

## Sex Education – Through the Eyes of NEP 2020

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### Abstract

*National Education Policy 2020 has shaped the base of the education sector of the country in a significant manner by bringing in effective and efficient goals and in order for it to thrive and prosper, it is highly important for it is implemented and actualized with utmost efficiency and sensitivity. While there are numerous crucial ways to justify the goals, providing quality sex education is one such manner that will help the nation to achieve and justify one of the vital agendas of the Sustainable Development and thus the agenda of the National Education Policy which aims at “inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all” by the year 2030.*

*Adolescence is known to be a period of transition between childhood to adulthood which brings about significant and drastic changes in the mind and body of a human being. It is therefore this period which calls for educating a child about the natural changes which is happening within and around them and teaching them the effective ways to grow along with it in a wholesome manner. Including quality sex education in the school curriculum would prove to be a way to make them understand their body and channelize their spurt of emotions in the right direction. This paper thus focuses on the concept and significance of sex education and promotes various ways through which it can be actualized in the light of NEP 2020.*

**Keywords:** Sex education, NEP 2020, Adolescents

### Introduction

National Education Policy 2020 has framed certain significant goals in the light of Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 such as making education holistic, all-rounded and in turn making the learners compassionate, ethical, and contributing well to the society.

For these goals to actualize and create a significant impact in the minds and personalities of students, it is important to create new ideas and concepts adhering to the changing needs of the society or implement the existing concepts and ideas using

some new methods.

Introducing and reframing the concept of sex education in the school curriculum is one such manner through which the goal of NEP 2020 can be actualized and will thus bring about holistic development for the students and simultaneously serve the changing needs of the society.

### What is Sex Education?

Sex Education, in simple terms, can be referred to as the education which enlightens an individual on the concept of sex, makes them comfortable with their

body, their self, and significant changes which come along with it, and also focuses on the concept of reproductivity as human nature.

It is a large pool that pertains to various ideas such as making the individual familiarized with the concept of sex and sexuality, educating them with the scientific aspect of the concept as well as building value systems and beliefs around the whole idea. It also includes making the individual familiarized with their sexuality and body and major changes which occur during the time of puberty and teaching them the ways to take care of their sexual health. Most importantly, it includes the concept of society and gender which sensitizes the individual towards different genders.

### **Significance of Sex education**

Significance and the need for sex education can be understood through the consequences of the lack of education in the school curriculum and in general. Lack of sex education can prove to be more harmful than helpful. It can bring about disastrous impacts on the individualistic and societal levels. These harmful impacts of lack of sex education include teenage pregnancy, unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unhealthy sexual behavior, sexual violence, low acceptance of themselves, gender-based discrimination in the society, unhealthy sexual health, poor maternal health leading to their death, among many more.

According to UNESCO, two out of three girls are clueless about their bodies and changes occurring in them. They have absolutely no knowledge of menstruation and hence don't know what happens to them when they start menstruating. Due to lack of sex education, a lot of girls thought they were dying

due to the blood and pain when they first started menstruating. A lot of girls in India neither have the knowledge of menstruation nor have the access to hygienic means like sanitary napkins and well-constructed washrooms. And to worsen the situation, they are not aware of their rights as a human beings so as to demand the basic needs for themselves.

According to the studies, around 66% of youth in the entire world have got zero knowledge on HIV, AIDS, and their ways of transmission and prevention which either leads to health complications or worse, death. Another major issue is the maternal mortality rate (MMR) which in India went up to above 25,000 in the year 2018 and became one of the top reasons for death among girls aged between 15-19. India undergoes a major problem of child marriage which is based on getting individuals married below the age of 18 and according to the National Family Health Survey, India records an estimate of 40% of the child marriage around the world and is considered to have the 14th highest rate of child marriages

According to World Health Organization, 6% of the whole adult population in India gets infected with STDs every year, with just 32.5% men and 20.9% women having a comprehensive and required knowledge of STDs, which gives a clear light to the fact that most of the adults in India aren't aware of the STDs as a concept, its prevention, and cure and thus the infection goes unnoticed which can deteriorate the health of an individual.

One of the major drawbacks of the lack of sex education is the repression of emotions. With no knowledge as to how to channelize sexual energies in a healthy manner and with no safe environment to

speak their heart and mind, people end up repressing their emotions which then collectively emerges as one of the major reasons for sexual abuse and violence, and non-consensual sexual intercourse. Numerous people lose their lives as a consequence of trial and error sexual intercourse. The reason leading up to this is the lack of acquaintance of an individual with their body and rights. Lack of sex education also encourages gender discrimination where women in our society are looked upon as the weaker sex and men are perceived to be the dominating sex. Because of this gender inequality, sexual abuse faced by men is often ignored and the 'other' gender, known as the transgender are not given enough priority and attention.

For these and many more reasons, it is highly significant for a country like India to encourage and promote sexual education and uplift the people of India to a level where the comfortability on the concerned topic increases and the taboos, myths, and discomfort associated with the topic goes down the graph.

### **Myths and Taboos associated with Sex education in India:**

Numerous myths and taboos are deeply rooted in and around the whole concept of sex education which becomes the major reason for the failure of this significant education in India and arising of numerous uninvited issues.

People in India do not feel comfortable when talking about sex or listening to someone talk about it. To date, a lot of parents and teachers are not at ease when it comes to educating their child/student with the most natural and human aspect.

