

The Global Mobility of Sex Education in a Chinese Context

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Abstract: According to the current increasing number of sexual assault crimes among teenagers in China, sex education policy starts to attract people's attention. In order to highlight the issues with Chinese sex education, this study examines the global mobility of sex education in the Chinese context. It does this by giving in-depth information about the country's current sex education policy and by contrasting it with Australian sex education policy. The research's methodology included case studies and literature reviews in both China and Australia as well as a comparison of the two nations. The study's key finding is that Chinese sex education has a number of shortcomings that affect how well it instructs youth about sexual health and wellbeing. These negatives include a curriculum that is not age-appropriate, a lack of professional training for teachers, and improper teaching materials, etc. Solutions include professional training for instructors, suitable teaching materials, an age-appropriate curriculum, open discussion, and more government funding. These remedies can aid in resolving the issues with Chinese sex education and enhance the general sexual health and wellbeing of Chinese youth.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Due to cultural, political, and societal considerations, the subject of sex education in China has been divisive for a long time. The high emphasis on sexual morality and modesty found in traditional Confucian principles has prevented open discourse and education regarding sexual health. "Lack of sex education results in ignorance of sex-related topics and harmful health effects." [1]. Yet, with rising rates of teen births, STDs, and sexual assault in China, there has been a growing understanding of the need for better sexual education in recent years. There are still a number of issues with Chinese sex education that need to be resolved in order to ensure teenagers are protected, despite some initiatives to make things better. Sexual assault charges involving secondary school students have become more widespread in recent years.

1.2 The Importance of Research

It is significant practical importance to have a thorough awareness of the current state of sex

education for secondary school students in China as well as to actively seek out workable solutions. The implementation of sex education needs to be strengthened because it is not being given enough attention in China at the moment. However, because there aren't any theories on sex education that consider local circumstances, this implementation of sex education frequently leads to misunderstandings. Through researching this topic, the prevailing educational theories may be bolstered and strengthened and better equip the teaching staff to conduct secondary school students' sex education in a systematic and efficient manner. For secondary school children to grow up healthily with the help of family, school, and society, it is therefore vital to fully comprehend the state of sex education for secondary school students in China today and to identify workable and practical solutions through research. The research on this subject is therefore very important and has broad implications.

1.3 Research Methods

The research aims to explore the global mobility of sex education in Chinese context by conducting a literature review and case study/comparison study. The research will identify gaps in the existing research on Chinese sex education and offer new insights like combining Australian sex education policy with current Chinese sex education policy and perspectives on the subject. This research findings can contribute to the development of more effective policies and practices in Chinese sex education, as well as inform future research on the topic. By filling the academic gaps in the existing literature, this research can make a valuable contribution to the field of sex education and inform policy decisions that impact the health and well-being of Chinese teenagers.

2. Chinese Sex Education Policy and Practice Overview

2.1 The Current Situation of Sex Education in China

Sex education aims to increase people's awareness of sex and sexuality, prevent sexual diseases, and reduce inappropriate sexual behaviors. It does this by studying human reproduction, physiology, and psychology. In China, the current condition of sex education still has numerous challenges. "More longitudinal data are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of sexuality education in China in reducing hazardous sexual behaviour and poor reproductive health outcomes among students. The scope, substance, and delivery of this education are still disputed issues in China." [2].

First of all, sex education is not as popular as it should be, some schools in particular regions do not provide relevant courses, and many parents and instructors also see it negatively. As a result, many pupils lack the necessary understanding and awareness of sex education. Second, the information provided in sex education is unreliable and incomplete. Although some schools have established sex education programs, the information provided in the teaching materials is either incomplete or inconsistent with the needs of the pupils. However, the quality of some teachers' sex education instruction is impacted by their lack of formal training and specialized understanding in the field. Finally, sex education needs to do a better job of promoting gender equality. Some people still have sexist beliefs as a result of the influence of old views, which results in a lack of awareness of gender equality and makes it difficult to give kids a thorough sex education.

Overall, there are still a lot of issues with sex education in China today. Schools, the government, and parents must collaborate to increase the value and promotion of sex education so that more people can gain access to thorough and accurate sex education.

The sex education is divided into three different parts, which includes school education, family education and social education. The research demonstrates the problems that exists in these three parts and how it affects teenagers.

