



AFRICA REGIONAL SEXUALITY
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Sexuality Education in Nigeria: Evolution, Challenges and Prospects

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Introduction

Ancient theories and ideologies about sexuality, circled around the power of dreams, the individual as a sexual being, the power of self cultivation and processes of essentialism.

Although the concept of sexuality can be dated back to our ancestors, who laid much emphasis on the care of self and the act of procreation, emerging population and health concerns have led to the re-thinking and re-identification of the relationship between sexuality and human activity and behaviour.

Invariably, the concept of sexuality has undergone many changes within the past forty years. The emergence of the sexual revolution has also impacted greatly on sexual orientations, patriarchy, sexual relations, family formations and reproduction.

In recent times, the youth who constitute ages 10-24 and 36.7 per cent of the Nigerian population, are found to be highly vulnerable to antisocial behaviours such as violent crimes, unsafe sexual activities and drug abuse among others. The Nigerian Association for the Promotion of Adolescent Health and Development, (NAPAHD) has also alerted that, an hospital based research has shown that, 80 per cent of patients with abortion complications are adolescents. This assertion was based on the fact that, over 16 per cent of teenage females reported first sexual intercourse by age 15 while 8.3 per cent of boys of age 15 have also had their first encounters. This adolescents' health dilemma has been attributed to their great lack of information and knowledge about the implications of their population behaviour on their sexual health and the general welfare of the nation. In this vain the introduction and institutionalisation of sexuality education became one of the immediate efforts made to address this problem to create awareness about these sexually based problems. The rationale was to acquaint the youth with factual and accurate sexual information about the dimensions of sexual knowledge that will enable them understand and clarify their personal values, improve their sexual knowledge and sexual decision-making and promote their knowledge about how all these interact with socio-cultural and religious factors to affect personal well-being. This set of values sexuality education was set to promote perhaps form part of the motivation for its introduction into the Nigerian educational system. However, in view of the predicament suffered by similar intervention packages such as Population/Family-life Education it is relevant to examine the potentials for success and failure of this nascent subject.

With this backdrop, this paper will examine the origin of the concept of sexuality education, how it evolved in Nigeria and how well it is fairing in Nigeria. In doing this, the paper will highlight on some conceptual perspectives of sexuality education, identify its definition, its content and structure. The prospects and challenges of sexuality education in Nigeria today will also be identified by looking into the relationship between sexuality and; society and culture, socio-economic status, ethics, communication, information, gender and the media.

Conclusions will be drawn and practical ways of moving sexuality education forward in Nigeria will be suggested.

Conceptual Perspective

The following conceptual perspectives guide the discussions presented in this paper. Foucault (1986) asserts that, individualistic attitude is characterised by the absolute value attributed to individual's singularity and by the degree of independence conceded to him vis-à-vis the group and institution he is answerable to; that is, the way a person behaves will depend largely on what he values, the amount of freedom he is allowed and what the society expects of him. The interrelationship of biological, psychological and socio-cultural dimensions determines the total personality of an individual.

Ikpe (2004) postulated that "Sexuality defines the very essence of one's humanity including one's self-image, being male or female, physical looks and reproductive capacity; that is sexuality is a natural part of life. It is about the way we are made, how we feel about ourselves, what roles we play in the society and how we procreate".

Culture as a way of life determines, to a large extent, human behaviour. It is patterned, learned, shared and adaptive and is transmittable from one generation to the other (Basso, 1997). Culture has a way of influencing every thing we do. It can be perpetuated and has the potential to overpower intervention programmes and educational innovations.

Religious and spiritual beliefs influence feelings about morality, sexual behaviour, pre-marital sexual behaviour, adultery, divorce, contraception, abortion and masturbation (Greenberg et al 2000). Sexuality education can be seen as yet another religion which is not necessarily different from what already obtains.

What is Sexuality Education?

