

**AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
MODEL UNITED NATIONS
UNESCO**



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Introduction of the chairs

Berber de Lange



Hello, my name is Berber de Lange. I am a first-year student at Amsterdam University College. My major is in social sciences and my main interests are International Relations, Politics, Economics and Human Rights. I am from the Netherlands and have been living here all my life. I have always enjoyed participating in MUN's and I am really looking forward to the AUCMUN. See you guys in April!

Aditej Nair

Hello, my name is Aditej Nair, but you can call me Adi. I was born in India, but I've spent most of my life between Singapore and the Netherlands. I am an incoming economics student at the University of Amsterdam. Outside of my academics I enjoy talking about politics, philosophy and artists like MF DOOM, Matisse & Kafka. I have been participating in MUNs since the 8th grade and I am really looking forward to being your Chair alongside Berber in April!





INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

Mission of the Council:

Created in the aftermath of two world wars, the primary mission of UNESCO since its inception in 1945 has been to strive for world peace and lasting stability through international cooperation within the realms of education, arts, sciences, and cultural exchange.

Over the past seven decades, UNESCO has worked towards this mission by sponsoring programmes that seek to improve literacy and advance education in the natural and social sciences as well as campaigning for projects that protect independent media and press freedoms.

With time, the mission and activities of the organisation have also extended to the establishment of World Heritage Sites, which provide landmarks or areas of cultural and natural importance with legal protection under the international convention of the UNESCO. In more recent years the organisation has worked towards eliminating the global digital divide.

Functioning of the Council:

The [General Conference](#) of UNESCO is made up of representatives of the member states. When the General Conference meets every two years, attended by the representatives of the member states, associate members, observers for non-member states, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and foundations.

The General Conference is where the policies and its main objectives are decided upon. The general policy of the Organisation will be discussed and a program for the upcoming four years will be adopted as well as the Medium-Term Strategy of the Organisation. The two years budget submitted by the Member States and [the Secretariat](#) will be adopted. The Members of [the Executive Board](#) will be elected and every four years the [Director-General](#) will be appointed.

During the General Assembly of the Member States, the recommendations that have been submitted will be examined. The heads of the delegations will take part in the General Assembly debating the general policy.

TOPIC

The Implementation of Sex Education in Schools

Consequences, Implementation and LGBTQ+

Introduction to the topic

The vision of UNESCO is predicated upon the belief that peace is created by “intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity”¹. One of the tools to achieve this is education. In this light, one of the missions of UNESCO is to ensure that every human has access to education. UNESCO believes education is a human right. With a mandate to cover all aspects of education UNESCO covers themes such as global citizenship, sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, health, HIV and AIDS, technical skills and vocational skills. Therefore sex education and its implementation and consequences is an important topic for UNESCO. During the AUCMUN 2022 we will be discussing the access to sex education, how to implement it, the topics should be a part of CSE as well as the consequences of the implementation of sex education across cultural and national borders. The delegates will also be asked to consider the inclusion of LGBTQ+ sex education.

“UNESCO assists member states in developing high-quality and inclusive education systems through building their capacities to design and implement education policy.”²

¹ <https://www.unesco.org/en/brief>

² <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/all-themes>

Reasoning and causes

Acknowledging that education is an important factor for keeping peace around the world according to UNESCO, it is one of the missions of UNESCO. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (ASD), UNESCO emphasised including sexuality education as part of quality education in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4. This [Comprehensive Sexuality Education](#) creates accurate and age-appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills aiming at positive relationships, health, well-being, respect for human rights and gender equality³. CSEd is according to UNESCO, central to health, well-being and development of our youth. It teaches young people how to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections/diseases. It also inculcates values of tolerance, mutual respect and nonviolence in relationships. By receiving CSE young people adopt more knowledge, a higher self-esteem and self-efficacy. It improves gender and social norms. It brings forth safer sexual behaviors while not hastening sexual activity. Still there are young people not receiving CSE, leaving young people at a higher risk of contracting HIV. Adolescent girls and women are affected by gender inequality which further limits their access to education. UNESCO acknowledges that in order for CSE to have the desired effect it must be appropriate in its content and be in accordance with specific content and an attention to the needs of young people. This requires that the CSE include information and considerable discussion on gender discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, gender identity, sexual orientation, STD/STI transmission, and safe sex practices along the lines of contraception and consent. Parents and education board must also be involved in the implementation and discussion of CSE in order for it to be effective⁴.

