2. Affective sexual-education

INDEX:

1. Introduction
2. Human sexuality: a comprehensive vision
3. Affective sexual education
4. Dimensions of Sexuality
5. Universal Sex Education, for all people.
6. Sexuality and Disability
7. Strategies for Teaching and adaptating affective and Sexual Education for People with Disabilities
8. Bibliography

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1 - INTRODUCTION

This topic aims to provide basic information and key concepts about affective-sexual education, as well as highlight the importance of receiving adequate training.

It also seeks to raise awareness about the need to educate young people on this subject, including those with disabilities.

Affective-sexual education must be accessible, adapted, and equitable, respecting each individual's timing, context, and specific needs.

2. HUMAN SEXUALITY: A COMPREHENSIVE VISION

2.1 WHAT IS SEXUALITY?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

"Sexuality is a central aspect of being human and is present throughout a person's life. It encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, reproduction, and sexual orientation. It is experienced and expressed through thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles, and interpersonal relationships.

Sexuality may include all of these dimensions; however, not all of them are always experienced or expressed.

Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors."

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World Health Organization (WHO) 2006:

According to the WHO (2006), sexuality is an essential and inherent part of the human condition and plays a fundamental role in the development of personal identity and social integration.

Sex education aims to help individuals understand how sexuality influences the construction of self-esteem, decision-making, and both physical and emotional well-being.

2.3 SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Talking about rights in the context of sexuality implies ensuring that all individuals can live their sexuality in a free, informed, safe, and respectful manner, without discrimination or violence.

In this regard, sexual and reproductive rights have been recognized as human rights. The World Health Organization (WHO) states:

"Sexual rights constitute the application of existing human rights to sexuality and sexual health. They protect the right of all people to satisfy and express their sexuality and to enjoy sexual health, with due respect for the rights of others, within a framework of protection against discrimination."

The fundamental rights essential for achieving sexual health include:

- The right to equality and non-discrimination;
- The right not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment;
- The right to privacy;
- The rights to the highest attainable standard of health (including sexual health) and the highest level of social security;
- The right to marry and to form a family with the free and full consent of both partners, and to equality within marriage and upon its dissolution;
- The right to decide the number and spacing of one's children;
- The rights to information and education;
- The rights to freedom of opinion and expression; and
- The right to effective remedy in the event of a violation of fundamental rights.

The responsible exercise of human rights requires that all individuals respect the rights of others.
(WHO, 2006a; updated 2010)

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3. AFFECTIVE-SEXUAL EDUCATION

3.1 What Is Affective-Sexual Education?

Affective-sexual education involves a formative process that goes beyond anatomy and reproduction. It also encompasses the emotional, social, ethical, and relational dimensions of the human experience. Key topics include:

- Gender identity and sexual orientation
- Affective relationships and healthy bonds
- Consent and personal boundaries
- Diversity and respect
- Self-awareness and self-esteem

Affective-sexual education is grounded in respect for human rights, gender equality, the acceptance of diversity, and equitable access to information. This inclusive approach does not exclude people with disabilities or any other group.

Its goal is to empower individuals to live their sexuality freely, safely, and respectfully–promoting personal well-being and relationships based on mutual respect and consent.

UNESCO published the International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education (UNESCO, 2018), referring to affective-sexual education as comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). The document states that:

"Comprehensive sexuality education plays a central role in preparing young people for a safe, productive, and fulfilling life. It is based on a curriculum that addresses the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality."

This scientific publication recommends key concepts, themes, and learning objectives to guide curriculum development for students aged 5 to 18 and beyond. These are the following:

"INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL GUIDELINES ON SEXUALITY EDUCATION" (UNESCO, 2018)

- RELATIONSHIPS: TYPES OF FAMILIES, FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS
- VALUES, RIGHTS, CULTURE, AND SEXUALITY
- UNDERSTANDING GENDER
- VIOLENCE AND HOW TO STAY SAFE
- SKILLS FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
- THE HUMAN BODY AND DEVELOPMENT
- SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR
- SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

These guidelines will serve as a reference for the topics developed throughout this training, as they are an internationally recognized standard.

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3.2 The Importance of Affective-Sexual Education in Personal Development

Why is it important to talk about sexuality and learn about it?

Sexuality is a universal experience that accompanies people through every stage of life–from childhood to old age. Learning about sexuality is essential for individuals to understand their bodies, emotions, and relationships with others.