Sexuality education has been given various definitions by various schools of thought. AHI (2003) described sexuality education as "a planned process of education that fosters the acquisition of factual information, the formation of positive attitudes, beliefs and values as well as the development of skills to cope with the biological, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual aspects of human sexuality." That is, learning about the anatomy, physiology and bio-chemistry of the sexual response system which determines identity, orientations, thoughts and feelings as influenced by values beliefs, ethics and moral concerns. It is the interactive relationship of these dimensions that describes an individual's total sexuality (SIECUS, 1995). Also, sexuality education teaches us that, religious principles, beliefs, rules and regulations and ethical considerations affect our everyday interactions just as our culture, role models in our families and our friends impact us as well. Sexuality education is simply the art of learning how to conform to a certain art of living by being able to reason, examine and monitor oneself in clearly defined terms.

Origin of Sexuality Education

Sexuality education came into being in different countries at various times. The sexual revolution of the 1800s contributed immensely to the debate of sexual pleasure as an ethical substance which continued to be governed by relations of force, struggle and establishment of dominion. During that period, women started agitating for more debates on issues concerning their sexuality. They questioned and revolted against rules and regulations prohibiting the use of contraceptives and the spread of information about them. The first six to seven decades of that century, saw both males and females beginning to question the concept of virginity and male dominance. Bruess and Greenberg (1994) revealed that, between 35 and 45 per cent of females and 55-65 per cent of males engaged in sexual relationships before marriage at that time.

As far back as 1897 a female Swedish doctor, Karolina Widerstorm, saw the need to educate the young especially the girls about sexual hygiene as a way of informing and protecting them from sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhoea and syphilis which were found to be very common during that period. To her, the idea was that, "if girls got to know in good time how pregnancy came about and how sexually transmitted diseases were spread, they would be better able to protect themselves. In this way girls were considered to be able to take responsibility for the sexual health for boys as well as for themselves" (Lena, 2000). Given the controversial nature of sexuality education at that time, the high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases was used as the basis of introducing sexuality education in the schools. Despite all the positive potentials of sexuality education, the major challenges were what form sexuality should take and at what level it should be introduced in the schools. There was also the problem of methodology. Sexuality education was seen as the gospel of the flesh that could lead to sexual espionage, egoism and revelry among the young. The young recipients of sexuality education were therefore referred to as "victims".

Notwithstanding, serious advocates of sexuality education insisted on driving home the potentials of sexuality education such as building new standards and removing deceptions between people and by the dawn of the 1900s, several events had occurred which changed the way people perceived sexuality hence sexuality education was introduced in Swedish schools. Talking to the young about sexual life became less controversial among the Swedish.

As women became empowered with education, their number in the workforce increased and this made them assume a visibly significant part of the society. They appeared more aggressive in their demands for equality in all spheres of human endeavour. Overall, they became more active partners in sexual activity. These "new" women, according to Murstein (1974), wanted freedom similar to that of the men. The rise in the status of women in America during that period also enhanced discussions on sexuality issues. There was a significant effect on the receptivity to the subject of sexuality by the people.

In Nigeria as well, traditional forms of sexuality education existed in kinship systems and coming-of-age ceremonies where the youth were tutored about manhood and womanhood. Its essence was purely biological and culture specific. There were various methods of contraceptives which included virginity, herbs, breastfeeding, the ring, and abstinence; most of which were strictly meant for the married and kept as a secret. Issues on sexually transmitted diseases were also of great concern but were barely discussed while the contraction of them was a big shame and stigma. The socialization process of the child remained strictly the only way of acquainting the child with issues like family relationships and public manners with very little room for self-expression.

As school education expanded, people began to question moral view points about virginity and abstinence and wondered about the credibility of rigid moral standards and myths that surrounded sexual issues.

The fast pace of urbanization encouraged rapid improvement in communication, transportation which had tremendous effect on sexuality issues in Nigeria. The use of telephones and letters helped to promote interpersonal relationships. The print media intensified and popularised the notion of flirting, dating and a variety of sexual behaviours. Intimate relationships developed from social activities such as dancing, singing and local drama sketches. In spite of these changes, information on sexuality were still kept in the dark, not openly discussed, and was perceived as dirty or evil particularly by religious leaders who often viewed morality as being determined by a higher order from above (Adepoju, 2005).

The mundane views about early childhood sexuality was kept intact until recently when it came to light that early childhood experiences are related to sexuality. Today, conservative morality about sexuality is beginning to diminish with people gradually coming to terms with the fact that sexual knowledge can serve as a great weapon against ignorance.