2.2 School Sex Education

In 2004, Watts had a spot-on overview of the current state of sex education for Chinese adolescents in *The Lancet*: “Chinese sex education lags behind the practicality of adolescence.”[1]. Numerous facts show that current adolescents mature early, have early sexual debut, have a high proportion of abortions, which leads to the school education. Whereas sex education has been the subject of research and discussion in the educational world, its effectiveness is far from sufficient. As the saying goes, there are policies at the top and countermeasures at the bottom. For instance, despite the fact that human reproductive structures and physiological development are the subject of one chapter in secondary school biology textbooks, most teachers are too self-conscious to discuss these topics with their classes. Instead, they take the approach of letting students discover the information for themselves and only go as far as to inform them. Research on Sexual Health Education in Shenzhen Primary and Secondary Schools, the "Tenth Five-Year Plan" for Shenzhen prioritized the subject of the city's educational disciplines, and it has taken more than two years to survey more than 3,000 kids and 700 parents about sexual education.

“65.5% of junior high school students and 52.1% of high school students agreed that sex education is rarely taught in schools, and 22% of junior high school students and 42.5% of high school students said they have never received sex education in schools.” [2]. Although the Chinese government starts to realize the importance of sex education, it is still not fully implemented by policies and schools.

2.3 Family Sex Education

Also, China is a civilized country with a history of thousands of years, and the Chinese people are deeply influenced by traditional feudal thinking, and the concept of sex is no exception. Parents also avoid talking about sex with their children. According to the research that relates to “Chinese Parents’ Perspectives on Adolescent Sexuality Education”, The majority of parents (83.6%) admitted that they had not taught their children about sexuality, while mums were more likely than fathers to have done so (p .001) (20.8% vs. 10.7%). The majority of parents (81.43%) said that their primary need for sexuality education was the ability to discuss sexuality with their children; 10.25% said that their primary need was for more information about sexuality; and 6.8% said that their primary need was for assistance in changing their attitudes towards such education [2]. Correct sex education is abandoned by parents through family education so that teenagers have to figure out other ways to get to realize about sex.

2.4 Internet misleading Sex Education

Without correct guidance of sex education from school and family, teenagers in China start to get more information through the Internet to fulfill their curiosity. Nevertheless, due to the complexity of the Internet and incomplete regulation, the knowledge they acquire through the Internet is often misleading. “It is simple to learn some sexual material that is inappropriate for one's own age in today's erotic information-rich network environment.” [3]. Secondary school students miss out on official sex education due of this lighthearted and superficial approach to sex education in the classroom. Sexual deviant behaviors and sexual crimes are on the rise, and this is due to the ineffective teaching of sexual science knowledge and the improper guidance of sexual moral conceptions, which results in the weak sexual moral will of minors in adolescence. “The conflict between the significant physiological changes that are peculiar to adolescence and the relatively feeble moral and ethical concepts and moral will of younger teenagers, which directly contributes to the rise in sexual crimes committed by minors, becomes more and more apparent with the development of sexual maturity.” [4,5].

3. Globalization and Chinese Sex Education

Both opportunities and difficulties are presented by globalization for sex education in China. Under the educational globalization, sex education is becoming one of the most important topics. “Chinese youth have been constructing and experimenting with their sexuality in the context of a rapidly shifting cultural, socioeconomic, and political environment, influenced by both local and global influences” [6,7]. It is undeniable that sex education in developed countries is much more advanced than that in China, and it is an opportunity for Chinese scholars to learn and may use for reference to create Chinese traditional sex education according to Chinese feudal and conservative society.

3.1 Increased Openness of Sexual Concept

“Chinese teenagers claim that the country's current sexuality education lacks a gender perspective, including a discussion of gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation, and that they have many misconceptions about sex (particularly with regard to puberty, masturbation, contraception, STDs, and HIV).” [8-10]. With the advancement of globalization, more and more western sexual concepts, sexual culture and sexual products have entered the Chinese market, which has a certain influence on Chinese sexual concept and culture, making Chinese young people's sexual concept more open and freer.

3.2 Enrichment of Sex Education Curriculum

Globalization has promoted the enrichment of sex education curriculum, and sex education in China has gradually shifted from simple physiological knowledge education to comprehensive and diversified sex education, which involves many aspects such as gender equality, interpersonal relationship, sexual behavior and sexual health. Over the past few years, China has increasingly adopted the Western idea of "comprehensive education," which places an emphasis on teaching students about a variety of themes, including gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Globalization has led to sex education resources more diversified, and China can learn from other countries' sex education concepts, education models and education resources to provide new ideas and methods for its own sex education development. China's sex education policies have also begun to focus on the prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, similar to those in the West. China has also strengthened its sex education efforts in the form of popularizing the prevention and treatment of STDs and AIDS to the entire society. For example, “in order to promote CSE nationally and give Chinese sex educators useful resources and technical support, the UNESCO China Office developed and disseminated International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality

An Evidence-informed Approach (updated version) in both English and Mandarin in 2018. More than ten top specialists in the field formed a technical consulting team in 2019 with support from the China offices of UNESCO and UNFPA. This team's work will ideally lay the groundwork for national curricular standards on CSE [11].

