to man and from female to woman. This is a transition which takes place throughout the entire life span of the individual and many influences contribute to it.

The home makes an immeasurable contribution to this developmental process, but the school has its own particular and comple-

mentary contribution to make. As that place where the child really begins to broaden the sphere of his interpersonal relationships, and as the preponderant influence during the very important period from pre-adolescence to middle-adolescence, the school has a very great contribution to make in assisting children and adolescents to assume increasing responsibility for their growth toward sexual maturity. The role of the school is both pedagogical and social. Pedagogically, the school has a duty to provide knowledge which is consistent with the intellectual and emotional development of those entrusted to it. Socially, it must provide a learning environment which respects the values of the home while it assists the child in attaining that degree of moral maturity which will enable him to become ultimately a sexually mature individual.

Since education in human sexuality deals primarily with values, the Protestant Committee has consistently maintained that such education must be integrated into other subject areas in the curriculum. Our present purpose is to reaffirm that position. Indeed, the aims and objectives for education in human sexuality have been incorporated into the programme for Moral and Religious Instruction. This does not mean that topics pertaining to human sexuality must be dealt with only in the context of Moral and Religious Instruction. They can hardly be avoided in subjects like biology and literature and they must be dealt with when they arise. The point is that human sexuality should not be treated as a subject on its own. This position would appear to be essential considering the Judaeo-Christian heritage of the Protestant School and the current Departmental policy of educating the whole child.



What to teach?

Obviously, the specific objectives and content of any course in human sexuality must be left to specialists in the area of psychology, pedagogy and curriculum development, as well as to parents and administrators who can best articulate the specific needs of a given community.

Given the above reservation, however, the Protestant Committee deems it advisable to make the following general statement about the content of, and the general approach to, this area of the curriculum.

1. Interpersonal relationships are both the source and the expression of much learning about human sexuality. It follows, therefore, that the quality of human relations in the daily life of the school has an immeasurable influence on the development of sexual identity and growth toward sexual maturity. Teachers and administrators must be aware of the incidental learning which results from the total environment of the school and they must make every effort to assure that the organization of this environment is such that positive learning results from it.

2. The school must also provide, in a more explicit manner, the information necessary for a proper understanding of the physical development which the pupil is experiencing or about to experience. The kind of information and the amount of information must be in conformity with the educational needs of the pupils. In this area of information the Protestant Committee considers it exceedingly important that the school assume responsibility only for the educational needs of the child.

There are many pressures on the school to become the instrument of those who would use this area of the curriculum to promote their own philosophy or to secure religious commitment or even to combat social ills. Those who promote the first two are confusing preaching with teaching and those who would promote the third aim are asking the school to perform a therapeutic role rather than an educational one.

3. Much more important than the environmental and informational aspects, however, are the moral and religious dimensions of education in human sexuality. The term religious is used here in its broadest sense. That is, it denotes a loyalty or commitment to whatever the individual conceives to be the highest value or values. Physical maturity is inevitable but maturity in other areas of human development is subject to many influences. One of the school's major objectives in providing education in human sexuality must be to help the child acquire the personal, social and religious maturity he needs in order to cope adequately with his physical maturity. Moral maturity, in an educational context, may be defined as the process of clarifying, developing and assuming responsibility for one's personal and social values. Religious maturity, in the same context, may be defined as the establishment of a priority among the values assumed by the individual. Thus, the area of values is the most important area of study in education in human sexuality. It is for this reason that the objectives for such education have been included as part of the programme in Moral and Religious Instruction.

In concluding this statement on the place of sex education in the Protestant schools of



Québec, the Protestant Committee reiterates its stand that the school reject adamantly any role other than an educational one. This stand should be profitable in the long run because it will emphasize the need for Continuing Education. For even if the school were highly successful in implementing the aims of Education in Human Sexuality as outlined above, what about the educational needs of older adolescents, of couples contemplating marriage, of the parents of a young family, of middle-aged people facing problems of menopause both male and female, and of the elderly? It is quite unrealistic to expect the school to provide a programme for education in human sexuality which will fill the needs of every stage of human life. Nor is it educationally sound. It is enough to design a programme which will meet the needs of the student at his particular level of social, intellectual and emotional development.





Gouvernement du Québec
Conseil supérieur de l'éducation
Comité protestant

© couthuran

CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION



QCSE005447

Dépôt légal: 4^e trimestre 1978
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

7879-453
50-2022A