Evolution of Sexuality Education in Nigeria

Initial efforts to introduce sexuality issues in the Nigerian educational system was done through the introduction and institutionalisation of population education which was considered as a potential way of tackling the problem of rapid population growth and its consequences for socio-economic development in the country. The need to inform young people about the causes and consequences of uncontrolled rapid population growth has become paramount hence the National Population Policy of 1988 which was recently revised and officially launched in February 2005, was put in place with emphasis on population education as a potential vehicle to translate the population policy into action.

Also, among health and educational professionals in Nigeria the feeling is widespread that the health of the adolescents is at risk. This burgeoning adolescent group who constitute more than 12 per cent of the population of Nigeria and whose number are expected to rise sharply over the years are often prone to unplanned sex, unwanted sex, unsafe abortion, sexual coercion, sexual

violence, sexually transmitted infections and even HIV because they are uninformed, or poorly informed, about the implications of their reproductive behaviour and health risks especially from under-age sexual practices and other anti-social practices. Over the years, the federal government, donor agencies and non-governmental agencies have put forward initiatives to address population problems and issues. The Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) have been involved in curriculum and instructional package development and teacher training for school-based population and family-life programmes.

Drawing from practical experiences, the Directors of National Education Programmes in African countries drew up general principles upon which African population and family-life education programmes was based, as follows:

1. the contribution which population education can bring to the socio-economic development of the community and the nation;
2. the importance of both individual decision-making on population matters, and the role of the family in collective decision making
3. the importance of understanding the social and cultural context in which population education contents are to be integrated;
4. the fact that low rates of school enrolment and high rates of drop-outs should lead to greater recognition of out-of-school programmes; and
5. the need to sensitise the decision-makers in Africa on their countries' population situation and problems (UNESCO, 1985).

Udo and Viederman (1979) argued that the definition of population education should include components such as:

1. Population education as a part of a total social learning process which can assist learners to better regulate their lives and their environment.
2. Population education, being a problem-centred process, could enable learners to define their own and their communities' population-related problems.
3. Population education is concerned uniquely with the population interactions and inter-relationships between the individual and the communities in which he/she lives.
4. Population education is oriented towards the improvement of the quality of life of both individuals and the society, both now and in the future.

Given these principles, a general definition of population education was formulated as an educational programme designed to create awareness and understanding of population issues directly related to social, economic and cultural development of the individual, the family and the nation; to enable informed decision-making on population matters in order to contribute more effectively towards the amelioration of socio-economic and cultural welfare of the individual, the family and the nation (UNESCO, 1985).

The evolution of sexuality education and its introduction in Nigerian schools came about when it became apparent that there was, as there is, an urgent need to address adolescents' reproductive health, reproductive rights and sexuality issues. The need to prepare the adolescents for their adulthood roles that conform to contemporary life styles has become paramount and success was seen to depend greatly on basic education and information on health care and positive relationships provided the adolescents. In tune with Karolina Widerstorm, such education could empower young women to have a greater control over their sexuality and reproduction to the benefit of social and economic aspects of their lives. It also has the potential to respond to overall life situation of the adolescents, address their holistic well-being and help them achieve their full potential.

The success of the efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria lies in strong political support and the continued strong commitment, team work and skilfulness of prevention teams of donor agencies, NGOS and projects such as The Vision Project and the African Regional Sexuality Resource Centre housed under the Action Health Incorporated in Nigeria.

In recent times, the Action Health Incorporated (AHI) has been in the frontline of NGOs complementing government's efforts in raising awareness about adolescent health issues and setting a new direction for adolescent sexuality education in Nigeria by building on lessons from the past success and constraints, and appreciating the present potentials of sexuality education in strengthening national development efforts for a brighter future. AHI has viewed sexuality education as an educational process which provides for an articulated and practical study of the various dimensions of human sexuality with the aim of developing in the individual a more rational attitude and responsible behaviour towards improving the quality of life of the individual now and in the future. To borrow the words of International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) it is, "an education process designed to assist young people in their physical, social, emotional and moral development as they prepare for adulthood, marriage, parenthood and ageing, as well as their social relationship in the socio-cultural context of family and society" (IPPF, 1987)

A cursory review of these principles and definitions demonstrates in clear terms the relationship between Population Education and Sexuality Education. Although the objectives of the two concepts are basically to create awareness

and promote understanding of population issues directly related to social, economic and cultural development, sexuality education seeks further to promote proper development of personality through the acquisition of factual knowledge.

