



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Education  
Sector

# Review of Curricula and Curricular Frameworks

Report to inform the update of the UNESCO International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education

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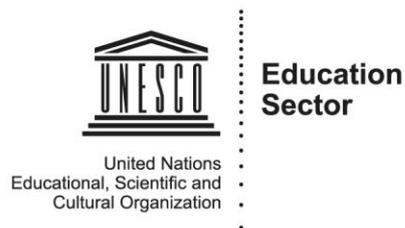
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Published in 2018 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France  
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This document was commissioned by UNESCO as background information to prepare the revised *International technical guidance on sexuality education*. The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and should not be attributed to UNESCO.

This document can be cited as follows: "UNESCO. 2017. *Review of Curricula and Curricular Frameworks. Report to inform the update of the UNESCO International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*: prepared by Advocates for Youth. Paris, UNESCO".

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## Introduction

In 2009, UNESCO published the *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE)*: An evidence-informed approach for schools, teachers and health educators. The purpose of the ITGSE is to assist education, health and other relevant authorities in the development and implementation of school-based sexuality education programmes and materials (UNESCO, 2009). The publication was released in two volumes: Volume I, which focuses on the rationale for sexuality education and provides sound technical advice on the characteristics of effective programmes; and Volume II, which focuses on the topics and learning objectives to be covered in a 'basic minimum package' on sexuality education for children and young people from 5 to 18+ years of age, and includes a bibliography of useful resources.

In 2016, UNESCO began a process to update the ITGSE, consisting of a literature review of the evidence and lessons learned since the release of the original publication; a stakeholder consultation on sexuality education held in October of 2016; an online user survey; and an expert, Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Advisory Group established to inform the process and its findings.

This report summarizes evidence-informed conclusions, expert recommendations and current practice for curriculum-based sexuality education for ages 5-18+ and provides preliminary, overarching changes to Volume II of the ITGSE for consideration by the UNESCO CSE Advisory Group.

## Process

To inform recommendations for updating Volume II, a broad range of publications and documentation was reviewed and in-depth interviews were conducted with a small group of stakeholders, including primary and secondary school students, teachers, and other experts.

The desk review included first and foremost materials and recommendations generated to date through the ITGSE review process, including: PowerPoint presentations providing feedback gathered by stakeholders from numerous regions through a variety of methods, including focus groups, surveys, and written inputs; outcome recommendations from the UNESCO stakeholder consultation on updating the ITGSE, held in October of 2016; and, a review of the evidence on sexuality education commissioned by UNESCO for informing the update of the ITGSE, conducted in 2016 by Paul Montgomery and Wendy Knerr of the University of Oxford Centre for Evidence-Based Intervention.

In addition, grey literature and journal articles addressing school-based sexuality education complementary to those reviewed by Montgomery and Knerr and which were published since 2008 were sought out through searches using a variety of terms for sexuality education (including sexuality education, sex education, life skills education, health and family life education, sexual and reproductive health education, life planning education), as well as more specific terms often in combination with "education" or "life skills" such as HIV, pregnancy prevention, gender, puberty, lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans-gender (LGBT), gender-based violence, and cyber-bullying, among others. Further, emphasis was placed on securing global, regional, or country frameworks and expert recommendations for school-based sexuality education for ages 5-18 published since 2008. Web sites searched included United Nations agency websites, including the UNESCO HIV and Health Education Clearinghouse, websites of UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNICEF and WHO; bilateral and multi-lateral organizations including USAID; and, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or initiatives, such as International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Population Council, Plan International, International Women's Health Coalition, among others. In total, 55 documents were reviewed in three languages (English, French and Spanish) from Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Asia and the Pacific.

In addition to the review of publications and materials, a total of 16 interviews were conducted to further inform recommendations for ITGSE Volume II. Students and teachers were identified as key stakeholder groups whose representation could be strengthened and whose contributions would be important to consider in the update process along with a few additional expert stakeholders. Persons interviewed included eight students ages 10-18, five teachers, and three experts from several countries, including India, Bangladesh, Algeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi, Guatemala, the United States. Question guides for each category of respondent were developed and used to guide interviews and parental consent forms were obtained for students under the age of 18. All but two interviews took place by phone or skype and two were completed in writing.

## Findings from the Desk Review and Interviews on Content for Sexuality Education

The existing recommendations for curriculum components of sexuality education as put forward in the ITGSE Volume II of 2009 are as follows, by key concepts and topics.

