




Education, Empowerment and Sexuality

Colleen McLaughlin on behalf of the ASKAIDS team

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‘Everyone knows that ‘children have no sex’, which is why they are forbidden to talk about it, why one closes one’s eyes and stops one’s ears whenever they show evidence to the contrary.’

(Foucault, 1976, p.4).

Some preliminary remarks

- ◆ 'the world has turned the corner – it has halted and begun to reverse the spread of HIV' (UNAIDS/WHO, 2010, p.7).
 - ◆ Most clearly seen amongst young people
- ◆ Girls and women disproportionately affected – directly
 - ◆ Young women 15- 24 are 8x more likely to be infected than boys
- ◆ Profoundly affected indirectly – orphanhood and caretaking – life chances affected
- ◆ General role of schooling – protective factor
- ◆ AIDS education is a primary means of prevention – should be appropriate

Starting points for our project

- ◆ Need to know how young people contextualise and gain their knowledge
- ◆ What young people (primary stage) want from AIDS education
 - ◆ Need to combine in-school and out-of-school knowledge
- ◆ Need to know what the reality is
- ◆ Key ideas
 - ◆ Socio cultural influences most powerful
 - ◆ Consulting pupils possible source of empowerment
 - ◆ Need to bring in and out of school together in education

The complexity of gender and sexuality education

- 💧 Girls as innocent and dangerous – need to be controlled
- 💧 The vulnerability in contexts of poverty – sex and money
- 💧 The cultural taboos around talking about sex, especially across the genders
- 💧 The religious, political and cultural push for abstinence
- 💧 The myth that knowledge leads to experimentation and promiscuity
- 💧 The safety of talking about facts
- 💧 Lack of teacher preparation and support

Photovoice – what they showed us

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SOURCES OF SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE

Wall paintings





AVOID DRUGS and BAD CON



Literature







Community











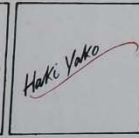








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Schools





Girls' experience

- 💧 Intergenerational sex
- 💧 Abusive environments
- 💧 Transactional sex – sex for money
- 💧 Sexual violence
- 💧 Provocation and patriarchy

What they wanted

- 💧 Looser boundaries between in and out of school knowledge – to be able to discuss their experience in a safe place
- 💧 More interactive and active pedagogy
- 💧 Genuine dialogues with trusted, open and informed adults


‘We were doing group work and wanted to know whether a man who sleeps with another man can get infected with HIV or fall pregnant. Ms Yeki did not answer us, she walked out of the class... promising she would tell us at a later stage.’

Possibility of dialogue as a mode of change

- 💧 Photos and dialogue challenged notion of innocence and naïveté of childhood
- 💧 Showed the possibility of responsible and mutual conversations between adults and youth
- 💧 Showed signs of bringing about change

Key notions to be challenged

- ◆ Between innocence and exposure/empowerment
 - ◆ Need to move beyond romantic notions of children as passive and innocent
 - ◆ Philosophical and religious notions in which 'children are prone to impiety and in need of firm authority' (Faulkner 2010, p.68).
 - ◆ The need for children to be seen as agents and citizens who can be involved in 'a deliberative, democratic practice' (Ibid, p.76)
 - ◆ Through dialogue in family and community
- ◆ Beyond cultural impediments to learning (especially about sex)
- ◆ Need for a hybrid curriculum – in and out of school knowledge – Locally informed and constructed curricula as mode of

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‘The teachers are careful with us because they think we are still young... They think we are too young to know... They think we are going to be naughty or sometimes experiment what they told us ... [but] who wants to experiment with AIDS?’

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Forthcoming

McLaughlin, C., Swartz, S., Kiragu, S., Walli, S. and Muhamed, M. (2012) *Old Enough to Know: Consulting young people about their sexual knowledge and sex education*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Published

McLaughlin, C. and Swartz, S. (2011) Can we use young people's knowledge to develop teachers and HIV related education? *Prospects*, 41(4), December 2011