The rationale for sexuality education includes;

1. Taking responsibility for sexual health
2. Building new morality and removing falsity among people
3. Preparing adolescents for adulthood roles
4. Helping adolescents to achieve their full potentials
5. Providing sexual knowledge that can serve as weapon against ignorance.

Content of Sexuality Education.

Traditionally, sexuality education drew its content from social demography, human ecology, family life and sex education. Details of these contents and the areas of emphasis varied between, and sometimes within, countries in response to the particular requirements of individual cultures and population situations. In most cases, sexuality concepts were basically meant to prevent early pregnancy and disease.

At the beginning, there were difficulties in determining the content of sexuality education, the way it could be adopted and how it could be taught. Selection and presentation of contents relating to sexual behaviour posed great problems. Although sex education is generally considered as important, a number of its content areas were highly controversial and turbulent whenever they were associated with cultural and religious issues.

In order to apply the most useful concept of sex education to sexuality education, some countries embraced the participatory approach, others chose rotary methods whereby learners were expected to memorise the facts in the hope that it would in some ways lead to behaviour change. Conscious efforts were made to exclude sexual/sensual matters hence the concept of sexuality was used as a broad knowledge base to provide contents for sexuality education. Issues such as homosexuality, contraception and abortion were potentially inflammatory and were kept away.

The practical experience countries have had in introducing sexuality education is leading to a new way of perceiving sexual contents and their appropriateness, just as the upsurge of adolescents' health problems in Nigeria has led to a new way of perceiving adolescents' reproductive health information in the country.

Given the interactive nature of the subject of sexuality, its content ranges from;

- Human growth and development,
- Relationships,
- Life skills,
- Sexual attitude and behaviour,
- Sexual health,
- Society and culture.

Each of these content areas has its various sub-divisions. It is worthwhile to note that, although other intervention programmes such as population education, environmental education, and family life education share some important contents (as in sex education), sexuality education is a different field. Its conceptualization corresponds to sexuality issues and problems and it is meant to contribute to their solution. Therefore, the contents of sexuality education respond to the specific sexuality needs that emerge from population issues such as the adolescent sexual health problems and problems of acculturation that are plaguing Nigeria today. Sexuality education in Nigeria is a huge task, though it has many prospect, it also faces many challenges.

Challenges / Prospects of Sexuality Education in Nigeria

Sexuality education like other intervention programmes in Nigeria has suffered many setbacks. Its prospects and challenges are found in the various dimensions of sexuality education as highlighted below;

Society, Culture and Sexuality

Interactively, complex sets of biological, psychological and socio-cultural issues influence the human sexuality. The way we feel about our worth, the way we think and our body image play important roles in our sexuality (Ikpe, 2004). Most of the time, we judge our looks and behaviour with what our culture dictates. For example, the idea of what is attractive with respect to height, weight, hairstyle and skin tone are all socio- cultural ideas.

Society and culture go hand in hand. Society can simply be defined as a group of people living in an area, regenerating its members through reproduction and sharing the same culture as in knowledge, habits, belief, art, morals, law and custom. Both society and culture are dynamic and prone to change. The goal and significance of what is and could become of the population (i.e. people) in the future occupy a very vital place in the philosophy and the history of traditional African societies (Nigeria in particular), hence, great emphasis is placed on the importance of life, the eternity of the human being and the immortality of the community. These are constantly preached and reinforced through family formations, kinship systems and initiation ceremonies.

The perpetuation of each family, clan or line of descendants or community is of major concern, hence all political, economic, cultural, spiritual and ideological efforts are geared towards this end. Given this scenario, it can be deduced that sexuality is one of the major concerns of traditional societies and that the ideology on which traditional sexual education was based was biological which perfectly corresponded with the then prevailing socio-economic conditions.

The idea of social constructionism, from which sexual identities and experiences are acquired, is influenced and modified by the ever changing social environment (Tiefer, 1995). That is, society and culture control both the biological and

psychological components of sexuality in the sense that people acquire and assemble meanings, skills and values from other persons around them (Foucault, 1986). Indications of how to think, talk, act or comport ourselves begin during the early period of socialising among family members and progress through the circle and network of friends and schools. In this way, cultural and social issues consistently affect our thoughts and actions.