**Table 1: Original ITGSE Volume II: Key concepts and topics**

| Relationships                                      | Values, Attitudes and Skills                         | Culture, Society and Human Rights  |
|--|--|--|
| Topics:  | Topics:  | Topics:  |
| 1.1 Families                                       | 2.1 Values, Attitudes and Sources of Sexual Learning | 3.1 Sexuality, Culture and Human Rights  |
| 1.2 Friendship, Love and Romantic Relationships    | 2.2 Norms and Peer Influence on Sexual Behaviour     | 3.2 Sexuality and the Media  |
| 1.3 Tolerance and Respect                          | 2.3 Decision-making                                  | 3.3 The Social Construction of Gender  |
| 1.4 Long-term Commitment, Marriage and Parenting   | 2.4 Communication, Refusal and Negotiation Skills    | 3.4 Gender-Based Violence including Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Harmful Practices |
|  | 2.5 Finding Help and Support                         |  |
| Human Development                                  | Sexual Behaviour                                     | Sexual and Reproductive Health   |
| Topics:  | Topics:  | Topics:  |
| 4.1 Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology | 5.1 Sex, Sexuality and the Sexual Life Cycle         | 6.1 Pregnancy Prevention   |
| 4.2 Reproduction                                   | 5.2 Sexual Behaviour and Sexual Response             | 6.2 Understanding, Recognising and Reducing the Risk of STIs, including HIV          |
| 4.3 Puberty  |  | 6.3 HIV and AIDS Stigma, Care, Treatment and Support                                 |
| 4.4 Body Image                                     |  |  |
| 4.5 Privacy and Bodily Integrity                   |  |  |

UNESCO. 2009. *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, Volume II: Topics and Learning Objectives*. Paris: UNESCO.

Many countries' efforts to develop or strengthen sexuality education curricula have since been informed by the ITGSE. When asked to rank the topics already included in the ITGSE, most stakeholders who responded to a global survey administered online by UNESCO (94%) affirmed these to be of high to medium importance with the majority of respondents noting all topics as being of high importance.

Existing ITGSE Volume II content was also supported by responses collated through in-depth interviews conducted with a small number of primary and secondary school students, teachers and stakeholders from sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa, Asia, and Central and North America. For example, some of the topics that students said they would like to be taught as part of sexuality education included reproductive anatomy; puberty, including hormonal changes and the menstrual cycle; hygiene; contraception; how to use a condom; effects and impacts of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV; pregnancy and impact on young parents; how to build self-esteem; how our bodies are normal; love, feelings and relationships; and decision-making, communication, and refusal skills such as how to say

'no' to unwanted sex or how to counter peer pressure to have sex; safer sex; family diversity; child sexual abuse; alcohol use; and, how to access services.

Teachers and other stakeholders also affirmed the importance of content already included in the original ITGSE, such as: reproductive anatomy; reproduction; sexuality; countering myths and taboos about sexuality; puberty, including menstruation; physical, social and emotional changes experienced during adolescence; pregnancy; parenting; contraception; how to use a condom; STI's and HIV; relationships—family, friendships and love; gender; sexual abuse; personal safety; respect for your body; right to your body; bullying; risk taking behaviors; and how to counter peer pressure.

Meanwhile, the evidence review on sexuality education commissioned by UNESCO and conducted by Montgomery and Knerr (2016) to inform the ITGSE update also affirmed existing ITGSE content, suggesting that there is little rigorous evidence to support a substantial update of Volume II. However, the review does acknowledge that there are grounds for adding information about gender and violence as components of sexuality education programmes (Montgomery and Knerr, 2016; 2016b), which was supported in the feedback gathered through the ITGSE review process and in-depth interviews. Further, based on emerging documentation, inputs gathered through the ITGSE update process, and the in-depth interviews, there are additional content areas that merit strengthening and further integration into the updated ITGSE Volume II, including more in-depth information about puberty; cognitive, emotional and social changes that adolescents face; menstrual hygiene management; and, sexual orientation and gender identity. Other emerging topics suggested for inclusion within existing ITGSE concepts and/or topics include human rights, health and support services, bullying, media literacy, abortion, substance use, faith and sexuality, sex trafficking, female genital mutilation/cutting, circumcision, and pleasure.

To further inform the ITGSE update, literature addressing curriculum content for sexuality education on gender, violence, puberty and menstrual hygiene management, and sexual orientation and gender identity are explored below.

## Gender

Addressing gender and power in sexuality education is not a new idea but it has grown to be an increasingly important one, being integral not only to development since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) but to sexuality education as seen through field experiences of non-governmental organizations, donor programmes, and emerging research efforts (Haberland, 2015). This observation was affirmed during the stakeholder consultation on the ITGSE, comprised of 60 experts representing ministries of education, curriculum and education experts, civil society organizations, academics, UN and other experts, including young people, who identified gender as the top area for inclusion within sexuality education (UNESCO, 2016b). The ITGSE Volume II already addresses gender to some degree, including gender inequality, gender norms and power in relationships in Key Concepts 1, 2 and 3 (3.1 Sexuality, Culture and Human Rights; 3.3 The Social Construction of Gender; and 3.4 Gender-Based Violence, including Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Harmful Practices) (UNESCO, 2009).

Preliminary evidence from an analysis of evaluated sexuality and HIV education programmes point to the importance of engaging learners in reflecting about gender norms and power within intimate relationships. Curricula that incorporates this type of reflection on gender dynamics were more likely to demonstrate positive health outcomes, including reducing rates of pregnancy or sexuality transmitted infections, as compared to curricula that did not (Haberland, 2010). For example, in a randomized controlled trial of a targeted programme to increase girls' understanding of the risks of intergenerational sex in Western Kenya, the provision of information on the relative risk of HIV infection by type of partner led to a 61 percent decrease in the incidence of pregnancies (a proxy for unprotected sex) with older, riskier partners among teenage girls, while not increasing pregnancies with same-age partners. On the other hand, there was no impact on pregnancy rates among students receiving the official HIV/AIDS curriculum, which provided general information about the risk of HIV but not specifics about risks associated with types of partners (Dupas, 2011).

