

Equal Opportunities Commission

A Study on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Secondary Schools of Hong Kong (2022)

Infographics

All 473 local secondary schools were invited to join the questionnaire survey

203 questionnaires received (Response rate of 42.9%)

5 focus group discussions conducted

Interviewed 26 principals, teachers, NGO workers and school social workers

Current Situation:

2% of the schools taught sexuality education as a separate subject

85.2% of the schools included sexuality education in different school subjects (e.g. Biology, Liberal Studies)

13.8% of the schools had no sexuality education in formal lessons

Teaching Hours in the 2018/19 School Year:

75.4% of the schools did not have a target of lesson hours allocated to sexuality education for different subjects per year

Around half of the schools offered 5 hours or below of sexuality education classes in junior and senior secondary levels

Over 90% of the schools offered 20 hours or below of sexuality education classes in both levels

Common Activities Organised by Schools:

55.7% of the schools: Group or individual counselling sessions

52.2% of the schools: Sharing/discussion at Form Teacher Periods

31.0% of the schools: Talks in morning assemblies

16.3% of the schools: Extra-curricular activities (e.g. drama contests, game booths, quizzes, etc.)

12.3% of the schools: No activities

Topics Covered in Sexuality Education:

Covered by most schools

96.1% of the schools: Self-image and self-concept

95.1% of the schools: Friendship, dating and courtship

93.6% of the schools: Puberty

Covered by fewest schools

54.2% of the schools: Sex, law and ethics

46.8% of the schools: Sexual orientation and gender identities

40.9% of the schools: Sexual informed consent

Who Teaches Sexuality Education?

80.8% of the schools did not have the post of sexuality education coordinator

93.1% of the schools invited external organisations to teach sexuality education in the 2018/19 school year

56.7% of the schools did not provide support to parents to help them teach sexuality education to students

Among the schools in which sexuality education is taught by teaching staff (2018/19 school year):
On average, each school had 4.7% of teaching staff taken professional development courses related to sexuality education

47.6% of schools said that their staff who taught sexuality education had not taken any relevant professional development courses

95.3% of them did not require teaching staff to take relevant professional development courses before teaching sexuality education

Challenges:

Nearly half (49.7%) of the interviewed school representatives believed sexuality education in secondary schools is insufficient or very insufficient

Top difficulties encountered by schools:

82.3% of the schools: No time for it as the school curriculum is already jam-packed

60.6% of the schools: A lack of relevant training for teachers

56.2% of the schools: A lack of structured or appropriate teaching materials

Quotes from the Focus Group Discussions:

A social worker responsible for implementing sexuality education: Teachers are not fully prepared to teach sexuality education

- A student asked a teacher in class, “Have you ever had sex? How was it like?” That teacher said that he could not react but blushed at the question. Since he had never expected to be challenged by students in class, he felt embarrassed and remained silent. He had no idea how to proceed with the class.

A teacher responsible for implementing sexuality education: School management and frontline staff have different views

- School management is relatively conservative. They think that the topic of safe sex should not be introduced to school, and that it would be best to keep students from the knowledge of contraceptive methods. The view of the school management is not in line with that of social workers and counsellors. Given the conservative approach of the school management, it would be not be easy for teachers to organise related activities.

A social worker responsible for implementing sexuality education: Sexuality education has a low priority

- After a video capturing two students kissing in a classroom went viral online, the school management asked us to give students a sexuality education lesson. My perception is that the school does not welcome us except when remedial measures are needed.

Recommendations:

What did school representatives want the government to do from the aspect of policy?

62.6% of the schools: Widely promote the importance of sexuality education among parents and the general public

61.6% of the schools: Revise the existing guidelines on sexuality education in schools

55.7% of the schools: Set recommended lesson hours for sexuality education in different school subjects

What resources did school representatives want the government to provide?

74.9% of the schools: Provide schools with comprehensive teaching materials on sexuality education in different media

69.5% of the schools: Subsidise schools to hire NGOs to provide on-site sexuality education courses

64.5% of the schools: Provide funding and incentives to encourage teachers to take relevant courses on sexuality education

Quotes from the Focus Group Discussions:

A teacher responsible for implementing sexuality education: Implementing sexuality education using innovative approaches

- Students gave positive feedback when drama performance was adopted in teaching sexuality education. When it comes to the activities in the classroom, they prefer more practical knowledge. We need to teach them about contraception or how to define sexual harassment, which they may have no idea at all.

A teacher responsible for implementing sexuality education: Sexuality education should help build positive attitudes towards gender equality

- As sexuality education evolves, the focus has shifted from purely imparting physiological knowledge to value education. The key is to encourage students to uphold the values of respecting others in all circumstances.