



"International Guidance on Sexuality Education" UNESCO 2018

Analysis and contribution offered by the CCIC

Considering on the one hand UNESCO's missions and on the other hand the principles of the CCIC collaboration with UNESCO, a working group composed of Catholic-inspired NGOs members of the CCIC platform, as well as friendly NGOs, took the initiative to review this UNESCO document issued in March 2018 (French version in December.)

This working group agreed on the following text with reactions and recommendations, more specifically aimed at CCIC members, a specific version having been sent to the relevant UNESCO sectors and another version to the Forum of Catholic-inspired NGOs in Rome.

Education and especially the person integral education provided in Catholic educational institutions has a major role to play in achieving a balanced perception of men and women in an inclusive society.

Respecting young people means considering them in all aspects of their person: physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual. Sexuality reflects all these dimensions. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, it must therefore be the subject firstly of an informal education within the family unit by parents and then be complemented by a formal education, introduced to parents in the school environment.

Such education also has an important role to play in raising awareness that women and men, boys and girls, perform functions of equal importance and value. Different cultures traditionally assign girls and boys certain differentiated roles. It is worthwhile questioning them to assess their relevance in different fields (education, trades, work sharing, rights, life transmission...). This questioning cannot conceal the biological diversity between women and men. Discernment is essential to avoid entering into an ideological and political instrumentalization of the concept of gender to formulate new norms.

Indeed, « *relationship beings* », men and women participate in the construction of society in their roles as parents, citizens and actors in the development of their country and humanity. Similarly, they share equal responsibilities, as well as equal rights, by virtue of their common belonging to human nature.

However, in some countries, the temporary and repetitive exclusion from school of girls who have their period, and the often permanent dropout of those who are pregnant, de facto lead to a lack of access to education that is detrimental to their future and that of their community. The need for education is equally relevant for both boys and girls. The construction of their personality, their life paths and their responsibilities are closely linked. It is important to consider what societies gain from promoting quality sex education, in particular the benefits in terms of reducing poverty.

It should also be noted that populations suffering from social or legal discrimination, moral or educational poverty, or caste confinement are unlikely to escape exclusion. They are unable to obtain help and support as they lack the appropriate influential relational network and sufficient financial resources. Their only chance, whether for boys or girls, is to access to a comprehensive quality education, a path and factor of peace for societies.

To develop greater inclusiveness, the UN Agenda, in its Statement of Objectives for Sustainable Development (SDGs 2030) promotes, inter alia, the "International Guidance on Sexuality Education" (UNESCO March 2018). In order for this very rich initiative to bear more fruits, it would be advisable for it to :

Recognize the vital need for each person to love and be loved, in the long term and stability, which is of a different order than the practice of "safe sex" linked to hedonism and dependent on the bio-economy (commodification of the body, "bio-industry", pornography industry...);

To move away from an educational approach that would only be a behavioural approach, and to deal with the question of the significance of the body, the value of commitment and of a life project;

Promote and develop comprehensive sexual education: physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual, for boys and girls, adapted to each age of life;

Educate girls and boys in the esteem of their sexualised body, received from conception. Accompany, with enlightened discernment, young and older in their possible questions about their sexual orientation;

Keep in mind that Science has its own field of validity, just as sociology has its own perimeters. None of these disciplines says everything about humans. Therefore, discernment should be used to avoid the use of programmes that "promote personal identity and emotional intimacy that are radically cut off from the biological diversity between men and women". Young people are likely to be deeply troubled, if not manipulated, when these theories are presented to them by teachers in whom they place their trust (1);

Welcoming and engaging in dialogue with sexual minorities is positive. Speaking in truth also means addressing the biological consequences for the people concerned, such as the legal consequences for society as a whole: entitlement to a child and rights of the child; commodification of the body of surrogate mothers; exploitation of the poorest women; fictitious filiations...

Systematically include parents and legal guardians in the educational process (UDHR art. 26 and International Convention on the Rights of the Child art. 3, 2). Thus, educating a generation by involving parents would make it possible to establish an intergenerational dialogue within families that would guarantee mutual trust;

Take into account the degree of maturity of the "learners" (different from their age of civil status) and the surrounding cultural pressures, consequently set up very small working groups in which , the discomfort being overcome, the modesty of each would be respected;

Become aware that there may be a power or power relationship within the context of sexual intercourse. The negotiation for the consent of the partners would then neither be free nor balanced;

Combat the trivialization, representation, commodification and instrumentalization of the sexual act that have destructive consequences for the person, especially for children now exposed very early, without parental control, to pornography distributed over the Internet.

Be vigilant, in communication, to ideological biases presented as objective or scientific criteria;

Develop dialogue and ethical reflection on the consequences of individual and societal choices concerning filiation and parenthood;

Provide accurate information on the beauty and responsibility of the transmission of life by physically and psychologically mature man and woman, as an essential component of this education. Humans have the singular characteristic of being conscious and free to receive and transmit life as a gift. Therefore, it would be preferable to use the term procreation rather than reproduction.

In conclusion, in order to reconcile Science and Wisdom (2), shouldn't quality education (SDG4), which includes sexuality education, be committed to:

Take into account all the dimensions of the person, « *relationship being* », and in particular his/her universal aspiration to love and be loved.

Also take into account an aspiration:

- to more peace in order to be able to build one's life in self-esteem and respect for others;
- to live stable relationships over time, because young people know the constructive value of the family unit regardless of the difficulties encountered;
- to ensure that medical technological powers are allies of care at all stages of life, the omnipotence of medicine being put into perspective;
- to put Man back in his right place: a « *relationship being* ».

We are aiming at a generation on the way to its accomplishment, capable of responsible choices and with a taste for life!

For we know that "The way in which man devotes himself to building his future depends on his conception of himself and his destiny. It is at this level that the Church's specific and decisive contribution to true culture resides' (3).

Note 1: "He created them man and woman" Congregation for Catholic Education 2019
http://www.educatio.va/content/dam/cec/Documenti/19_999_FRANCESE.pdf

Note 2: Jacques Maritain on 06/11/1947 at the Second General Conference of UNESCO.

Note 3: Centesimus annus 51 a

Paris, June 26, 2019

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FAFCE: Federation of Catholic Family Associations Europe

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