Expert recommendations also underscore the importance of implementing and testing sex and HIV education curricula that place a central emphasis on gender and rights. Experts suggest that curriculum content can specifically address harmful gender norms and foster critical thinking skills in order to break intergenerational cycles of gender inequality. Harmful gender norms can contribute to increased girls' vulnerability to HIV due to a limited ability to negotiate safe sex; homophobia and violence related to (real or perceived) sexual orientation; and, risky sexual behaviors among young men due to expectations about what it means to be masculine (UNESCO, 2012). Programmes that seek to address gender norms among men and boys can also impact gender attitudes, such as in India, through an initiative that included engaging cricket coaches to teach boys in school about controlling aggression, preventing violence and

promoting respect. As a result, there was a greater positive shift in gender attitudes among participating athletes compared to non-participants (Avni and Chandra-Mouli, 2014; Das et al., 2012).

Further, the International Planned Parenthood Federation's framework for comprehensive sexuality education gives high priority to gender and also emphasizes the need to consider cultural factors that influence gender expectations in planning and delivering sexuality education (IPPF, 2010). Lastly, eliminating gender biases in teaching objectives and materials is another important recommendation for strengthening any curriculum's grounding in gender equality (UNESCO, 2012).

Yet, addressing gender within sexuality education can be challenging. According to a UNESCO assessment of the content and delivery of sexuality education programmes in West and Central Africa, gender and social norms had the least coverage in sexuality education programmes as compared to how other global sexuality education standards were being met (Herat et al., 2014). Programmes have been slow to integrate a gender or power perspective into sexuality education due to a lack of clarity about what this means and detailed information for both the educator and the learner (Haberland, 2015). In spite of being addressed to some extent in the current ITGSE Volume II, in a survey conducted by UNESCO of the ITGSE, gender was one of the topics identified as missing (Montgomery and Knerr, 2016; 2016b), thereby further supporting the need for additional guidance on gender in the updated version.

In addition to the ITGSE itself, which is already informed by evidence and addresses gender to some extent, regional and national sexuality education frameworks that address gender also affirm its importance as part of sexuality education. Such frameworks include the Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe for ages 0-15+, with gender addressed across several topics, including as social and cultural determinants of sexuality, relationships and lifestyles (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010); the Health and Family Life Education Regional Curriculum Framework for Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries for ages 5-12, with gender addressed as part of human sexuality (CARICOM and UNICEF, 2010); the US national standards for ages 6-18, with gender addressed as part of the topic of identity (Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2012); the national curriculum in Senegal, with a topic dedicated to gender, in addition to addressing gender within other topics, such as taking care of your body and relationship skills (Coalition pour la Santé des Adolescents et Jeunes, 2016); in the national curriculum in Colombia, also with topics specifically addressing gender through gender identity and cultural behaviors related to gender (Ministerio de Educación Nacional Republica de Colombia, 2016); and, in the national curriculum in Mexico for ages 3-14 within natural sciences and history (Bonilla, 2016).

## Violence

There are few systematic reviews reporting on studies that included violence prevention as a component or key characteristic of sexuality education, but recommendations from experts around the world increasingly point to addressing aspects of violence prevention in sexuality education curricula. In 2016 UNESCO and UN Women, in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education and School Health, along with an advisory group of stakeholders, published global guidance on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), aimed at ministries of education and education stakeholders.

This guidance notes that 'curriculum approaches are important, as education that encourages young people to question, negotiate, and challenge violence and gender discrimination is critical for preventing school-related gender-based violence.' It recommends that curriculum and materials be age-appropriate and that these include: what constitutes violence and abuse (including all forms of SRGBV, such as violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex [LGBTI] people and homophobic and transphobic bullying); positive models for forming relationships; addressing personal values and perceptions about family and peer norms around sexual behavior, health and rights; how to protect yourself from harm; what actions you can take to avoid harm to others; a focus on changing gender norms; opportunities to develop positive notions of gender (including masculinity and femininity and non-binary expressions of gender) and understanding of sexual and gender diversity; communication and consent; and, SRGBV laws and linkages to SRGBV reporting, referral and support mechanisms. In terms of how to deliver this content, the guidance recommends participatory teaching methods and selecting capable and motivated educators who are well-trained in participatory teaching methodology (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016).

Further, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children also asserts in her report on bullying in schools and cyberspace that teaching children about their rights is crucial to contributing to a safe school environment. Through discussions, games, simulation exercises and role plays, the report recommends a number of general principles for teaching children about their rights, including that they be able to identify children's rights as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child; know what to do if someone's rights have been violated; respect others' rights; express their opinion and listen to others' opinions in the case of rights' violation or conflict;

and, take action when someone's rights are violated. The Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comment no. 13, proposes several educational measures to combat bullying and refers to: "the provision of accurate, accessible and age-appropriate information and empowerment on life skills, self-protection and specific risks, including those relating to [Information and Communication Technologies] ICTs and how to develop positive peer relationships and combat bullying; empowerment regarding child rights in general - and in particular on the right to be heard and to have their views taken seriously - through the school curriculum and in other ways" (United Nations, 2016).