Although cultural and social barriers often hinder open discussion on the topic, it is crucial to approach sexuality in a natural and respectful manner. Only then can we foster full social inclusion and a healthy, positive self-image.

Given today's context, it is essential to have affective-sexual education that is evidence-based, rights-based, and informed by a gender perspective. This helps counteract distorted messages that often circulate on social media, in the press, and in social settings.

When understood and applied correctly, affective-sexual education becomes a powerful tool for:

- **Preventing violence**
- **Promoting healthy relationships**
- **Strengthening self-esteem**
- **Building a more egalitarian and diverse society**

Affective-sexual education should not be limited to biological or reproductive aspects. It must also address identity, emotions, relationships, pleasure, rights, gender, consent, communication, and self-care.

Such education should be adapted to individuals' needs and developmental stages, promoting values like respect, empathy, equality, and open communication. This requires a comprehensive approach, and the creation of safe, inclusive, and non-judgmental educational spaces where dialogue is encouraged.

3.3 Essential Principles of Comprehensive Sexuality Education

One of the fundamental principles of affective sexual education is recognizing its essential role in human development. It involves understanding and organizing sexuality in accordance with personal experiences, social norms, and values. This requires acknowledging that everyone (regardless of ability) has the right to understand and express their sexuality in a healthy way.

Therefore, a holistic approach is necessary, encompassing biological, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality. Key principles and perspectives include:

- A rights-based approach
- As established by multiple experts and international organizations, comprehensive sexuality education must be based on sexual and reproductive rights, which are rooted in human rights. These rights support each individual's freedom, dignity, and access to knowledge, care, and protection.

Luján Santucci (2012) outlines three core principles:

- Universality of sexuality: All human beings are sexual beings. Sexuality is inherent from birth.
- Integrality: Sexuality is not isolated; it connects to other life dimensions such as emotional and physical health.
- Responsibility: Sexual activity involves ethical considerations of reciprocity, consent, and protection from risks such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies.

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Focus on pleasure a

García Ruiz (2009)

Garcia highlights that human sexuality is diverse and complex. It is influenced by biological, emotional, cultural, and social factors and is expressed uniquely by each person. This diversity may change over time, even in the same individual.

Recognizing sexual diversity is essential for creating inclusive sex education environments, where all individuals feel safe and respected.

Key Points Include:

- Sexual diversity: Sexuality is not homogeneous–it is expressed uniquely and pluralistically.
- Autonomy: Each person has the right to decide about their body and sexuality without external imposition.
- Comprehensive education: Understanding and respecting diversity is essential. Education should promote equality, empathy, and consent.
- Cultural and social context: How individuals experience their sexuality is shaped by their environment, including cultural, social, and economic factors.

4. DIMENSIONS OF SEXUALITY

Sexuality is an integral aspect of the human being that encompasses various dimensions. Each of them is interrelated and contributes to how a person experiences and lives their sexuality. Below are the main dimensions of sexuality:

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
BIOLOGICAL	Physical and physiological aspects of sexuality: primary and secondary sexual characteristics, sexual health, human body anatomy and physiology.
REPRODUCTIVE	Physical and physiological aspects related to reproduction: fertility, contraception, pregnancy, childbirth, and reproductive rights.
PSYCHOLOGICAL	Emotional and cognitive aspects linked to sexuality: feelings, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and desires related to the body and intimate relationships.
AFFECTIVE-RELATIONAL	Emotional and social bonds, establishing affective connections with others, as well as the importance of mutial respect in relationships.
SOCIAL	Social norms and expectations that affect sexuality: cultural, religious, family, and educational influences, along with power structures and discrimination.
RECREATIONAL	Focus on pleasure and personal exploration, promoting positive and healthy interactions in sexuality.

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5. UNIVERSAL SEX EDUCATION, FOR EVERYONE

Universal sex education, based on a comprehensive and accessible approach, seeks to provide all individuals–regardless of age, gender, origin, context, or disability–with the tools and knowledge necessary to live their sexuality in a healthy, responsible, and respectful way.

It is crucial that sexuality education be inclusive, adapted, and accessible to people with various types of disabilities, as everyone has the right to enjoy a healthy and safe sexuality, regardless of their abilities.

● The human sexual fact

Sexuality is approached through the concept of the "Human Sexual Fact," which includes sexuation, sexuality, and eroticism as interconnected components. It refers to sexuality as an integral and complex phenomenon that is an essential part of human life across all its stages.

