
Sexuality Education in a Muslim Culture: Practical Issues & Lessons Learnt

Bilal Aurang Zeb

Starting Point: Culture Vs Religion

Religion

Allah says in Quran:

"Say: Are they equal to those who know, and those who do not know?"

Aisha, the wife of the prophet testified:

Blessed are the women of the Ansar (the citizens of Madina). Shyness did not stand in their way seeking knowledge about their religion.

The Bottom Line...

"Shyness is part of the faith" as the prophet taught, but he also taught "There is no shyness in matters of religion" even entailing the delicate aspects of sexual life.

Culture

SEX!!

SEXUALITY EDUCATION!

Shhhhh...

Sexuality Education Vs LSBE

- Language matters: Entry Point: LSBE – A Personality Development Programme
 - Merely sex education is not enough if young people don't have skills to practice it such as decision-making skills, and skills to avoid peer pressure.
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Core Areas of Life Skills

- Self-awareness and empathy;
 - Communication and interpersonal skills;
 - Critical thinking and creative thinking;
 - Decision making and problem solving; and
 - Coping with emotions and coping with stress.
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Setting the ground right!

- General misperception about foreign NGOs.
 - Awareness of these misperceptions.
 - Throughout project cycle particularly in designing >> Involvement of key stakeholders: parents, mullas, principals, state authorities, local politicians, teachers and students.
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‘Empowered’ (trained) Team

- Values clarification
 - Knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and rights and its importance
 - awareness of social, cultural and religious norms and practices and cautious of linking them with SRHR
 - Danger of complete dependence on foreign consultant for training staff members.
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Curriculum Development

- The research strategy.
 - quotations from Quran/Bible/Hadith;
 - danger of complete dependence on foreign consultant for training staff members;
 - use of culturally appropriate words, not just words in the local language (danger of plain translation) but culturally appropriate words,
 - culturally appropriate content e.g. (a sense of promotion of) masturbation, (a sense of promoting pre-marital and extramarital sex through) use of condoms ;
 - Danger of English translation for English medium schools and losing the locally acceptable terminologies.
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Caution with Baseline Surveys

- The Case Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKUEB) – Questionnaire

 - Political interests and consequences
 - Do you drink? If yes, how much?
 - Should a girl have sex before the marriage? If yes, at what age?
 - When did you have sex first time in your life?
 - Have you seen your sister naked? If yes, what type of feelings you had in your mind? Did you ever think of having sex with her?
 - Is your father having sex with you? Is your brother having sex with you?
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Implementation

- MOUs with district and provincial governments.
 - Private Schools Association
 - First contact with Principals (Introducing through meetings to 'programme launching ceremony')
 - Orientation sessions for parents – written permission
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Training of Teachers

- Call for becoming volunteer trainers Vs the excuse of too much workload.
 - Teachers as agents of change (ownership and respect; values orientation; openness in what they are shy about).
 - Picnic in the hills!
 - The excitement and being over-ambitious (Reality realization is important).
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Training of Teachers

- Monitoring to see what they are doing (Masturbation chapter in Pishin)
 - Clash with their current time tables
 - Teacher transfers and turnover (2 teachers from each school; follow the teacher to another school)
 - Separate sessions for males and females (although it promotes gender divide) but has proven effective in delivering the message across. Less time limitation. No permission to female teachers to participate just because of this reason. Context: lack of co-ed schools (sometimes classes in the same school) for boys and girls.
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Sustainability

- Advocacy – part of national curriculum.
 - Keeping decision-makers and media involved throughout the project.
 - Volunteerism – by schools.
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Thank you!