Sexual abuse and violence are addressed in the ITGSE Volume II, under Key Concepts 1 (Relationships), 2 (Values, Attitudes and Skills), and 3 (Culture, Society and Human Rights particularly in 3.4: Gender-Based Violence, including Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Harmful Practices) (UNESCO, 2009). In spite of being addressed in the current ITGSE Volume II, in the survey conducted by UNESCO of the ITGSE with stakeholders, school-related gender-based violence was one of the topics identified as missing from Volume II (Montgomery and Knerr, 2016; 2016b), and preventing sexual abuse/exploitation was noted of high importance by 85% of respondents (UNESCO, 2016c), thereby supporting the need for additional guidance on violence in the updated version. Personal safety, bodily integrity, and sexual abuse were also identified as desired topics for sexuality education within the in-depth interviews.

Regional and national sexuality education frameworks that address violence also affirm the importance of addressing violence as part of sexuality education. Some examples include the European standards for sexuality education, which address violence within the topics of sexuality, health and well-being and sexuality and rights (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010); the CARICOM standards as part of self and interpersonal relationships (CARICOM and UNICEF, 2010); the US national sexuality education standards within the topics of healthy relationships and personal safety (Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2012); and the national curriculum in Senegal as a dedicated topic in addition to addressing violence within others, such as taking care of your body, relationship skills, and rights related to health and reproduction (Coalition pour la Santé des Adolescents et Jeunes, 2016), among others.

## Puberty and Menstrual Hygiene Management

In spite of being a hallmark of adolescence that impacts cognitive, emotional and physical changes, puberty- when it is taught as part of sexuality education- is often taught too late, after young people have already experienced it (UNESCO, 2015). An extensive literature review along with key informant interviews, an international technical consultation and peer reviews note the importance of integrating puberty education within existing sexuality education curricula. It notes the importance of providing age-appropriate puberty education with concepts and skills for younger adolescents that are more basic, and concepts and skills that build as they grow older. Key topics to be included are: defining puberty; when puberty begins and ends; changes in female and male bodies; body image; hormonal and psychological changes and how to manage them; male and female reproductive systems; emotional changes; ejaculation, erections, wet dreams, and male hygiene; menstruation, including pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), if menstruation hurts, how to manage pain, how to manage menstruation, menstrual hygiene materials, hygiene around menstruation and how to dispose of menstrual materials, the menstrual calendar, and identification of signs that a girl is going to have her period; cultural and religious beliefs, social norms, myths, and stigma; gender roles; privacy and bodily integrity; adult perceptions; and how puberty affects a young person's roles and relationships with family and friends (UNESCO, 2014).

Puberty is already addressed in the ITGSE Volume II, under Key Concepts 4 (Human Development) in 4.3: Puberty (UNESCO, 2009) yet lacks some of the specificities recommended by experts described above. Puberty was also identified as a desired topic area for sexuality education within the in-depth interviews both among primary and secondary school students —particularly hormonal changes, the menstrual cycle, changes in the body, and an understanding of what happens to both boys and girls. The two secondary school students who identified puberty did so in the context of being a topic that they wished they would have learned about when they were younger.

Despite puberty often being a neglected topic in sexuality education or offered too late, there are regional and national sexuality education frameworks that address puberty, such as the European standards for sexuality education for ages 6-9, 9-12, 12-15, and 15+ (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010); the CARICOM standards for Health and Family Life Education for ages 9-12 (CARICOM and UNICEF, 2010); the pedagogical guide for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS for Central African countries for ages 9-12 (UNESCO-IBE and UNESCO Office Yaoundé, 2014); the US national sexuality education standards for ages 8-18 (Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2012); and the national curriculum in Senegal (Coalition pour la Santé des Adolescents et Jeunes, 2016). In India, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has developed national guidelines for menstrual hygiene management and a framework, within which access to knowledge and information about menstrual hygiene constitutes a core component. At the school level, educating both girls and boys about menstrual hygiene is recommended, particularly about puberty and menstruation

from a biological perspective, myths and misconceptions around menstruation, and hygienic management of menstruation, among other school-based efforts (Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation of the Government of India, 2015).

## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression

A recent global review of homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings and of education sector responses shows that hostile and non-inclusive curricula contribute to reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes that indirectly lead to homophobic and transphobic violence. On the other hand, inclusive or affirming curricula such as those that discuss definitions of masculinity and femininity and challenge existing stereotypes about gender and sexuality, contribute to increasing feelings of belonging and safety among LGBTI students (UNESCO, 2016).