Sexuality education debunks ideologies and social constructs that regard certain words as dirty and wrong, that certain parts of the body are unmentionable and that sometimes we should hide our feelings and other myths and taboos that influence the human sexuality negatively. In Nigeria cultural heterogeneity, multiculturalism, ethics, social status and other traditions perpetuate rules and norms that affect the perceptions of parents, teachers and others and therefore serve as catalysts against the successful implementation of sexuality education in the country.

Religion and Sexuality

It has often been said that, behaviour comes out of belief systems hence many people have equated sexuality education with some form of religion or gospel that has emanated as a response to adolescent's sexual health problems.

Religion plays an important role in individual's sexuality as its principles, regulations and practices affect our everyday interactions. Wilson and Filsger (1986) emphasised that religious beliefs influence sexual attitudes and behaviour. Greenberg, Bruess and Haffner (2000) opined that religious and spiritual beliefs influence feelings about morality, sexual behaviour, premarital sexual behaviour, adultery, divorce, contraception and abortion.

Some of the positive impact of religion on sexuality have been said to include assertiveness, postponement of age of first sexual experience, diminished pre- and post-marital sexual permissiveness, responsible relationships in marriage and parenthood. Indeed, according to Laumann (1994), conservative or traditional beliefs exert strong impact on sexual experience for as Fazl (1993) noted, "Islam endorses any form of beneficial knowledge which must be acquired by every Muslim male or female and also recognises the dynamic of change in human societies as long as human reason is not placed at par or above divine wisdom". That is, God is the source of all knowledge hence any subject of study must be founded in the parameters set by and through revelation.

It is also believed that Christianity is the friend of government because; it is the only religion that changes the heart.

Invariably, religion continues to pose a daunting challenge to the successful implementation of sexuality education in Nigeria. While Christianity is seen as less rigid and highly adaptable to societal change, Islam is very rigid and not receptive to any subject whose content is at variance with its ideals. The idea of

intermingling of people of the opposite sex, half-naked dressing and female assertiveness is seriously frowned at by Islam. Christianity tolerates the idea of protective sex as a measure of avoiding “sinful” abortions, but frowns at masturbation and covetousness.

The Islamic injunction believes that both the Islamic moral philosophy and the social system of Islam have adequately taken care of the sexual problems beyond the conception and scope of sexuality education. It is strongly believed that religious knowledge, be it Islam or Christianity helps children to cultivate religious attitude towards life and orientate them towards self purification, self actualisation and socialisation. Both Christianity and Islam do not see the need for sexuality education in Nigeria.

Socio-economic Status and Sexuality

The problem of low self-esteem and self worthlessness due to poor socio-economic background and lack of sexuality information has been identified by sexuality educators. It is generally believed that, the socio-economic status of individuals greatly influences their sexuality and that, persons of low income status often think and act differently from middle class individuals in matters affecting their sexuality. Low income status people are prone to becoming pregnant and bearing children at an earlier age. In certain societies, such people showcase high parity and large family size as a means of obtaining high status among their peers (Michael et al, 1994). This status problems that confront almost 75 per cent of Nigerians who are agrarians needs to be addressed through the acquisition of personal skills in value clarification, self-esteem, goal setting, assertiveness, decision-making etcetera as offered by sexuality education. This will help to control juvenile acts and unprofitable sexual behaviour among the poor and the lowly.

Values have been identified as those things individuals attach much importance to. Such things are very important to us to the extent that we can even place a price on them. Being able to clarify own values vis-à-vis others such as family and friends enables us to understand issues such as virginity, abstinence, responsible parenthood, respect for others, etc. Responsible sexual decision making is a major attribute of value clarification.

Seligo (1997) argued that sexual experience does not necessarily bring wisdom or skill in sexual decision making. Lack of value clarification restricts our understanding of the many social and cultural factors that influence our sexuality, undermines our understanding of our feelings and jeopardises our sexuality.

In view of the prevailing high illiteracy and poverty levels in the country, special non-formal sexuality education programmes have to be designed and implemented for the out-of-school populations, in particular those in rural areas, where the majority of the population live.

