

Expert's thought-
ALEX KAKOOZA, EDUCATION MINISTRY PS

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POLICY/PRACTICE

ESSENTIALS AND ALTERNATIVE IDEAS



The government will soon roll out sexuality education in schools, something some stakeholders say will curb recent rise in sex-related offences in schools. FILE PHOTO

Why sexuality education is timely

Sexuality education has been a controversial issue in Uganda over the past years. It was previously banned but now with a new framework which will classify learners according to age, the primary goal may be close to being achieved.

BY DORCUS MURUNGI
dmurungi@ug.nationmedia.com

In 2016, the ministry of Gender announced a ban on comprehensive sexuality education in Uganda. But lawmakers worried that the values, practices and behaviour taught by sexuality education go against Ugandan beliefs, customs and aspirations.

However, recently the Education ministry approved the national sexuality education framework, a guide that schools are supposed to use while teaching sexuality education.

Among the reasons the Education minister, Janet Museveni, gave for introducing this framework is the fact that Uganda is experiencing significant sexual and reproductive health challenges such as high cases of teenage pregnancies, early marriages HIV and gender-based violence in schools hence threatening the right and access to education.

"The Ministry of Education and Sports is committed to promote sexuality education as a very important component of school health education programmes. This will empower young people with information and life skills that are life appropriate, culturally and religious sensitive so as to enable children make safe and healthy life choices," the Education minister's message read in part.

According to Alex Kakooza, the Education ministry permanent secretary, this

THE BAN

In 2016, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social development banned comprehensive sexuality education in schools. The ministry's ban came after the discovery of sexual reproductive health books in more than 100 schools that included "sexual orientation and a non-negative portrayal of masturbation."

framework seeks to create an over-arching national direction for providing sexuality education in the formal education setting for young people, specific to the Ugandan context.

He explains that sexuality education is essential in equipping young people with information about sexuality so that they are able to make healthy choices about their sexual and reproductive health.

Implementation

Deogracious Ssekakoni, the deputy head teacher Seeta Junior School, says sexuality is very broad. To him, this broadness implies that schools should be sensitive while introducing these topics to their learners.

He notes that some learners are young and might get traumatised by some difficult sexuality concepts. He advises teachers to always be mindful of the age brackets when introducing these topics.

VOICES



"The good thing is that the Education ministry has regulated how children of different age brackets will be given this information. It would have been hazardous if they were introducing topics that are inappropriate for some children's ages."

EMMANUEL MUGARURA,
HEAD TEACHER KAMPALA
SMART SCHOOL, NTINDA



"Many parents have neglected their children. They do not spare time to talk to them about sexuality, making them learn some of the naughty behaviour from inappropriate channels. It is good they will now be taught through proper means."

RHITAH KIRUNGU, STATE
ATTORNEY

However, Ssekakoni says it is a good idea to teach sexuality even right from nursery level because it will help children get familiar with the concept from the right sources.

"Unlike in the past where children would not mature so fast, some children nowadays even start menstruating while in Primary Four. If they are ignorant about sexuality, they may get disturbed and consider themselves abnormal," he notes.

Ssekakoni also says teaching sexuality helps a child grow with an open mind, well aware of the dangers involved with misusing some of their body organs.

Parents' involvement

Despite teachers having the sole responsibility at schools, parents have a bigger role to play. And George Tinka Byamukama, the head teacher Buhinga Primary School, says the concept of sexuality should start right from homes. He says some parents share rooms with their children, which compromises children's morals.

"Some parents even have intercourse when the children are listening and sometimes watching. This has created a generation of children that know more than they should about sex," he observes.

He, therefore, says teaching sexuality will be effective if the parents are sensitised on how to deal with it while at home.

"If a child can be well versed on what their parents use specific body parts for at the age of five, then a teacher may not do much if they introduce a topic of naming body parts to these children," he notes.

If Ugandans go by the ministry's plan, this month the framework will be unveiled. We wait to see if this will be a step in the right direction.

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