Curriculum content that is inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression encourages critical thinking and feelings of safety at school, thereby positively impacting students' and teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Research suggests that integrating attention to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression within relevant, existing themes within curricula is more effective than using a stand-alone curriculum. Curriculum content should address taboos surrounding adolescent sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and provide access to accurate information on sexual diversity, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Further, curriculum content that challenges homophobia and transphobia is most effective when LGBTI issues and people are reflected positively throughout. Lastly, teachers need appropriate training and support to enable them to address sexual orientation and gender identity without inadvertently conveying negative messages about sexual and gender diversity (UNESCO, 2016).

Currently, sexual orientation is addressed in the ITGSE Volume II in Key Concept 1 (Relationships) in 1.1: Families and 1.3: Tolerance and Respect and Key Concept 3 (Culture, Society, and Human Rights) in 3.1: Sexuality, Culture and Law and 3.3: The Social Construction of Gender. Gender identity is addressed in Key Concept 3 (Culture, Society, and Human Rights) in 3.1: Sexuality, Culture and Law and 3.3: The Social Construction of Gender. Yet, the need for greater integration of sexual and orientation and gender identity within the ITGSE was raised through the review process.

Research with younger children shows that personal beliefs and attitudes about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression form during the early stages of childhood. In some countries, schools are addressing sexual diversity and gender identity/expression beginning in primary school, such as in the Netherlands, the State of Berlin in Germany, Ontario in Canada, and Ireland (UNESCO, 2016). In terms of existing frameworks that address sexual orientation and gender identity, the European standards for sexuality education address sexual orientation and gender identity from age 0 and also integrates sexual orientation and gender identity across four general themes: sexuality, relationships and lifestyles; fertility and reproduction; sexuality and rights; and, the human body and human development (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010). The US national sexuality education standards address sexual orientation and gender identity within the topic of identity, also within the primary school level (Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2012) and in Colombia, both are addressed within respective components of sexuality education as well as through complementary guidance for teachers and other educators on sexual orientation and gender identity (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Republica de Colombia, 2016; Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Republica de Colombia and Fondo de Población de las Naciones Unidas, 2016).

## Additional Topics for Inclusion and Considerations

In addition to the above-described topics, there are other topics ranked by a majority of survey participants as being of high importance that were also referenced by some respondents of the in-depth interviews. These topics merit consideration for strengthening within the updated ITGSE among existing concepts and include: sexual and reproductive health and rights; human rights; health and support services; bullying; media literacy, including online and social media, and abortion. Other topics noted by less than half of respondents as being of high importance included: sexual pleasure; female genital mutilation; circumcision; and, faith/religion (Montgomery and Knerr, 2016b) while topics referenced by respondents of the in-depth interviews included sex trafficking, substance use, pornography, faith and sexuality, seeking services for sexual abuse, and countering myths about sexuality.

Further, through the ITGSE update process, experts and stakeholders strongly recommended that topics in the existing ITGSE Volume II be supported through a more balanced, consistent mix of illustrative learning objectives that address knowledge, attitudes and skills, rather than only through one or two knowledge-based learning objectives and several key ideas.

## Pedagogical Approaches to Delivery of Sexuality Education

While the focus of this review is to inform curriculum content, references to the delivery of sexuality education within literature and frameworks were also noted, including the importance of participatory learning methods, teacher training, creating safe learning environments, and gender considerations.

Teacher training and support are crucial to guaranteeing that sexuality education is delivered well and in a safe environment. The importance of using participatory methods to deliver sexuality education is well documented and constitutes a core characteristic of effective sexuality education (Kirby et al., 2006). Yet, teachers often do not consistently use participatory methodologies for delivering sexuality education due to lack of training (UNESCO, 2015).

Participatory methods are noted as essential in regional and national curriculum frameworks and materials. In the Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe, delivering sexuality education in an interactive way is noted as a key characteristic (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010). Similarly, the pedagogical guide for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS for Central African countries underscores the importance of participatory methods. The guide provides teachers with an orientation on 14 interactive methods, such as debates, problem-solving activities, role plays, and interviews, among others, which are used throughout the series of lesson plans that are provided (UNESCO-IBE and UNESCO Office Yaoundé, 2014). The CARICOM standards also ground the health and family life education framework in interactive teaching methodologies (CARICOM and UNICEF, 2010). Meanwhile, national standards and curricula do as well, such as in Cuba (Colectivo de Autores, 2011; 2011b), Colombia (Ministerio de Educación, 2016), Nigeria (UNESCO, 2014b; Wood and Rogow, 2015), among others.

There are different approaches to delivery of sexuality education as it relates to gender. In the Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe, gender responsiveness is noted as one of seven characteristics of sexuality education whereby different gender needs, such as gender-based differences, should be addressed by appropriate methods, such as temporary separation of learners by gender (WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010). In Namibia, the curriculum *My Future is My Choice*, addresses gender through discussion activities. Separately, boys and girls talk about how puberty affects their bodies, relationships with their families and friends, and how they relate to the opposite sex. The teacher then brings groups back together and facilitates a discussion about gender roles, including why boys and girls are told different things about sex and relationships. Drama was also used in schools in Mozambique and South Africa where it was found to be more effective than didactic methods. Lastly, during short sessions, girls are less willing to participate or challenge things in mixed groups but if sessions are continued over a longer period of time, girls can develop greater confidence and speak directly to boys about their attitudes and behavior (UNESCO, 2012).