Ethics and Sexuality

The ethics of sexuality is about the way we treat ourselves and others in respect to questions such as;

- Should or should I not drink alcohol or smoke cigarette?
- Should I be or should I not be a prostitute?
- Is it right to engage in sexual activity with an underage person or a stranger?
- Is it right to use position or power to obtain sexual favours?

How we respond to ethical questions about our sexual behaviour differentiates what is wrong from what is right and could depend on our type of personality and how skilled we are in handling our emotions and actions. Ethical decision-making underscores the importance of taking responsibility for one's sexual wellbeing. Our reproductive health, sexually relationships, use of contraceptives, drug abuse, sexual coercion etcetera are issues that call for appropriate use of ethical decision-making. Teaching the adolescent about how to make ethical decisions concerning their sexuality and sexual behaviour is an important attribute of sexuality education which promotes rational thinking and positive decision-making.

Communication and Sexuality

Communication can simply be defined as an act of transmitting and receiving messages

One of the most important elements for living in a society is communication or language because it provides the society with a means of socialising its members and a mechanism for role-taking and role-playing.

Communication can be verbal or non-verbal, and involves a lot of negotiations between the sender and the receiver. Our personality traits can easily be determined, most of the time, through the ways we communicate. The way we talk or walk, our facial expressions and our other body gestures are different ways by which we communicate. That is why it is generally easy to differentiate an extrovert from an introvert (Adepoju, 2005). Our communication style may lead to a sexual or non-sexual relationship.

Effective sexual communication has remained difficult, elusive and almost unattainable in Nigeria. This has remained a great constraint against the effective implementation of sexuality education in Nigeria because free, open and relaxed communication about sexual topics between adults and the youth (particularly parents and children) have been left to only specific occasions such as traditional initiation ceremonies that alert boys of their coming of age and girls of their readiness for marriage and procreation. Little or no reference is made to reproductive health and/or reproductive rights. Most of the time Nigerian children resort to books, films etc to learn sexual communication only to be criticised by the adult populace; this act of criticism makes the youth feel threatened and sometimes impairs their ability to function normally. Criticism has been known to

affect sexuality with regards to sexual functioning and denigration of self esteem. It is therefore imperative that criticism, when given, should be constructive and non-destructive.

For criticism to be effective, the environment, time and attention are pertinent. There is also a need for positive approach, specificity of the situation and awareness of limitations of the person being criticised. On receiving criticism, non-defensive attitude should be adopted with less justification of actions and understanding and appreciation of the criticism.

It is a well known fact that the ability to give and receive criticism is difficult but specific suggestions should lead to actual change. In this vein, the sexuality education teaches the youths how to open up their relationship to discussion of problems, how to foster a style of communication that will enhance all aspects of their relationship and enable them to discuss freely matters that bother them through free expression of their emotions and behaviour. This is one of the great gains of sexuality education.

Information and Sexual Well-Being

One of the major concerns of sexuality education in Nigeria is the sexual health and well-being of its populace, particularly the youth. Ample research findings have revealed that, sexual activities (especially among teenagers) are on the increase globally. Emergence of new cultures has led to acculturation and a redefinition of 'sex' among the youth (Adepoju, 2001). Sexual matters have become permissive and liberal among members due to exposure to media both foreign and local and the abandonment of important traditional virtues. It is therefore believed that, knowledge that wanton sexual activities with multiple partners can result in unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, HIV/AIDS and even death, can contribute to the practice of safer sexual behaviour among the youth.

In Nigeria, young persons' inability to access sexuality information either through the home or school has contributed immensely to high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases and other adolescents' sexuality problems. Sexuality education in Nigeria is about providing vital information on reproductive health needs of the adolescent in relation to the inculcation of good practices and reinforcement of values and group norms against unprotected sexual behaviour. Whether this information is accurately provided by the various institutions is another challenge for sexuality education in Nigeria.

Gender and Sexuality

Gender can simply be defined as masculinity or femininity, taking into consideration biological, social and cultural norms. A person's self image as a male or female and the roles the person is attached to can be used as gender identity. It is a common assumption that, society and cultural factors exert more influence on gender identity than to define its roles for males and females and reinforces behaviour through gender roles socialisation. Any deviation from

societal expectation of gender roles is labelled inappropriate (Adepoju, 2005). Gender roles differ from society to society and each society has different socialisation process designed for their children.

