



Sex & Samfund

The Danish Experience:

Introduction to Health and Sex
Education in Denmark, Teaching
Methodologies

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The Danish Family Planning Association

- A private ngo working to promote worldwide sexual well-being, wished-for children and no sexually transmitted diseases - for everyone.
- National activities: sex education, counselling, sexual health clinic, teaching of professionals, development of new methods and materials.
- A central collaborator to The Danish Board of Health concerning the development of activities regarding sexual education in Denmark.





A short flash back in history

- Sexual education became a compulsory part of the Danish school system in 1970
- Sexual topics had been on the school agenda since the beginning of the 19th century.
- The purpose was to form the character of the child and promote a certain behaviour
- Arguments were often found in the need to reduce sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies
- Guidelines were made describing how the teacher should treat the subject in an appropriate manner

The Danish context

- Today's approach to sex education in schools is not to change behaviour in a certain centrally defined direction – the approach is much more democratic.
- But the arguments are still the same: the reducing of STI's and unwanted pregnancies.
- There is an overall support and positive attitude towards compulsory sex education in schools
- The characteristics of the Danish school system sets the frame for the possibilities of the comprehensive sex education from 1st – 10th grade.



The curriculum

- "Health and Sexual education and Family Studies" is a compulsory subject in the municipal primary and lower education.
- The subject contains other health issues that are not directly linked to sex education (alcohol, drugs, healthy eating etc.)
- The subject has no set time frame but is to be taught when relevant to the students
- The curriculum is set by the Minister of Education and contains binding national objectives ("Common Objectives") for the subject





The curriculum and objectives

- Health is a positive concept (Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion 1986)
- Action competence (empowerment) is the overall objective

End objective (after 9th grade):

“The subject should contribute to the prerequisites of the pupils abilities to jointly as well as individually commit to actions that promote the health of themselves and others.”



Action competence

Action competence is a concept containing five important elements:

- Knowledge
- Commitment
- Visions
- Action experiences
- Critical sense

An action-oriented approach to sex education emphasize the pupils active participation and involvement.



The methodologies

An action-oriented approach means:

- Choosing methods that focus on dialogue and active participation of students
- A strong focus on the pupils and their interests, experiences and concepts
- The role of the teacher as a facilitator and an active partner in dialogue



Example:

The use of authentic cases

Help!

Dear hotline,

I have a question and I really need an answer: I have been with my boyfriend for nearly two years now and I am afraid that he is about to break up because I'm not showing my feelings right. I write him everyday, saying I love him and miss him. But he doesn't really seem to believe me. I'm a bit shy in school which is why I don't approach him much to hold him and kiss him – but I'd really like to... How do I show him my feelings? Please help. *(Girl, 14 years old)*



Example:

The use of value clarification exercises

The hot seat

- You can talk about feelings with your friends
- Friends are more important than boy-/girlfriends
- Boy-/girlfriends are more important than friends
- It's important that your parents like your boy-/girlfriend
- It's important that your friends like your boy-/girlfriend
- It can be hard to say no to a boy-/girlfriend
- When you date someone it's because you are in love
- When you date someone it's because your friends go on dates
- When you date someone you have to have sex as well



Example:

The use of value clarification exercises

The four corners:

What do you do if you want to break up with your boy or girl friend?

1. You don't say anything and try to avoid meeting him/her.
2. You send him/her a text message saying you want to break up.
3. You meet him/her face to face and explain the situation.
4. Open corner.



Example:

The use of story telling/drama exercises

Benjamin, Selma, an evening and a condom

Benjamin and Selma are both 15 years old. They have been going out for a while. Tonight they are at Benjamin's house. His parents are out. They have a really nice evening, watching a really romantic movie. At some point they start kissing and taking off their clothes. It feels really nice and they both want to. Benjamin knows that now is the time to find the condoms he has in his room but he is not sure how to suggest it.

What happens now - and the rest of the evening? Discuss in small groups, write the ending of the story or make a short roleplay.



The challenges – from ideal to practise

- There is a great difference in how the schools prioritise the subject
- Only one teacher out of ten are satisfied with the teaching of the subject
- Most teachers and school nurses are not formally educated in teaching the subject
- Most schools do not have local guidelines or principles describing how to manage the task of sex education at their school
- There is only used very few economical resources on up to date educational materials
- The pupils are not satisfied with the teaching of the subject

How do we face the challenges

- Danish FPA receive economical support from the National Board of Health to commence nationwide activities promoting better sex education in schools.
- We engage other key actors and put the subject on the agenda in media and relevant forums
- We educate teachers, school nurses and at teacher training colleges
- We develop new methodologies to be used in classrooms and share them for free on websites and in printed materials





A succes story from real life

- In 2008 the Danish FPA introduced a new nationwide campain for better sex education in schools
- Each year in week six (February) the campain "6 week" puts sex education on the timetable in classes from 6th-10th grade.
- Participation is free and the schools have no obligations regarding number of lessons or content in teaching.
- The Danish FPA launch new and free materials on the internet for teachers and pupils each year
- In 2008 more than 39.000 pupils participated, in 2009 the number had grown to 88.300.

Thank you for listening!

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