Ensuring a safe environment is also a key aspect of delivery of quality sexuality education, as reflected to different degrees in various regional and national curriculum frameworks and materials. In the pedagogical guide for reproductive health and HIV/AIDS for Central African countries, a serene classroom environment is noted as a main characteristic of HIV education based on participatory learning methods whereby students should feel safe and at ease, supported by ground rules established with teachers prior to starting lessons (UNESCO-IBE and UNESCO Office Yaoundé, 2014). The CARICOM standards include ethical guidelines in terms of responsibilities to students, families, colleagues, and self, which address inclusivity, confidentiality and disclosure, among other issues (CARICOM and UNICEF, 2010). In the teacher training standards of the United States, the importance of a safe environment is reflected in the standards on Diversity and Equity and Legal and Professional Ethics. These standards address classroom inclusivity, disclosure of sexual health issues, confidentiality, and professional conduct with students (Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2012b).

Teachers and students interviewed to inform this update also validated the critical role of participatory methods and teacher training in delivering sexuality education as well as the importance of safe environments. Teachers shared participatory methods that they use to deliver sexuality education, such as drama, role-plays, group work, and games, and underscored that learners are most likely to master the content of the lesson when they are actively engaged. When students were asked about how sexuality education should be taught, they noted the need for trained teachers who can deliver more depth of information within lessons, more communication with teachers whereby you can go to them for information/support, and the need for confidentiality.

## Conclusion and Outline Recommendations

The present review of ITGSE update feedback, reviews and publications, and in-depth interviews, suggests that the content provided in the original ITGSE Volume II still constitutes a strong foundation for evidence-informed sexuality education that is comprehensive and age-appropriate. While there is little evidence to justify a substantive revision of the ITGSE Volume II, there is nonetheless reason to update the concepts and topics in the guidance to better reflect emerging issues, particularly by adding two new key concepts—one on gender and one on violence. In addition, given inputs from the ITGSE review process to date, expert recommendations, existing frameworks and curricula, and insights provided through the in-depth interviews, it is also critical to further develop and strengthen some topics within the ITGSE, including puberty and menstrual hygiene management; sexual orientation and gender identity; human rights; health and support services; bullying; media literacy; abortion; and, substance use. Lastly, in order to provide a more well-rounded guidance across all topics, it would be useful to include illustrative learning objectives that consistently address knowledge, attitudes and skills within each age range and topic that build on the key concepts provided in the original ITGSE. The recommended, updated key concepts and topics for the ITGSE are presented in the table below:

**Table 2: Recommended ITGSE Key Concepts and Topics**

| Key Concept 1 : Relationships                              | Key Concept 2 : Values, Attitudes and Skills      | Key Concept 3 : Understanding Gender                   |
|--|---|--|
| Topics:  | Topics:   | Topics:  |
| 1.1 Families   | 2.1 Values and Sexuality                          | 3.1 The Social Construction of Gender and Gender Norms |
| 1.2 Friendship, Love and Romantic Relationships            | 2.2 Human Rights and Sexuality                    | 3.2 Gender Equality, Stereotypes and Bias              |
| 1.3 Tolerance, Inclusion and Respect                       | 2.3 Culture, Society and Sexuality                | 3.3 Gender-based Violence                              |
| 1.4 Long-term Commitments and Parenting                    |   |  |
| Key Concept 4: Violence and Staying Safe                   | Key Concept 5 : Skills for Health and Well-being  | Key Concept 6 : The Human Body and Development         |
| Topics:  | Topics:   | Topics:  |
| 4.1 Violence   | 5.1 Norms and Peer Influence on Sexual Behaviour  | 6.1 Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology     |
| 4.2 Consent, Privacy and Bodily Integrity                  | 5.2 Decision-making                               | 6.2 Reproduction                                       |
| 4.3 Safe use of Information and Communication Technologies | 5.3 Communication, Refusal and Negotiation Skills | 6.3 Puberty  |
|  | 5.4 Media Literacy and Sexuality                  | 6.4 Body Image   |
|  | 5.5 Finding Help and Support                      |  |
| Key Concept 7: Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour              | Key Concept 8: Sexual and Reproductive Health     |  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Topics:                                      | Topics:   |
| 7.1 Sex, Sexuality and the Sexual Life Cycle | 8.1 Pregnancy and Pregnancy Prevention                                      |
| 7.2 Sexual Behaviour and Sexual Response     | 8.2 HIV and AIDS Stigma, Care, Treatment and Support                        |
|  | 8.3 Understanding, Recognizing and Reducing the Risk of STIs, including HIV |

Outline recommendations for the ITGSE Volume II are provided below for all parts of the document as originally presented, acknowledging that some of these components may become duplicative if both volumes are merged and that the drafting of updated content within the revised key concepts and topics will follow, to be informed by feedback from the UNESCO CSE Advisory Group.

#### Cover Page:

- Insert a table of contents that includes pages for the beginning of each key concept.

#### Introduction (page 2):

Subtitle: What is sexuality education and why it is important?