3.3 Internationalization of Sex Education

Globalization has promoted the internationalization of sex education in China, and it has begun to receive guidance and help from international organizations and institutions, and actively participate in international educational exchanges and cooperation, which has improved the international influence and competitiveness of sex education in China [12]. To further popularize and promote sexual health and knowledge, China has started to disseminate the idea of sexual health education in

Western nations. This also reflects that China's sex education policy has gradually moved closer to the cutting-edge international level.

4. Comparison between Chinese and Australian Sex Education

4.1 Education Content

Chinese sex education mainly focuses on the introduction of physiological knowledge, emphasizing basic knowledge such as contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, and relatively little content in gender equality, the legality of sexual behavior, safety, and mutual respect. In Australia, sex education focuses on gender equality, the rights of homosexuals and sexual minorities, the legality of sexual behavior, safety, mutual respect, etc., and is more comprehensive and diversified. “Young people say that one of their most reliable sources of information about relationships and sexuality is school-based sexuality education.” [13].

4.2 Age of Education

Sex education in China is mainly focused on middle school and high school, and relatively little sex education is provided at elementary school level. In Australia, sex education starts at the elementary school level and gradually deepens and expands. “The Sixth National Survey of Secondary Students and Adolescent Sexual Health which surveyed Australian students in five different age groups, from 1-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10 and 11-12. Also, 85.3% participants indicated they have received RSE at school which represents that Australian teenagers get sex education at an early age before their sexual maturity.” [14].

4.3 Form of Education

Chinese sex education is mainly conducted through classroom teaching, while Australia adopts more diverse forms of education, such as interactive teaching, online teaching and workshops. Chinese sex education is in the content of biology class, and it mainly involves information about body difference and organs rather than knowledge about sex itself. “In 2010, the Institute of Population Research at Peking University conducted a survey of 22,288 young people, aged 15 to 24, and found that 40% of those polled said they had received sexuality education at school, most frequently in the form of lectures on puberty, STI and HIV prevention, contraception, and birth control.” [15]. Chinese sex education puts a lot of efforts on sexual knowledge about HIV, rather than how to face sexual behaviors.

4.4 Family Involvement

The involvement of parents in sex education in China is relatively low, and parents' responsibility for sex education is often neglected. “It has been demonstrated that parental views, understanding, and communication regarding sexuality are all associated with favorable results for children.” [16,17]. In Australia, parents are more involved, and families and schools share the responsibility for their children's sex education. Chinese parents are averse to discussing sex with their kids and are unfamiliar with how to teach kids about sex.

4.5 Teacher Training

“In order to have the desired results, high-quality sexuality education must be presented in a thorough manner by qualified teachers. It may also be effective in enhancing sexual knowledge and sexual health outcomes [13].” In Australia, teacher training in sex education is relatively well developed, with special teacher training institutions and education systems, while in China, the

training of sex education teachers is relatively weak. “Standardized training and textbooks about sex education is missing in Chinese sex education which means that teachers lack experience to teach young teenagers about sex and they don’t have materials for professional teaching.” [18].

4.6 Summary

According to this comparative analysis, sex education in Australia is more comprehensive and diversified, which emphasizes gender equality, the legality of sexual behavior and mutual respect. “School year made the biggest contribution to HIV and STI knowledge, for better knowledge among year 12 students.” [13]. Western schools play an important role in providing sexual knowledge to teenagers. While there is still much space for development, sex education in China has to pay greater attention to the diversity of educational formats, the comprehensiveness of the curriculum, and the involvement of parents and instructors.

5. Opportunities and Challenges of Global Chinese Sex Education

In terms of opportunities, globalization offers a wider perspective and more resources for the advancement of sex education in China. China may research cutting-edge sex education theories and techniques utilized abroad, expand international exchanges and cooperation, and encourage the ongoing innovation and development of sex education. China can also learn from the sex education models and experiences of other nations. “Globalization has also given China access to more resources and assistance, such as funding from NGOs and international organizations, contributions from multinational corporations, and support from social organizations, all of which can help advance the development and advancement of sex education in China.” [19].