In most Nigerian cultures, women are expected to be quiet, passive and concerned primarily with home, husband and children, while men are expected to be gruff, strong and unfeeling and concerned with work and acquiring wealth. This process has been found to have a serious negative effect on sexuality in the sense that qualities, capabilities and interests of individuals are consistently jeopardised.

In most cases, career women who appear to be aggressive in their quest for money are sometimes treated with disdain and disrespect. Social pressure, rigid customary practices and even the law have led to people being boxed-in with limited self-expression, personal growth and development.

The major ways which gender affect sexuality include;

- Pressure to conform to socialisation leading to anxiety in men and women
- Consideration of men as sensitive, gentle and intimate beings is eroded
- Women are not considered as same sexual beings as men
- Men and women get locked into specific roles leading to difficulty in division of labour, and
- Conflict in interpersonal relationships, emotional needs and expectations

Ample research by W.H.O, John Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programmes and other similar organisations have demonstrated that women are more vulnerable biologically, culturally and socio-economically to majority of sexually transmitted infections including HIV. The Nigeria Demographic Health Survey has also indicated that, an estimated one third of 600,000 women who obtain abortions each year in Nigeria are adolescents. They also reported that, 13% of women and over 27% of men reported exchanging money, gifts, or favours for sex within a fiscal year. These are threats to women's lives and overall national development.

In order to alleviate some of these gender problems, sexuality education arouses the individual's self assertiveness and ability to empathise with others. This social interaction skill enables the individual to express their feelings freely and helps men and women to be directive and sensitive in order to function effectively. For example, women need to make decisions in parenting, in control of their careers and in their sexual behaviour, while men need to accept responsibility for parenting and be happy with being both givers and receivers as well as seeing the sharing of intimacy as a normal process rather than being loss of control over the women. The prevention of sexually transmitted infections and diseases through the inculcation of responsible sexual behaviour especially among the adolescent group in Nigeria is one of the major concerns of sexuality education.

As laudable as these intentions are, the problems that confront sexuality education in this situation are threefold;

1. Poverty; the socio-economic status of the adolescent
2. Society; ideologies and conservatism of parents and other stakeholders
3. Implementation; perceptions of teachers, coverage and measurement of learning outcomes.

Media and Sexuality

Ellis (1998) asserts that, "society depends on persuasion". Children are persuaded daily by parents to accept certain forms of lifestyles; advertisements are created by producers to make people spend money; politicians persuade people to vote for them; while individuals persuade each other to remain in friendship, be it conjugal or platonic.

According to an estimate by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), more than twenty million people are exposed to their commercials every day. Many writers and speakers discretely or pointedly enter individuals' lives through radio, magazines, books, brochures and so on, leaving the individual with many choices about what to do, what to buy and who to be.

Most of the time, the media, whether audio, print or visual, has been blamed for affecting the minds of people negatively with very little potential of creating positive change in them. The media poses a great challenge to sexuality education in the sense that it does not necessarily complement the tenets of sexuality education because sexuality messages by the media cannot be devoid of selfish interest and propaganda. Such messages could easily be seen as mere entertainment thereby restraining the potential to impart accurate information about sexual problems.

Education, Sexual Knowledge and Sexuality

Education as a liberalising influence is also an indicator of sexual behaviour. According to Michael et al (1995) people with at least some school education in general tend to have more sexual partners than those who have not been to school, and this has led to obstruction of success due to unwanted and unexpected pregnancy, and ill prepared parenthood. This happens to be the case even among college students, and has been known to affect status by creating a sense of self-worthlessness and personality conflict among target groups.

Knowledge, it is generally acknowledged, is a great weapon against ignorance. A sound foundation of sexual knowledge helps the individual to dispel sexual myths, superstitions and misinformation that hinder proper understanding or create confusion. Accurate information enables the individual to think critically and make sound decisions and also take responsibility for sexual health (Caron and Bertran, 1988). Knowing and feeling that we are normal persons can go a long way to increase our sense of personal worth and self-esteem.