The Ministers of Education and Health from 20 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa have worked together to create [the Eastern and Southern Africa Ministerial Commitment](#) which was reaffirmed in 2016 and in December 2021⁵. The section 'Solutions currently being implemented' will further expand on the solutions agreed upon in this commitment. In this section we will discuss the challenges signalled to be yet unresolved. Chiefly, the inequalities in education still persist, the number of adolescents not completing primary school or progressing to secondary school has only increased as a result of COVID-19. The delivery of the range of content and the quality of said delivery has remained weak. The accurate and comprehensive knowledge of HIV only increased by 4% since 2015. The high rates of GBV remain the same, affecting the health and wellbeing of young people and educational outcomes, resulting in increased rates of EUP, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections as well as psychological distress. This affects young people with disabilities significantly more. Adolescent pregnancies have not significantly declined, moreover the lack of access to family planning for adolescent girls and young women has not changed, while child marriage still remains prevalent in the highly conservative, underdeveloped areas of this region. Spreading information and awareness surrounding menstrual health remains a challenge, standing in the way of fulfillment of Sexual

³ <https://en.unesco.org/news/africas-leaders-strongly-reaffirm-importance-education-well-being-and-sexuality-education>

⁴ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/health-education/hiv-sexuality-education>

⁵ <https://www.youngpeopletoday.org/about>

and Reproductive Health and Rights of those that menstruate⁶.

The [Education 2030 Framework for Action](#) and [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) both highlight the importance of inclusion and equity by defining it as “the laying foundation for quality education⁷”. This importance is further emphasised in the [UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education](#) as well as in other international human rights treaties by prohibiting exclusion from or limited access to education based on socially-ascribed or perceived differences. In order to achieve inclusion, the development and implementation of inclusive educational programmes and policies is needed. UNESCO therefore promotes inclusive educational systems, working together with governments and partners to create inclusion to and within education⁸. This means it is important to consider the role of LGBTQ+ sex education within the sex education curriculum.

Regional & national stances:

Africa: The majority of sex education programs on the African continent focus on stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS. These programs which are made in partnership with various international NGOs and the WHO are often inhibited in their efforts by the Mexico City policy, a policy instituted during the Reagan presidency and upheld by each following republican administration. The policy stipulates that in order to receive federal funding organisations/programs must agree to neither promote nor perform abortions as a means of family planning. The failures of the Mexico City policy in curbing the spread of HIV were highlighted when the suspension of the policy under the Clinton administration resulted in a drastic fall in the cases of novel HIV transmissions in countries like Uganda.

Although the majority of the continent has access to a comprehensive HIV/STI avoidance sex education, other important areas of comprehensive sex education is often briefly touched upon or completely omitted from the curriculum. Religion and cultural norms are often the central reasons behind the omission of these topics from discussion around CSE. In countries like Uganda, where more than a quarter of young girls aged between 15-19 are either pregnant or have already given birth, we see proposals to include discussions about safe sex or to distribute contraceptives amongst teenagers repeatedly get declined by the Ministry of Health on religious or moral grounds claiming that such proposals would encourage promiscuity and increase abortions.

The curricula in countries like Kenya, Malawi and Lesotho either poorly address or completely omit the discussions of issues such as child marriage. In South Africa, sexual abuse or exploitation is often missing

⁶ https://www.youngpeopletoday.org/_files/ugd/364f97_b99daa2ed6c846bda782eb5c443130ee.pdf

⁷ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/inclusion-in-education>

⁸ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/inclusion-in-education>

from programs in spite of the nation having one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world.

Asia: The level and development of sex education programs in the largest and most populous continent varies significantly, each influenced by the individual countries' cultural and religious norms as well as its economic development and population distribution.

India, the second most populous country in the world has a relatively underdeveloped sex education program. This problem stems from the fact that the open discussion of and around sex is often considered taboo and perverse, this problem is worsened by the widespread political belief that a sex education curriculum that is not solely based on abstinence will corrupt the youth and lead to promiscuity.

As recently as 2009, multiple states had bans on sex education programming. Most notably Maharashtra (wealthiest Indian state by GDP) had imposed the ban on the claim that "sex education" was a western construct that was forced upon India in order to increase condom sales. During the same period the idea of imprisoning teachers who taught sex education for up to two years was floated but ultimately rejected in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

But there has been a shift towards tolerance of sex education policies in recent years. In April 2018, the Ministry of Health published a set of national guidelines for sex education in public schools, marking the first time that the issue had been addressed on a federal level.

Even in highly economically developed nations like Singapore, regressive views on sex and sexuality take precedent. In February of 2022, a letter from the Ministry of Education (MOE) to parents of students regarding sexuality education in schools highlighted the nation's approach to discussing the topic, the MOE clarifying in the letter that its main goal is to "encourage healthy, heterosexual marriages and stable nuclear family units". While the curriculum in Singapore adequately discusses issues like the development of reproductive organs and sexual feelings, it fails to adequately discuss issues around sexual relationships, instead advocating for abstinence rather than education. This failure can be clearly seen in the MOE letter which states that "Casual sex can harm and hurt you and your loved ones" while claiming abstinence before marriage as the best protection against STIs and unwanted pregnancies.

Europe: While still lacking in some areas of discussion, European nations have measurably more comprehensive sexual education programs relative to their African, Asian and American counterparts.

The Netherlands is known to have one of the most robust and comprehensive systems of sex education in the world. Since 2012, The Netherlands has followed a tiered age-appropriate system of teaching sex education, which starts with students as young as four and continues up into secondary school.