Globalization has presented certain difficulties for Chinese sex education as well. First, there is the matter of cultural variances. According to its own cultural history and characteristics, China has the responsibility to adapt flexibly to international concepts and techniques of sex education. This is because different countries and regions may have distinct sexual customs, concepts, and values. In order to work more effectively with foreign organizations and NGOs, China has to improve its English education and intercultural communication abilities. “In order to increase the accessibility and caliber of sex education, it is also necessary to promote the creation and development of domestic resources in China.” [20].

In summary, globalization is both an opportunity and a challenge, and for sex education in China, there is a need to seize the opportunity, meet the challenge, and gradually improve the quality and level of sex education to promote sexual health and comprehensive development.

6. Discussion and Possible Solutions

Every person in our society need to give this troubling issue serious thought. What should people do to prepare for the future? What adjustments ought to be made? Does the society wish to provide a full upbringing for teenagers? According to the research, human-beings have the responsibility to do the following things in response to these current causes. According to the current situation of Chinese Sex Education, schools, families and society have the responsibility to implement and construct policies for cultivating young teenagers’ learning of sex education.

6.1 Strengthen Teacher Training to Improve Teachers' Professionalism and Awareness of Sex Education

“The quality of teachers directly affects the quality of sex education because they are the primary transmitter of sex education.” [21]. Therefore, teachers who teach sex education courses should be systematically trained and improved so that they can better provide students with professional

knowledge of sex education.

6.2 Establish a Comprehensive Sex Education Curriculum

“Schools should establish a comprehensive sex education curriculum, incorporate relevant contents into the curriculum system, and provide students with comprehensive and systematic sex education starting from the elementary school level.” [22]. In addition, there should be a focus on gender equality so that comprehensive sex education can be better provided to students.

6.3 Raise Awareness of Sex Education among Parents

Schools and the government can strengthen sex education awareness among parents, make them aware of the importance of sex education, and provide relevant guidance and assistance so that they can better provide sex education knowledge and assistance to their children.

6.4 Promote Sex Education Resources and Information

Schools and teaching professionals make use of modern technology, such as establishing sex education websites and promoting sex education APPs, so that students and parents can easily access sex education resources and information. These resources and information should be authoritative, scientific, and comprehensive to meet the needs of students.

6.5 Strengthen the Regulation of Sex Education and Ensure the Quality of Education

The government need to strengthen the supervision of sex education, establish corresponding evaluation mechanisms and standards, and supervise and evaluate various educational institutions to ensure the quality and effectiveness of sex education. At the same time, effective measures should be taken to strengthen the fight and prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment to protect the physical and mental health of students.

7. Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that China's approach to sex education is complex and multifaceted, necessitating careful consideration and attention from politicians, educators, and parents. There is still much that can be done to increase the number, quality, and accessibility of sex education programs across the country, even if advancements have lately been achieved in this area. This research has the potential to significantly advance the field of sex education and help shape public policies that will affect the health and wellbeing of Chinese youth. The government now recognizes the value of educating young people about sexual health and relationships, replacing the conventional conservative attitudes regarding sex with a more progressive outlook. According to this research, Chinese sex education is still in its enlightenment stage, which could be improved through different aspects. By giving young people in-depth, age-appropriate information about sexuality, relationships, and reproductive health, sex education can equip them with the knowledge they need to make wise decisions and safeguard themselves against harmful outcomes like unintended pregnancies and STDs. Not only the government need to take the responsibility of sex education, but also family and society education. Under the background of educational globalization, western countries like Australia have a more developed sex education system. It is beneficial for Chinese government to use their experience as a reference to develop a Chinese traditional way of teaching sex education. For the future thoughts, comprehensive sexuality education has to be given more attention in schools, with a focus on disseminating accurate and current information about sexual health, contraception, and consent. The stigma and taboos associated with sexuality should also be addressed, and open and honest discussion about sex and relationships should be encouraged. To help young people and their

families, this may entail collaborating with local authorities, academics, and healthcare professionals. In order to satisfy the requirements of young people and consider the particular difficulties and cultural considerations that are present in China, it is also critical to keep investigating and assessing the success of sexuality education programs. In the end, a well-thought-out and well-implemented sex education program can aid in fostering healthier attitudes and practices about sexuality and assist create a society that is more dynamic and inclusive.

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