- Replace title and sub-title with “Importance of sexuality education”

Paragraph 1:

- Re-write to present balanced frame of positive and not just negative perspective

Paragraph 2:

- Broaden not to be singularly focused on HIV
- Update with statistics and references to commitments since 2008
  - Knowledge of HIV (UNICEF. State of the World’s Children, 2015  
[https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC\\_2015\\_Summary\\_and\\_Tables.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2015_Summary_and_Tables.pdf))
  - Adolescent pregnancy (WHO fact sheet, 2014,  
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/>)
- Add reference to Jamaica and Senegal in growing number of countries scaling up sexuality education and/or reference countries noted in Volume I
- Add reference to Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Ministerial commitment
- Add reference to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Paragraph 3:

- Update with new CSE definition

Paragraph 4:

- Broaden reference beyond HIV—ie. “CSE is a vital part of programming for young people in order to support their overall health and well-being, including programming to develop life skills and address vulnerabilities, such as risk of STI/HIV infection, unintended pregnancy and gender-based violence.”
- Replace reference to universal access targets with reference to the UNAIDS Fast-Track strategy, launched in 2014, and the SDGs

Paragraph 6:

- Amend this paragraph to reference teacher training as well: School settings...as well as offering an appropriate structure (i.e. the formal curriculum *and teacher training*) within which to do so.

#### Basic minimum package for a sexuality education programme (page 3)

- Rename subtitle, ie. “Topics and Learning Objectives”

Paragraph 1

- Revise to include agreed-upon terminology—we propose not qualifying this as a basic minimum package as it is unclear how to justify that this is the case

Paragraph 2:

- Update to reference foundation as current ITGSE and add reference to review, key informants, and consultation/update process

Paragraph 5 (bullet points):

- Update bullet points as follows: The goals of the topics and learning objectives are to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to:
  - realize their health, wellbeing and dignity,
  - develop respectful social relationships,
  - consider the wellbeing of others affected by their choices, and
  - understand and act upon their rights throughout their lives.

Paragraph 6:

- Remove reference to “comprehensive package” and possibly begin sentence with, “All learning objectives.....”
- Re-order the last sentence to reference “increase knowledge” as the first item in the list of items after “others will attempt to...” and replace “change social norms” with “promote positive social norms.”

#### **Age Range (page 4)**

- Replace title with “Age Ranges” and maintain current age ranges

New Paragraph before others:

- Add a paragraph preceding others that provides background on age-appropriate content: text from the UNESCO 2015 global review (UNESCO, 2015) section 2.1 (p18).

Paragraph 3 (bullets with age ranges):

- Remove reference to Levels

Paragraph 4:

- Replace “logically sequenced” with “incremental, age- and developmentally-appropriate”
- Replace “pay attention” with “include”

Paragraph 5:

- Are we using the term “sexual debut” or could we say instead “...as well as *when they become sexually active*, vary considerably”

#### **Components of learning (page 5)**

Paragraph 2: reference only values and attitudes (remove reference to norms) and add reference to “responsibility” as a principle

Paragraph 3:

- Reference additional skills integrated into the guidance, ie. empathy, problem-solving, communication, critical thinking, managing emotions, etc..

Paragraph 4:

- Consider replacing “responsibility” with “application,” or “taking action” noting that “sexuality education encourages students to apply learnings by practicing respect, acceptance, and empathy for all people, adopting protective behaviors, and exercising their rights.”

#### **Stand – alone or integrated programmes (page 5)**

- Replace title with “Ways to deliver sexuality education”
- Further inform this section using UNESCO’s CSE global review of 2015 (section 3)

- Replace box with the following identified by models with examples:
  - Stand-alone (Jamaica)
  - Integrated (Nigeria or Senegal)
  - Mixed (Colombia)
  - School-based sexuality education with link to services component (Estonia)

### Structure (page 6)

- Update bulleted list of key concepts to reflect changes recommended below and provide visual and written explanation of how they are all linked. Possibly one circle in the middle that says CSE with inter-connecting circles around it constituting the key concepts.

### Key concepts and topics

#### Suggested cross-cutting changes:

- Develop illustrative learning objectives that address knowledge, attitudes and skills for key ideas across topics and consolidate duplicative key ideas where possible.

#### Suggested changes by key concepts:

- Keep Key Concept 1: Relationships
  - Under level IV, add key idea on how siblings, parents/guardians or extended family can provide support
- CHANGE name of Concept 2 to Skills for Health and Well-being
  - Retain values, attitudes, and sources of learning, decision-making; communication, refusal and negotiation skills; and finding help and support
  - Change “2.2 norms and peer influence on sexual behavior” to “norms and management of peer pressure”
  - In 2.3 Decision-making, Level III, bullet 4, add “, both positive and negative” at the end of the sentence
- CHANGE name of Concept 3 to Human Rights
  - Reconfigure to include legal, ethical, moral and universal aspects of human rights
- CHANGE name of Concept 4 to The Human Body and Development
  - Include 4.1-4.5
  - Expand on 4.3 (puberty)
- CHANGE name of Concept 5 to Sexuality and Behavior
- Keep Concept 6: Sexual and Reproductive Health
  - Change title of 6.1 Pregnancy Prevention to “Pregnancy Planning and Prevention”
  - Include reference to IVF, child spacing, and abortion within pregnancy prevention sub-topic for ages 15-18
  - Include reference to Pre - Exposure Prophylaxis (PREP) and Post – Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) in 6.2, ages 15-18
- Add two new Key Concepts on:
  - Gender
    - Including difference between gender and sex, social construction of gender, and gender identity and sexual orientation
  - Personal Safety
    - Including topic on 3.4 gender-based violence including sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful practices.
    - Including consent
    - Including internet safety, with reference to cyber-bullying
    - Including media literacy, with reference to pornography

