

The transformative potential of sexuality education

Written statement

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The transformative potential of sexuality education

The right to education's transformative potential and multiplier effect is widely recognised. The same potential applies to sexuality education.

However, this is often met with resistance and taboo, despite this right being supported by international law standards.

This means that regardless of the country they live in, young people have the right to access information about relationships, intimacy, and identity.

Although it takes a lifetime to learn about these topics and to shape one's attitudes, beliefs, and values, it is essential to teach children and adolescents early on because it will shape their relationships, self-esteem, trust in others, and communications for the rest of their lives.

In addition to teaching children and adolescents, sexuality education should be taught to young people older than fifteen because this is when they become more romantically active and start having sexual experiences.

“Sexuality education should be taught throughout the whole school career of young people.”

In this statement, Rutgers will touch on both classroom-based sexuality education and on providing information about sexuality online.

The positive effects of classroom-based sexuality education

Research has shown the positive social outcomes of evidence-based, comprehensive sexuality education in preventing and reducing gender-based and intimate partner violence, reducing harmful gender stereotypes, reducing unplanned pregnancies, and young people making more conscious decisions when it comes to their intimate relationships, such as using contraceptives.

Sexuality education provides young people with the tools to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections to safe sex practices, such as negotiating condom use, and to identify when their rights are being violated, such as cases of sexual abuse or denial of health services.

Young people want to learn about love
Classroom-based sexuality education often focuses on the human body, reproductive elements, and disease prevention. But this is just a small fraction of what children need to know and understand about relationships, intimacy, and identity. Curricula tend to be risk-based, which can even disempower young people during an age where they crave agency. Sexuality education should move towards a participatory and learner-centered approach that meets young people in their need for agency. Research shows that young people need and want information about gender and sexual diversity, communicating about boundaries and desires, dating, intimacy, sexual pleasure, love, online communication, and sex in the media. In other words: sex-positive and comprehensive sexuality education.