In recent times, the idea of how to engage in 'safer sex' depends on how much accurate and up-to-date sexual knowledge we have. Safer sex has been identified to mean achieving satisfaction and personal control through getting more pleasure with less risk hence, the things we need to consider when thinking about 'safer sex' will include:

- Types of activities that can lead to the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Whether an individual belongs to a high risk group
- What can be done to reduce the risk of transmitting STDs and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Whether the two people involved share the same opinion concerning STDs, etc.

Access to factual knowledge as offered by sexuality education enhances our understanding of socio-cultural traditions, rules, norms, inventions and systems that govern our personality.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Functional education, a major factor in the development process, to be relevant, must help appropriately an individual to understand his/her own culture and integrate into the other cultures, foreign or local, for the proper enhancement of his/her ways of life. Unfortunately since the inception of sexuality education, the Nigerian educational system has not succeeded in helping the student to understand the implications of their sexuality upon their social and sexual well being at the micro level and population trends at the micro level because, sexuality education is still being perceived as "sex" education which has the capacity to encourage sexual espionage and promiscuity among the youth. Hence sexuality education has made very little progress in Nigerian schools. Will sexuality education therefore go into oblivion? This is a question that only time can answer.

The objective of sexuality education is to promote the proper development of personality, sexual well-being and quality of life of the population as a whole and thus implies that its contents cover all aspects of life in society, namely economic, political, social, legal, health, cultural and spiritual, making sure that both individual and collective interests work in harmony for the goodness of individuals and the society as a whole.. This concept of education derives its contents from a vision of the world which incorporates aspects of cultural, cosmological, theological, biological, economical, political and psychological repertoires of knowledge.

Traditional forms of education are losing more and more importance in the present context of development of the Nigerian society. The penetration of market economy into rural areas has led to a partial destruction of the traditional

social structures. The improvement in school enrolment separates the children from their families for most of the day thereby limiting educational guidance of the family and the community especially with regards to sexual and family life issues. For example, initiation ceremonies have been greatly reduced and emptied of its original meaning but government's development strategies to change these traditional practices have been met with cultural and religious opposition. The efforts of various NGOs concerning sexuality issues are constantly thwarted. It is paramount for us to know that the introduction of Sexuality Education is a way of finding a new balance between the individual and ideology, economics, politics, environment, culture and ethics corresponding with present conditions. This is what I believe that sexuality education in Nigeria is seeking to achieve.

Positive and realistic guidance to adolescent boys and girls on sexual behaviour is very essential. The foundation of good sexual ethics can be laid in schools through the study of sexuality education in which the children learn to appreciate each other as personalities, to treat everyone with consideration and never to treat anyone callously or contemptuously.

The way we are, the things we value, the things we do, our relationship with people and so on revolve around the nature of our personality and our type of environment.

Whenever we interact with people, we use specific life skills that give impressions about us. For example, the way we manage our anger, share information or express our desire will depend largely on life skills which ought to have been acquired during the process of socialisation or learnt at school, especially through sexuality education (Adepoju, 2005).

At the conceptualisation level of sexuality education, appropriate stakeholders such as religious leaders, community leaders, parents, teachers, educational administrators, the media and so on ought to be involved in the process of determining the content and orientation of sexuality education. That this was not done prior to the introduction of sexuality education in the Nigerian education system is a major shortcoming which should be redressed.

The apparent rejection of sexuality education by some concerned groups was re-echoed in THISDAY publication of Wednesday, 12 January, 2005 under the caption: "Group Condemns Sex Education in Lagos Schools" and in the Muslim's submission at the on-going National Political Conference, Abuja where the Chairman of Jamatu-Wasril-Islam condemned in strong terms government's support for the sexuality education programme. In his words, he said: "We need religious education but they gave us sexuality education" Channels News Broadcast at 10 O'clock March 3, 2005)

In that context, we need to go back to the drawing board to:

- Reanalyse the content of sexuality education in Nigeria
 - Re-conceptualise the content of sexuality education for Nigeria
 - Re-sensitise the population about sexuality education in Nigeria
 - Design and provide appropriate and affordable educational resource materials
 - Train sexuality education handlers
 - Design and implement out-of-school programmes in sexuality education
- In so doing, we can begin to realise the goals and objectives of sexuality education in the country.

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