

Module 2: Evidence based approaches to sexuality education for adolescents - Adolescent health and development with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health - Assignment

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Barriers to expanding or improving Sexuality education in Malaysia

Malaysia is one of the world's most developed Islamic countries, with Muslims comprising over half of its population (total population 26 million) but topic of sex and sex education is still a taboo in this country.

Sex education, is still not universally available in Malaysian schools despite the perceived need.

The barriers to its introduction, especially in the school include resistance from parents, teachers, religious leaders and politicians:

- There is a misconception, in the mind of teachers and parents, that sex education will encourage sexual activity.
- Parents are shy to talk on sexuality related topics with their children.
- Teachers state that they lack training to impart this knowledge.
- Religious leaders are totally opposed to discussing male/female relationships based upon the concept that religion forbids it and therefore the topic should not be discussed at all. Some politicians, who support sex education, are scared of the religious repercussions entailed.
- In Malaysia contraception is forbidden to unmarried couples and adolescents. This makes it almost impossible to introduce harm minimisation approaches.

Family Health Education was introduced in secondary schools in 1989 and in primary schools in 1994. The curriculum has been fragmented and introduced through different subjects. It is doubtful that this has been successful as the incidence of abortion is on the rise. No official statistics available due sensitivity of the issue. Baby dumping is on increase as contraceptive and abortion services are not available teenagers. The Police department reported an average 100 babies are thrown out annually, published in local newspaper, New strait times 23 august 2010. This indicates that family life education has not been effective.

Suggestions on overcoming these barriers

Though all the actions mentioned in “Levers of success –case studies of national sexuality program“ are applicable to implementation of sexuality education in Malaysia – the most important that need to be implemented at the earliest are:

- The development of **political will**, relevant **policy** framework and **national guideline to implement** the same.

- The Ministries of Health and Education to frame a curriculum for introduction in school which it should **be stand alone** rather than integrated for better understanding and correlation.
- To gain the support of religious and political leaders in implementation of the introduction of sexuality education in school especially some modules may require to be introduced in primary school.
- The teachers need to be trained – this can be done by in service training and providing them with adequate material.
- Technical support from UN partners and other NGO can be taken for training the teachers and providing them with resource material.
- The support of youth organisations and media can be availed to sensitise the parents to the issues of introduction of sexuality and sex education in school and to educate young people. This can be achieved by e.g. introduction of adolescent health website, Helpline and peer support group.

Assignment documents

1. [IPPF. From evidence to action: Advocating for comprehensive sexuality education. London: IPPF; 2009.](#)
2. [UNESCO. International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. Volume I. The rationale for sexuality education. Paris: UNESCO; 2009.](#)
3. [UNESCO. International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. Volume II. Topics and learning objectives. Paris: UNESCO; 2009.](#)
4. [UNESCO. Levers of Success. Case studies of national sexuality education programmes. Paris: UNESCO; 2010.](#)