Sex education, as appropriate as it is for the growing

adolescents, is considered inappropriate by most of the parents in India with the notion and fear of getting the mind of their child polluted by acquainting them with the knowledge 'how to have sex at a very early age. With this wrong notion engraved in their minds, they tend to ignore their continuously growing child and do not prioritize making them aware and educated of their growth and changing needs.

In India, the whole concept of sex is supposed to be kept within the four walls. Discussing it publicly is considered a matter of shame and thus problems around are forbidden to become a matter of discussion. This gives various health-related problems a space to grow.

Sex education is considered to be a western concept that hampers the Indian culture. For this reason, people are not educated nor are they comfortable talking about different sexual orientations like heterosexual and homosexual, and not giving space to vocalize about one's sexual orientation can lead to repression of emotions and lead to negative outcomes.

Menstruation is still considered unhygienic and girls are often made to stay aloof during the days they menstruate.

These various myths give a picture of the deep-rooted stereotypes and an alarming signal for initiating sex education at an early and appropriate age.

### **Sex Education as a part of the school curriculum**

The significant period of physical change, termed as puberty, starts around the age of 9-11 for girls with the development of breasts and beginning of the

menstrual cycle and around the age of 11-13 for boys with the growth in testicles and change in the voice. They also begin to experience a spurt of change in their emotions towards themselves and towards others. These changes can either be too dangerous or an easy road depending upon the kind of learning they are being provided with. All of these changes arise at the same time which becomes difficult for the individual to handle them all together which is where sex education has a role to play.

Including quality, comprehensive, and holistic sex education will bring about an appropriate behavioral change of the individual by making them sensitive towards the idea and creating a sense of respect towards themselves as well as others. It will enable their decision-making skills and make them wise thinkers. It will help them to develop healthy individual, social and sexual relationships. Furthermore, it will prevent them from channelizing their emotions in the wrong path by avoiding disrespecting themselves or others and thus will help them to make the right choices and live their life with dignity. A child is known to be the future of the nation and for the nation to thrive, it is crucial to cater to the changing needs of the individual and the society.

The covid-19 pandemic has called the need for online classes, exposing children to the vast online world which carries its own set of advantages and disadvantages. One of the major disadvantages is the easy access that children have to various social media platforms with little or no knowledge of its usage which may lead to stimulation of driven desires with easily available proactive content on the internet like pornography and dating applications which promote casual sexual

relationships. Rapidity in the growth of the child and the changing times calls for including quality sex education in the curriculum.

### **Achieving quality sex education through the goals of NEP 2020**

National Education Policy has brought upon noteworthy goals for the all-round development of the curriculum and creating a learner-centric education.

#### **Some of the goals are stated as follows:**

- Promoting equitable quality education.
- Promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Promoting local and bi-lingual language as a medium of instruction.
- Adopting the multi-disciplinary approach of learning.
- Promoting ‘Gender Inclusion fund’ for girls and transgender students and encouraging inclusive activities.
- Promoting holistic development of the students by encouraging rational and creative thinking, compassion, ethical values, and empathy.
- Developing life skills like teamwork, cooperation, and communication.

Taking into account all the above-stated goals, various ways can be suggested to include sex education as an integral part of the school curriculum.

- Including all the stakeholders – While it is

crucial to provide education to students, it is equally important to include all the stakeholders, i.e., parents, teachers, and students while the education is being imparted so as to promote wholesome learning. A couple of workshops could be organized at frequent intervals inviting all the stakeholders to be a significant part of it. This will not only help in erasing the taboos and myths associated with the concept but will also help in breaking the wall between the parent and the child and will give way for a healthy learning environment.

- Breaking the gender barrier – The society does not live separately as male, female, and transgenders and therefore, while imparting the educating, all of them should be made to sit together. For instance, while girls are being taught about menstruation, boys should not be kept aloof. By creating an inclusive and equitable environment of learning, students will understand themselves and others and will thus respect and empathize with the differences and similarities.
- Promoting teamwork- Tables can be turned while imparting education. Students can be asked to form small groups, choose a suitable topic like puberty, menstruation, STDs, among other topics and can be encouraged to discuss the topic within themselves and present it to the class. This will not only break various mental and emotional barriers but will also promote holistic and lifelong learning of the students by preparing them for a harmonious world.
- Organizing campaigns – Students can be encouraged for organizing creative campaigns where they can come up with a topic of

awareness, create slogans and little acts and present it in rural and slum areas and thus educating people around different corners. Students should be encouraged to use local language for better communication and better outreach of the concerned message. Adding to this, they should be encouraged to have a conversation with people and educate them in turn. This way, both students and people witnessing the campaign will engage in two-way knowledge exchange. While one will be enlightened on the deep-rooted problems in society, the other will know the means of having a healthy relationship with oneself and others.

- With the current need for online classes due to the pandemic, students and parents together can be taught the ways to use a gadget and online platform in an effective and harmless manner. They should be made aware of the various pros and cons which come along with access to the online platform and therefore be made sensitive towards its use of it.
- Teachers should be taught the ways to create a safe learning environment for the students and should create an inclusive environment for all the students irrespective of their gender. For this, gender-neutral terms can be used like addressing the class as ‘students’ instead of ‘boys and girls.’

### **Conclusion**

Education decides the future of an individual and thus of the nation. In order to make the future of the nation bright, it is crucial to cover all the

angles and dimensions of human growth. With quality and inclusive sex education, not only will the world become a better place, but each individual will grow into a confident, sympathetic, mindful and rational human being.

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