### Appendix I

#### International conventions and agreements related to sexuality education (pages 38-41)

- Add the following:
  - ESA commitment
  - SDGs

- Education 2030 Incheon Declaration

#### **Appendix II (page 42)**

##### **Interview schedule and methodology**

- Update with description of present interview schedule and methodology

##### **Semi-structured interview questionnaire schedule**

- Update with interview questions – one set for students, one set for teachers, and one set for other experts

#### **Appendix III (page 44)**

##### **People contacted and key informant details**

- Replace with list of key informants. For underage informants, their first name or “anonymous” will be listed (and for which parental consent will have been obtained) along with country and whether in primary or secondary school.

#### **Appendix IV (page 45)**

- Replace with participant list of October 2016 UNESCO stakeholder consultation

#### **Add Appendix with Advisory Group**

#### **Appendix V (page 47)**

##### **Biography of Resources**

- Change to Appendix VI

##### **Paragraph 1:**

- Remove reference to the Feb 2009 consultation and simply list the criteria

##### **Bullet points on criteria:**

- Amend date to 2009-2017
- Amend to reference only primary and secondary
- Amend to reference English, Spanish and French

#### **Guidelines and Guiding Principles, Teacher Training Guides and Curricula (page 48-55)**

- Update list using same format based on criteria

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#### **Appendix I: All Materials Reviewed**

#### **ITGSE Update Process Presentations, delivered at the UNESCO Technical Stakeholder Consultation in Paris, October 25-26, 2017 (all presentations provided by UNESCO)**

Feedback on ITGSE from China, by H. Li

Focus Group Discussion on the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, Senegal, by X. Hospital

Health and Family Life Education, Jamaica, by A.K. Magnus-Watson

International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: Background and Context, by C. Castle

International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education South Africa Focus Group Discussion, by P. Machawira

ITGSE Updating Process: Contributions from Latin America, by M.G. Delaney

National Experience of Developing and Delivering Sexuality Education, Bulgaria by P. Mladenov

National Experience of Developing and Delivering Sexuality Education, Mexico by E. Bonilla

National Experience of Developing and Delivering Sexuality Education, Senegal by A. Traoré Seck

National Experience of Developing and Delivering Sexuality Education, Zambia by A. Saili

The PACT: Contributions to the update of UNESCO ITGSE, by A. Jarandilla Nuñez

Sexuality Education in Basic Education, Ministry of Education, Thailand, by S. Sripongpankul

UN International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) Updating Stakeholders Consultation, by J. Herat

UN International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) Updating Survey Findings, by M. Todesco

UN Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-based Approach, by P. Montgomery and W. and W. Knerr

Update ITGSE: Summary of Consultation Recommendations, by J. Herat

Updating the United Nations International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: Vol 1. Evidence & recommendations, by P. Montgomery and W. Knerr

Updating the United Nations International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: Vol 2. Evidence & recommendations, by P. Montgomery and W. Knerr

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**Appendix II: List of interviewees****Students, primary and secondary**

| First Name | Age | Country       |
|------------|-----|---------------|
| Soubeiga   | 10  | Burkina Faso  |
| Nacro      | 10  | Burkina Faso  |
| Emmanuel   | 12  | Kenya         |
| Vacaecelia | 12  | Kenya         |
| Sandra     | 14  | Ghana         |
| Caleb      | 16  | United States |
| Madelyn    | 18  | United States |
| Ana        | 18  | Guatemala     |

**Teachers**

| Name                     | School Level                             | Country      |
|--------------------------|--|--------------|
| Angela Bessah Sagoe      | Primary school teacher                   | Ghana        |
| Sam Talato Sandine Nacro | Primary school teacher                   | Burkina Faso |
| Sylvie Kansono           | Primary school teacher                   | Burkina Faso |
| Sakshi Rajeshirke        | Primary school teacher                   | India        |
| Mohamed Beldjenna        | Head master and secondary school teacher | Algeria      |

**Other Stakeholders**

| Name                            | Title  | Country    |
|---------------------------------|--|------------|
| Joyce Carol Kasambara           | Senior Curriculum Development Specialist   | Malawi     |
| Dr. Kamel Bereksi               | Président de l'association Santé Sidi El Houari SDH  | Algeria    |
| Dr. <a href="#">Ubaidur Rob</a> | Senior Associate & Country Director, Population Council, Bangladesh (including oversight of <a href="#">Bangladeshi Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents Project</a> ) | Bangladesh |