● Self-exploration and education

Self-exploration and sexual education are key components of a healthy and conscious sex life. Self-exploration involves personal discovery and connection with one's own body, allowing individuals to experience pleasure safely. It is important to educate about the body, rights, and personal protection–even in the absence of traditional sexual interactions–to encourage the healthy and conscious development of sexuality.

● Psychosexual development across life stages

Throughout life, the psychosexual development of people with disabilities follows similar paths to those without disabilities, although it requires specific approaches. From body exploration in childhood to building relationships in adulthood, it is crucial to adapt sex education to the particular needs of people with disabilities.

In summary, sex education for people with disabilities must be comprehensive, addressing biological, emotional, and social aspects. Fostering an inclusive and respectful understanding of sexuality is essential for the well-being and sexual rights of all people, regardless of their abilities. This approach not only enhances personal experience but also promotes a more equitable and respectful society.

6. SEXUALITY AND DISABILITY

The sexuality of people with disabilities is a vital and often neglected aspect. It is essential to recognize that all individuals–regardless of their abilities–have affective and sexual needs. This includes addressing sexuality in an inclusive context that is adapted to different types of disabilities, whether physical, sensory, intellectual, organic, etc.

6.1 Debunking myths about sexuality in people with disabilities

There are many myths and prejudices surrounding the sexuality of people with disabilities, such as the belief that they are asexual or incapable of fulfilling sexual relationships.

Addressing these myths and presenting the realities of sexuality in people with disabilities is essential to promote a more inclusive and respectful understanding.

It is crucial to normalize the sexuality of people with disabilities to ensure their rights are fully recognized. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities supports this perspective, affirming that enjoying a full sexual life is a basic human right.

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Common myths about sexuality in people with disabilities:

MYTHS	FACTS
1._PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE NO SEXUAL DESIRE	1._PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR ABILITY, HAVE SEXUAL DESIRES AND NEEDS. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CAN ENJOY A FULL SEX LIFE
2. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CANNOT HAVE SATISFACTORY SEXUAL RELATIONS.	2. DISABILITY DOES NOT PREVENT SATISFACTORY SEXUAL RELATIONS. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CAN HAVE FULFILLING SEXUAL EXPERIENCES, WITH ACCOMMODATIONS IF NEEDED.
3. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE ASEXUAL.	3. DISABILITY DOES NOT ELIMINATE SEXUAL IDENTITY. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CAN HAVE A RANGE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS.
4. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE TOO VULNERABLE.	4. WHILE SOME INDIVIDUALS MAY BE MORE VULNERABLE, THIS DOES NOT PREVENT THEM FROM HAVING AN ACTIVE AND CONSENSUAL SEX LIFE. COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION–INCLUDING TOPICS LIKE CONSENT AND RIGHTS–IS ESSENTIAL.
5. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE NOT INTERESTED IN FORMING ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS OR HAVING A PARTNER.	5. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MAY WANT TO FORM ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AND HAVE A PARTNER. THE RIGHT TO LOVE AND BE LOVED IS UNIVERSAL, AND THEY ALSO HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPERIENCE LOVE, ATTRACTION, AND INTIMACY.

6.2 Inclusive Education: Strategies and Good Practices

Sex education is fundamental and must be comprehensive and adaptable, taking into account the types of disabilities and the specific needs of each individual.

Why is it necessary to train in affective-sexual education?

➥ VIDEO: The journey towards comprehensive sexuality education, UNESCO, 2022.
¨**Learn, Protect, Respect, Empower with Comprehensive Sexuality Education [full version]**“
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sgqqh5JQOVU

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7. STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING AND ADAPTATING AFFECTIVE AND SEXUAL EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Affective-sexual education is a continuous process that accompanies individuals throughout their lives, adapting to the different stages of development. At each stage, topics related to sexuality and emotions are addressed according to age, maturity, and individual needs.

In this section, we focus on key characteristics and considerations in affective-sexual education for adolescents and young people, with particular attention to those with disabilities. These aspects are generally relevant to the affective-sexual education of all people, regardless of age or disability status.

- Adaptation of content:

Adjust your teaching content according to the cognitive and physical abilities of each individual, using visual methods, assistive technology, and accessible materials. This not only improves the quality of learning but also fosters an environment where young people feel respected and supported in their sexual and emotional development.

It is essential to tailor educational content to meet the learning needs of each person. For example, for individuals with cognitive or learning disabilities, materials should be clear, simple, and visual, using adapted educational resources and specialized teaching techniques.

Employ a variety of pedagogical strategies such as visual resources (e.g., drawings, videos), Braille materials, sign language, and detailed oral explanations as needed.

For those with verbal communication difficulties, use alternative and augmentative communication systems, such as communication boards or assistive technology.

- Autonomy and self-knowledge:

Promote knowledge of one's own body and the right to make decisions about it, emphasizing consent and personal boundaries.

Body perception influences self-esteem and sexual well-being. Encouraging a positive body image and the experience of pleasure may involve therapies, medical interventions, and the use of assistive devices when necessary.

- Sexual rights education:

Include information about sexual and reproductive rights, such as access to healthcare services, contraception, and the freedom to form romantic relationships.

- Abuse prevention:

Teach how to recognize and prevent sexual abuse, while promoting open communication about desires, boundaries, and the importance of consent.

- Inclusion and diversity:

Ensure that sex education respects the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities, and fosters relationships based on mutual respect.

- Safe environment:

Create a space of trust where people with disabilities can express their doubts and concerns without fear of judgment.

- Training of teachers and educators:

Train professionals to address sex education in an inclusive manner, involving families and communities in the process.

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- Access to health services:

Ensure that people with disabilities have access to sexual and reproductive health services that are both accessible and respectful.

- Active participation:

Involve people with disabilities in their own sex education process, empowering them to make informed decisions.

- Families:

Families play a critical role in young people's sex education, but they often feel reluctant to address this topic–especially during adolescence–partly due to the persistent myths and prejudices in society.

Therefore, it is essential to provide families with clear and accessible information on the subject, along with professional support, so they can address sexuality in a respectful and appropriate way. Open and honest communication within the family should be encouraged.

- Importance of inclusion:

Training educators and health professionals in the areas of sexuality and disability is essential. Raising awareness in the broader community also plays an important role in ensuring that people with disabilities feel comfortable expressing their sexuality. Creating safe spaces and supporting self-expression are fundamental conditions for enjoying a full and healthy sex life.

- Ethical perspective:

Affective-sexual education must be grounded in universal principles such as respect, consent, and human dignity. These concepts are vital and should be taught to young people to foster a deep understanding of their own bodies and those of others, while recognizing diversity in gender and sexual orientation.

1. Respect: Teach the value of one's own body and the importance of accepting individual differences in others.
2. Consent: Emphasize the importance of informed, voluntary consent in any sexual relationship and the right to withdraw it at any time.
3. Human Dignity: Promote respect for all individuals, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or personal characteristics.

- Cultural inclusion:

Affective-sexual education programs should consider cultural diversity and adapt curricula to be relevant and acceptable to various communities. Including different cultural perspectives enriches educational content, fosters mutual respect, and makes the information more relatable and effective for young people.

It is also essential to involve families and communities in the educational process to provide comprehensive support and reinforce what is learned. This collaboration creates a more holistic learning environment, where both home and educational institutions work together to deliver inclusive, respectful, and culturally sensitive affective-sexual education.

- Gender perspective

Incorporating a gender perspective into affective-sexual education involves recognizing how gender roles and expectations influence individuals' experiences of sexuality, relationships, and rights.

It aims to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and norms that limit freedom of expression and to empower individuals to live their sexuality with autonomy and respect, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

This perspective promotes equality and helps students understand power dynamics in relationships, identify gender-based violence, and foster inclusive environments where gender diversity is valued and respected.

- The Impact of the internet on affective-sexual development:

A solid affective-sexual education helps young people build positive relationships and recognize unhealthy ones.
The internet and social media offer unrestricted access to information, including pornography and violent sexual content that often portrays distorted and unequal gender dynamics. This can affect how young people perceive relationships and sexuality.

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Affective-sexual education should also address the responsible use of the internet, teaching young people how to navigate online spaces, recognize harmful content, and make informed decisions.

Educating them to form respectful, equal, and violence-free relationships contributes to healthy development and helps prevent abuse and exploitation.

- The Role of the educational community:

Teachers and professionals play a crucial role in delivering affective-sexual education. One of their key responsibilities is to maintain confidentiality, ensuring that students' concerns are handled with sensitivity and discretion.

They must be well-trained and equipped to address these topics and to create a classroom environment where students feel safe to express personal thoughts and questions.

In doing so, educators can offer a space that promotes learning, reflection, and the development of responsible, informed, and healthy sexuality.

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