The curriculum in The Netherlands begins with teaching Dutch children about self-image and the stereotypes of the genders, this is followed by learning focused on love and the personal boundaries of other

people in the latter half of primary school. The purpose of introducing such topics at a young age is to get children to open up and feel comfortable talking about issues like sex and sexuality without the fear of being judged. The Dutch also include information and discussions on masturbation, homosexuality, and sexual pleasure, the cumulative purpose of this being to provide adolescents with the knowledge as well as emotional capacity to understand their own sexuality and sexual development. As a result of such a comprehensive sex education, The Netherlands has one of the lowest rates of novel transmissions of HIV/STDs as well as teenage pregnancy rates in the world.

Most countries follow a curriculum similar to the Dutch, with certain variations accommodating for religious or cultural norms. Some countries such as Sweden & Germany choose to provide additional knowledge about oral and anal sex as well as educating students on recognizing and reporting sexual violence and child abuse. In other more religious countries like Poland & Scotland, there are alternate government programs for more conservative Catholic schools, such programs encourage children to abstain from sex until marriage and rarely cover the topic of contraception or abortions.

Americas: As of 2019, Latin America (comprising of Central & Southern America) is the only region in the world where the rates of adolescent pregnancies are not declining, this being a direct result of many nations within the region not having concrete curriculums for sex education or being run by governments that oppose sex education due to religious or political positions. Further up north in the United States, abstinence based sex education remains the most common as the propagation of sex education is dependent on the individual state where approaches to sex education are dependant on state laws and independent school districts, thus making it hard for NGOs and programs to encourage a CSE curriculum since there is no central authority through which legislation can be passed.

Some countries in Latin America are even choosing to regress toward more conservative sex education programs. As recently as early 2020, Jair Bolsonaro, the incumbent president of Brazil voiced his support for moving back to an abstinence-only sex education curriculum. Brazil's health ministry has since proceeded to rewrite educational health booklets removing information detailing female sexual organs and how to use a condom. Bolsonaro's vocal support for federal legislation to limit the level of sex education in classrooms could prove very detrimental to Brazil, which was finally seeing the benefits of the STD & AIDs program it had introduced in 2003. The country's teenage pregnancy rate has also dropped over the past few year (while remaining above the global average), and the current government's stance on sex education stands to undo years of progress.

As of March 2021, of the 50 states in the USA, only 28 require sex education to be a part of the school curriculum, and of those 28 only 18 are legally required to be medically accurate. In multiple different cases across different states, educators have used outdated statistics and disproven studies to encourage abstinence until marriage, infact 28 states necessitate that abstinence must be the focal point of what is taught.

Moreover, 19 states require that the curriculum emphasise that sex should only occur in marriage. Much like the abstinence-based programs in developed Asian countries, there is little to no discussion on sexuality or gender identity, 5 states even legally require that only negative information be provided on homosexuality, while placing positive emphasis on heterosexuality. But it is important to highlight that there also a growing grassroots campaign led by young legislators to introduce a CSE standard on a federal level to bring the level of sex education in the US up to its European counterparts.

Solutions currently being implemented

In the ESA commitment the goal is to reach 95% of adolescents and young people with good-quality, age appropriate, culturally relevant and evidence-based sexuality education. The ESA aims to achieve this by integrating appropriate SRHR services into the Universal Health Coverage packages, implementing a functional multi-sector framework between sexuality education programs for in or out of school youth as well as SRH and psychosocial services, laws and regulations to guarantee access for young people to SR healthcare, information and education, youth representative in policy- and decision-making processes⁹.

UNESCO together with, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and WHO have made an [International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education](#), outlining the key concepts, topics and learning objectives guiding the development of children and adolescents between 5 and 18+. UNESCO in a government dialogue marked the progress made by the 2013 ESA Commitment. UNESCO also has a global team of health and education specialists to support the implementation of CSE in collaboration with governments, bilateral partners, civil society organisations and young people. UNAIDS is the global AIDS response, co-sponsored by UNESCO¹⁰.

Concluding remarks

There is a measurably large disparity in the access to comprehensive sex education across the globe, the responsibility of bridging this gap falls upon UNESCO and its member states. It is important for the member states to consider how to overcome religious and cultural barriers in implementing CSE around the world. The central goal of encouraging a broader curriculum of sex education is to stem the issues of STD transmission, unsafe sex, sexual violence and teenage pregnancies at their roots by providing awareness and education as to why these problems arise to adolescents so that they have the knowledge and tools to combat such issues. In addition to the question of spreading CSE, the committee should look into improving access to contraception given its integral role along with the institution of CSE in developing the sexual health and integrity of the global community.

⁹ <https://en.unesco.org/news/africas-leaders-strongly-reaffirm-importance-education-well-being-and-sexuality-education>

¹⁰ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/health-education/hiv-sexuality-education>

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Appendix: Abbreviations

1. **UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
2. **HIV/AIDS:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus.
3. **LGBTQ+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+; + refers to additional marginalised and underrepresented sexual orientations and genders.
4. **CSE:** Comprehensive Sex Education.
5. **GBV:** Gender Based Violence .
6. **STD/STI:** Sexually Transmitted Disease/ Sexually Transmitted Infections.
7. **ESA:** Eastern & Southern Africa.
8. **SRHR:** Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights.