



# A Sexatlas for Schools

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SEXUALITY

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**Sexuality and personal relationships: a Guide for the planning and implementation of teaching programmes in this area for primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools.**

## **The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU)**

RFSU's aim since it was founded in 1933 has been to give people the means to change their lives for the better. RFSU is a non-profit organisation independent of any political party or religion. We are dedicated to promoting a well-informed, open-minded attitude to sexuality and relationship issues. RFSU is founded on a firm belief that sexuality and relationships are central to the individual and to society. By informing and educating people and shaping opinion, RFSU aims to break down prejudices, overcome ignorance and improve sexual health in Sweden and abroad. RFSU views sexuality as a matter of individual liberty and human rights, in which all of us have the freedom to be ourselves, the freedom to choose and the freedom to enjoy. By buying our products, becoming a member, working with us or supporting RFSU's work, you can help us continue to change people's lives.

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# 1 Introduction

The Questions chapter in this Guide is divided into four sections: prerequisites, contents and methods, organization and, finally, planning and responsibilities. Each section consists of a questions package, followed by some additional questions headed “Discussion and reflection”.

**Prerequisites** covers questions concerning support, resources, teaching materials, and further training that are relevant for successful education programmes in the sexuality and relationships area.

The **Contents and methods** section raises questions concerning what has to be done and how this can be achieved, and also ways in which certain items are introduced into the learning process.

**Organization** involves the manner in which the school arranges programmes covering sexuality and personal relationships – for example who takes the course and how the school can ensure that all pupils receive an equivalent education.

**Planning and responsibilities** contains questions concerning the objectives for education covering sexuality and relationships, the work-plan and the message.

The discussion and reflection questions at the end of each section may be more difficult to answer than the other questions. Group discussion is appropriate in this case, since these questions may call for more than one answer.

This Guide may be used in several different ways – for example:

- ♦ as a kind of checklist for the sexuality and personal relationships assignment,

- ♦ as a basis for one or more planning-days for the entire staff or for a group of staff members, in which the Guide can be used in a more dynamic way,
- ♦ to gain an overview of the assignment carried out by the school,
- ♦ to compare the responses to questions “before” and “after” the implementation of a programme for sexuality and personal relationships education,
- ♦ recurrent use of the Guide in a work group, for example by taking one section of the questionnaire at a time or by concentrating on certain specific questions for a limited period.

The Guide can be used for all classes in the school system. Most of the questions are of a general nature, although some of them may need to be reformulated in line with the needs of the age-group concerned. Some questions may be skipped completely, but most of them are relevant for both staff and pupils, irrespective of the age-group concerned. A question such as *“Is the content of gender myths about the sexuality of men and women analysed? If so, how?”* may be too advanced for pupils under the age of 12. This question and the corresponding answer may need to be modified somewhat, but basically it still applies since it involves attitudes about what girls and boys can do, and are allowed to do.

This Guide, which has been prepared by RFSU in cooperation with the County of Stockholm Association of Local Authorities, is designed to assist schools in analysing and structuring education programmes for sexuality and personal relationships. Quality assurance is a term which is often used in this context. Quality assurance involves examining and thinking about operations in a systematic and deliberate manner, with the aim of maintaining or improving the activity concerned. This Guide is based on

recent research into sexuality education and health promotion, the guidelines for the Swedish school system and RFSU's fundamental ideological commitment in the sexuality and personal relationships area.

The Guide is by no means comprehensive, since it is confined to a selection of questions for discussion and reflection. The questions have been selected in order to make the Guide useful in practical terms. We hope that it will facilitate even better sexuality education in Swedish schools, in a simple manner and without taking too much time.

## 2 Why we have prepared this Guide

All young people and children receive some form of sexuality education at school in Sweden. This is positive, and it is unique in global terms. It is easy to find examples of successful programmes dealing with sexuality and personal relationships, and Swedish schools have a high ranking in this area in international comparative studies. One reason is that adult members of the school staff respond in an open manner to questions about sexuality and relationships posed by children and young people, and this openness is a decisive factor in the pupil's fund of knowledge and in a meaningful learning process.

But the education provided could be better. The National Agency for Education's quality audit on education in the sexuality and relationships field published in 1999 indicated that the quality of programmes varied, both between schools and within the same school.

As RFSU has pointed out previously, one conclusion that may be drawn from this quality audit is that support for schools could be improved – both within the school and externally. Sexuality and relationships are often dealt

with in a grudging and niggardly manner, as if this was something the staff should be able to handle without any special training or opportunities for mutual discussion. There is no access to in-service training in many municipalities in Sweden, let alone regional resource centres which can assist the education process. It would be easy to conclude that the schools are not doing their job although, in point of fact, it may be a case of inadequate prerequisites.

In RFSU's view, education in this field maintains remarkably high standards, despite the inadequate support schools and staff receive in many districts. A high proportion of teachers, youth recreation leaders, school nurses, head teachers/head masters and other people in the school system involved in education in the sexuality and personal relationships area are making excellent contributions.

The considerable variations in quality between and within schools are unsatisfactory, however. Naturally, such differences will always exist between schools and classes – and should continue to exist – since needs and prerequisites are different. No one gains from a standardized form of education. But there is an essential difference between deliberate choices and random alternatives.

# 3 Starting points for sexuality and relationship education programmes

## a) Research on information about sexuality - in brief

Basically, issues concerning sexuality and relationships are a question of identity. Treating the learning process as a question of identity and identity development gives the subject area a meaning which extends beyond objective information. Facts about sexuality and knowledge about the human body are essential and have an obvious and fundamental part to play in the learning process. But they are not enough. Research on the health information aspects is unanimous on this point. Information, by itself, is not sufficient to change or maintain behavioural patterns – as regards the use of contraceptives for example. What is also needed is that children and young people can think about and process their notions, ideas and values in this area. The purpose of discussing values is to help children and young people to find an “inner compass” that can guide them through life and facilitate the choices they are aiming for – and to help them distinguish between what is good or bad for them and interpret and understand their feelings.

Research on information about sexuality indicates that education is more likely to be successful if it reflects a *positive view of sexuality* and has a *health promotion perspective*. In this context, health promotion means that positive aspects are the starting point, based on and reinforcing satisfactory elements in the young person’s life. Promoting positive aspects is a key protective factor. As a result, adults working in schools and in recreation centres are an important factor in establishing a context and making life



comprehensible for young people. Education or information programmes with overall “learn to say no” or “wait” messages have proved to have no effect, according to the research findings, including reports issued by the World Health Organization (WHO).

It is also important that the education programme should be *recurrent*. One-off measures tend to have less effect than repeated initiatives. As children and young people mature, they need to have opportunities to test their experience, values and information in new and different contexts. This is also because the same issues lead to new ideas and perspectives as young people acquire greater experience and more knowledge.

Education must also be seen in a social and societal perspective. Our ideas and values are permeated by the era and the place in which we live and grow up. But they are also influenced by more specific conditions and individual circumstances. In other words social factors affect human beings’ sexual socialization. This must inevitably affect the way in which we draw up sexuality education programmes for different categories of young people.

Certain issues are clearly more relevant or more important for specific groups. The social perspective means that gender, social class and sexual identity must also be regarded as factors that influence the design of the education programmes provided.

At its best, Swedish sexuality education is characterized by an interdisciplinary perspective by offering a combination of facts and processing of attitudes. School personnel employ different methods, ranging from traditional teacher-oriented techniques and films to discussion, group work and value-analysis exercises. This broad approach is strongly supported by research findings at the international level, including an Italian study on sexuality education over a 20-year period. This study indicates that a “multifocal approach” is called for. In other words, sexuality must be tack-

led from various perspectives – both social and biological – and involve a variety of themes and methods.

As a result, research indicates, among other things, that:

- ♦ sexuality education should utilize interactive methods, in addition to the dissemination of factual information,
- ♦ pupils must have an opportunity to analyse norms and values,
- ♦ sexuality education should convey a positive view of sexuality,
- ♦ sexuality education should be a recurrent feature throughout the pupil's school career, and
- ♦ it should take the pupil's circumstances and experience into account.

### **b) RFSU's view on sexuality and school education in sexuality and personal relationships**

Ever since it was founded in 1933, RFSU has regarded the school system as one of the key elements in sexuality education, and of the utmost importance for the sexual well-being of children and young people. Right from the start, from RFSU's point of view a further aim in sexuality education has been the promotion of equality between women and men. RFSU considers that school children should have a broad education in issues concerning sexuality and personal relationships, which includes discussion of physical aspects, values and the views of society as a whole on sexual matters. RFSU also considers that all adults working in schools should receive training to improve education in the sexuality and relationships area.

In RFSU's opinion, there are three fundamental freedoms which are essential prerequisites if human beings are to experience a sense of self-respect and be aware of their own intrinsic value. These freedoms are: the freedom to choose, the freedom to enjoy and freedom of action. In the case of sexuality education, RFSU considers that this includes:

**Freedom to choose:** the right to personally define your own sexuality and the form it takes, and when you want to have sex or say no. Schools are not entitled to criticize the way in which pupils express their sexuality, providing no one else suffers.

**Freedom to enjoy:** schools must convey a positive view of sexuality.

**Freedom to be oneself:** schools must have a favourable basic approach to the search for a personal sexual identity as part of the process of establishing an individual personality.

Schools must adopt a clear stance in their contacts with pupils as regards violations of these freedoms, and therefore it is important to stress opportunities for pleasure and enjoyment in exploring sexuality, and the fact that sexuality has an intrinsic value. Sexuality education also involves training in making personal decisions. It is essential that schools adopt a positive stance to sexual variations and life styles in order to let people discover and understand themselves. This also applies to attitudes to acts of harassment which infringe on the individual's desire to determine his or her own sexual life.

RFSU also considers that education concerning sexuality and personal relationships should be based on an equality and equality of opportunity perspective. We must all come to terms with gender myths and current inhibitive attitudes to the roles of women and men and sexuality. We regard gender myths as an approach in which men and women are seen as opposites – in other words a divisive (dualistic) and exclusive (dichotomized) approach. In their turn, such gender myths and attitudes influence our views on homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality and heterosexuality. Gender issues are linked to the three sexual freedoms of choice, enjoyment and action. Personal identity is also based on views about the sexuality and

gender of girls and boys. RFSU considers that girls (and women) and boys (and men) have not yet achieved equal status in a sexual or social context, and that social norms for male and female sexuality differ. There continues to be differences in the freedom of action permitted for girls and boys. Girls suffer more than boys from the current genus system, and this also applies to homosexuals in comparison with heterosexuals, working-class girls in comparison with their middle-class counterparts, and immigrants in comparison with Swedes. As a result, RFSU considers that gender aspects must be discussed. Schools should actively encourage a change in the attitude to the gender of boys and girls, and discussing gender issues with pupils involves analysis of this question. As adults, we must take care to ensure that we do not unconsciously maintain and reinforce current gender roles.

Gender issues are often exclusively a question for women and girls – especially girls. It is essential that boys are also taken into account, not merely as a result of the negative consequences for girls but also from the boys' point of view – for example ways in which the genus system influences them and acts as a constraint.

## **4** Planning education in sexuality and personal relationships

The planning model outlined in the following is simple, and by no means comprehensive. The aim is to facilitate planning, implementation and evaluation of current assignments or future activities.

In principle, the model and the questions in the questionnaire section are interrelated, but in this case the four questionnaire units are matched by six starting points to which four perspectives have been added: promotion, reflection, gender/equality and an adult/young people's perspective.

Some of the points covered under this heading are also dealt with in the questionnaire section and so less space is devoted to them here.

## Prerequisites

Take stock of your prerequisites for implementing a consistent sexuality and personal relationships programme. What support do you have? What resources are available in the form of money, materials and textbooks? Do you already have the expertise required within the school?

## Organization

This involves the way in which the school handles its task – the work group, planning, who conducts the programme and similar questions. Organizational aspects affect the prerequisites for pupils to receive a comparable education in this area. This item is covered in the questionnaire section under the following headings: *c) organization* and *d) planning and responsibilities*.

## Goals and theory

There are no practical activities that do not have some sort of theoretical base, although the theories may be visible to a greater or lesser extent, (un)conscious or specifically formulated. A theory is simply systematized knowledge. Theories about sexuality are part of what may be described as an approach to sexuality, together with values, and sexuality education is based on this approach – in other words the didactic content: why, what, for whom and how.

Sexuality approaches can be discussed at different levels, the most comprehensive of which is the way that sexuality is understood. Is sexuality to be regarded as primarily a biological phenomenon or does it have a social basis? Our view of sexuality is also affected by the patterns and rules surrounding sexuality in a given society or culture, and may be defined on a scale ranging

from repressive to supportive. Does society primarily regard sexuality as positive or negative? As a risk or as an opportunity? What connotations are applied? Is sexuality something which should be “supported”, or should it be “held back”? What is our attitude to sexual variations? Questions of this nature are also relevant at the personal and group levels.

The attitude to sexuality among young people is one level of approach, and this is perhaps where society’s views can be seen in their clearest form. The question of whether it is considered that young people should have sex before they are “grown up” and have come of age or are married provides an excellent example of this. What is considered acceptable or unacceptable for young people’s behaviour is another aspect of the same phenomenon. What is our attitude to sexuality in the case of girls or boys? Is there a difference and, if so, what form does it take, and why? This takes us into gender aspects, which we emphasize in our approach to sexuality education. Our attitudes to various sexual acts are yet another level in this context.

Theory also includes our experience of the most appropriate form for a learning programme and the question of what works or doesn’t work – for example the importance of using interactive techniques. Another aspect is that the programme should be based on knowledge and tried and tested experience, and should distinguish between “facts” and “values”. Obviously, education in the sexuality and relationships area is also permeated by values. This is inevitable since, for example, the principle of the equal value of all human beings has not always been accepted in a historical perspective, and this also applies to the assumption that education should counter discrimination against homosexuals.

Goals are, of course, concerned with what we want to achieve and perhaps what message the programme should convey. Goals influence the message, if there is one. What is/are the object/s of the programme? Is the object of the programme to reduce the risk of the less desirable consequences of

sexuality, to prepare young people for the sexual aspects of their lives, to discuss ethics in their choice of life style or to protect young people from venereal diseases? Do we give boys and girls different messages without actually intending to do so. More or less unconsciously, we embody and convey messages about girls and boys, about homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality and heterosexuality, about contraception, about HIV and about love and relationships which may be interpreted in terms of “good” or “bad. We need to reflect and work on our own values and try to be conscious about the values and messages we are conveying in sexuality education.

## **Contents**

Young people can talk about sexuality and personal relationships until the cows come home, if they get the chance. But we have to be selective and adapt to the needs of the group we are working with. Some issues are more relevant than others, depending on the location and background. (See also the *Contents and Methods* heading in the questionnaire section.)

## **Methods**

The methods we decide to use depend both on the programme’s overall goals and the purpose of the specific session concerned. It is particularly important to consider whether methods have been selected which give pupils an opportunity to reflect on issues concerning sexuality and personal relationships. You should also think about which themes can be discussed in a larger group and which are more appropriate in a single-sex group.

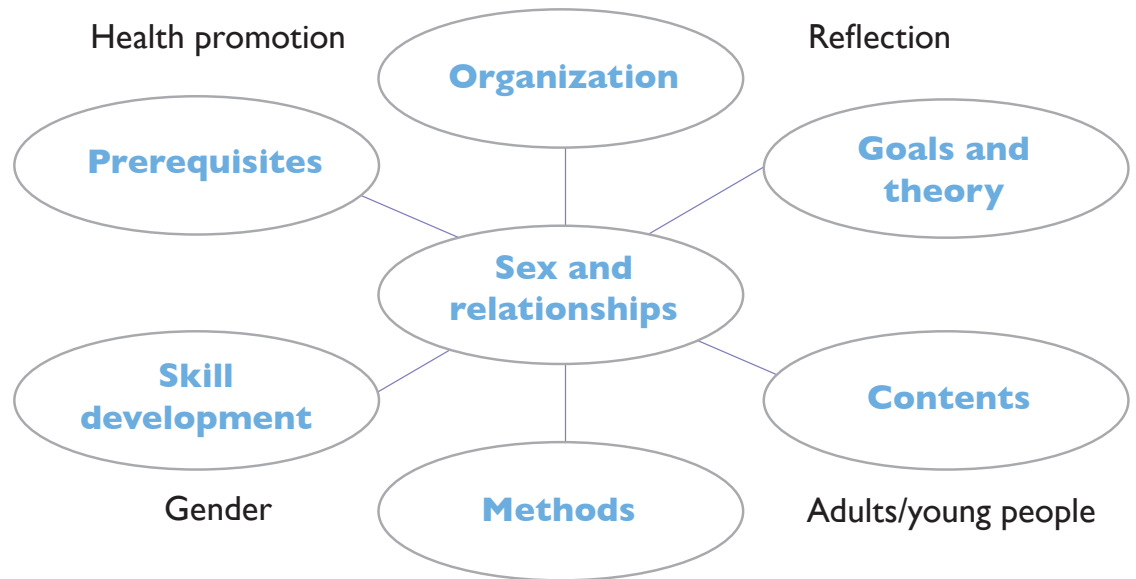
## **Skills development**

In-service training and ongoing skills development are just as crucial in the sexuality and personal relationships field as they are in other subject areas. This may involve facts, methods or personal reflection. Perhaps you want to learn how to work in a group/forum format, improve your hand-

ling of group discussion, find out more about physical changes in puberty or the global HIV/AIDS situation, or acquire a historical perspective on sexuality. Not everyone working in schools needs to do or know the same things. A satisfactory range of expertise within the school is probably a more desirable objective.

### Perspectives

We would like to supplement the above starting points by proposing some overriding perspectives which should permeate the programme. There is no clear-cut demarcation line between starting points and perspectives, however. In practice they overlap, and some questions are covered both under the starting-point and perspectives headings.





## Promotive perspectives

The health-promotion perspective was mentioned briefly on page 6. This approach assumes that sexuality can be employed in a positive manner, is something that most people want, and that young people can take care of their lives but may need guidance. One point to bear in mind is that there should not be an undue focus on the risks involved. Obviously, the negative aspects cannot be ignored, and they should be mentioned and discussed. But it is all too easy to spend too much time on what is, per se, a perfectly understandable desire to protect young people. Instead, there should be a greater focus on helping pupils to understand life and their own inner world, and to improve their ability to manage their lives. This can be achieved by making them aware of their own values and opinions, and by giving them an opportunity to think about such matters and the potential choices they face later in life. A promotive perspective also involves a positive approach to sexuality and the human body.

## Reflection

Everyone needs to reflect on and come to terms with the attitudes, values and norms that prevail in society as a whole, in the social group in which they operate, and at the personal level. This helps them to become aware of their values and find solutions or ways of managing various situations. Why, for example, do girls who take condoms with them to a disco tend to be regarded as “sluttish” – or maybe this is simply not true? Is this a “group opinion” with which most people privately disagree?

Reflection may involve thinking about personal, individual matters as well as general issues. One example of personal aspects reflected in a group context is the way in which people embark on a personal relationship, or how they terminate it in a reasonably decent manner. Questions such as what do people think about abortion from a social, ethical or religious perspective, and why does Sweden have the legislation it has, involve both

the individual and society in a broad sense. Another example is the way in which we personally, and society as a whole, treats people who fail to comply with established norms – for example people who have been diagnosed as HIV positive. And how would we react if a pupil or a teacher at the school turned out to be HIV positive?

When leading a discussion, it is important to avoid moralization. This allows pupils to think about values and process them. Avoiding moralization means handling pupils' ideas and choices on their own terms and on their own conditions. Otherwise they will become silent. There are no given answers when discussing values, and there are no “rights” or “wrongs” – providing that the opinions and values expressed are not clearly undemocratic. On the other hand, questions which clarify issues and challenge pupils' ideas or attitudes are an obvious tool in this context.

### **Gender/equality perspectives**

The simplest explanation of gender is to say that gender involves the social patterns expected of girls/women and boys/men, purely on the basis of their biological gender, and the way such expectations become established.

Conditions and prerequisites for girls and boys in the sexuality, love and personal relationships area differ, and discussion is called for.

We need to think about whether education in sexuality and personal relationships confirms or questions the prevailing norms for the sexuality of girls/women and boys/men. This may involve both the contents of the programme and the methods employed. One example may be dividing the class into groups of boys and girls. Why do we do this? What we want to talk about and how we do it? Group discussions exclusively with boys or girls are an excellent method, but they can also become a “secret club”

in which girls and boys receive confirmation of myths and ideas about themselves and the other sex.

A gender perspective also includes discussion of limits and sexual harassment. Limits are individual, and the same action may acquire different meanings, depending on the context. But crossing someone else's frontier involves exercising power. Sexual harassment means behaviour which is unwelcome in words or deeds, making the recipient feel violated, frightened or uneasy. The form of harassment which has attracted the greatest attention and is most common is practised by boys on girls, but the reverse situation also occurs when girls subject boys to harassment. And boys also harass other boys, and girls harass other girls. Sexual harassment appears to occur most frequently at the junior secondary school level, particularly in the eighth grade.

### **Adult/young people's perspectives**

What adults think young people should discuss, think and feel in the sexuality and relationships area does not always comply with the ideas held by young people themselves. We need to have information about young people's sexual behaviour and their way of thinking if we are to avoid an adult perspective that stifles the young people's perspective. Pupils must also be able to participate and influence the course content.

But we cannot simply let pupils determine every aspect of the programme. This is partly because the adult world wants to impart specific knowledge and information to young people. Pupils should not be allowed to avoid themes such as gender roles or homosexuality. Another reason is that young people do not always know what they need to know – and this applies particularly to junior secondary school pupils. And this would be impossible in any case? Their limited experience and sensitive age mean that many innermost secrets are inaccessible for them – and our task is to put these

secrets into words. As one boy in the ninth grade put it: “That was precisely what I wanted to know, although I had no idea what it was”.

Another way of increasing pupil participation and influence in the programme is to use an interactive methodology. This gives pupils an opportunity to steer the content of a specific theme in a direction that suits them. As one curator puts it: “If you let the kids discuss things, they say it all themselves. As an adult, you don’t need to worry about what you have to say. They say it for you, and they listen to each other”.

### **Exclusion pedagogy**

What we refer to as “exclusion pedagogy” simply means that the programme or the information provided ignores certain ways of behaving or feeling – more or less unconsciously. Exclusion pedagogy is a constraint on the individual’s possibilities and experience of his or her personal identity. It involves terming and describing individuals in a manner which complies with myths and expectations, applying a societal norm which excludes other ways of thinking, feeling and living. Generalizations are transformed into individual truths, sometimes in an unconsciously repressive manner. The clearest form of exclusion pedagogy occurs in descriptions of the roles of boys and girls, but it may also apply, for example to heterosexuals and homosexuals, or people with other ethnical origin than the majority.

As a result, exclusion pedagogy ignores certain ways of living and feeling (and may assume other ways). It may be a question of what gestures are permitted for boys and girls, the phrases that are considered appropriate, what they are “allowed” to be interested in, or what feelings they can express and who they can fall in love with. Exclusion pedagogy also means that we are in danger of avoiding saying what we *are* by referring, instead, to what we *are not* – taking certain life styles and ways of feeling as our starting point, or even rejecting them. It may be simply a question of “boys cannot wear a cap like that, because it is too girlish”. But in that case,

what is “boyish”? There is a tendency to define oneself in negative terms by saying: “I am not that or that”, instead of saying what you are, or what you feel, want, or dream about.

Exclusion pedagogy is a question of how adults deal with and refer to boys and girls. If you make some statement in the classroom about the way boys or girls behave, you are simultaneously saying that there is no alternative, even though we know that this is not the case. The rest of the world – parents, brothers and sisters, friends and teachers – expects a 13-year-old boy to behave in a certain manner, within given frameworks, although such expectations may vary, depending on the social class involved, or the cultural or religious background. This applies to girls too, of course.

Another example of exclusion pedagogy is if a teacher talks about homosexuality, but simultaneously makes it clear that he or she is not homosexual and would be surprised to find that any member of the class had such inclinations. This seems to apply to male teachers more often than women teachers, and it affects boys more than girls. This tells us that male teachers do not want to be regarded as homosexual and thus also imply that homosexuality – and homosexual individuals is something of less value.

The exclusion process is constantly at work and, unfortunately, it is unavoidable. Broadly speaking, we indulge in exclusion pedagogy every time we open our mouths, since we are obliged to make generalizations if we are to handle the realities we encounter. The aim should be, however, to pay more attention to what we say, thus avoiding the pitfalls as far as possible.

We should also mention an “inclusion” approach, as a counterbalance to the exclusion phenomenon. Inclusion involves a range of various types of references. The aim of information about sexuality is to extend the framework for what we are allowed to feel and be. Nothing can be assumed in advance. This approach, the programme content and the methods employed

help us to make pupils more open and it increases their respect for each other and for themselves.

## 5 Sexuality and personal relationships in the curriculum and the syllabus

When sexuality education was introduced in the Swedish school system in the 1950s, there was a considerable normative emphasis, or a “character-forming” element, to cite the wording of the guidelines. According to the teacher handbook of the time, abstinence on the part of pupils while they were growing up was to be encouraged, for example, sexuality was to be confined to marriage (with the exception of masturbation which was an accepted form of sexual containment), and homosexuality was something that pupils – at any rate the boys – should avoid. The emphasis is different today, when the normative aspects involve democratic values in society and respect for other human beings – and might be encapsulated in the concept of “fundamental values”. Today’s school system is expected to counter discrimination against homosexuals, for example, and to promote equality between women and men. In other respects, the school system is to provide an objective and comprehensive education, and “be open to different viewpoints and encourage their expression” (Lpo 94, the Swedish curriculum), with an emphasis on personal standpoints.

Three guidelines for education in the sexuality and personal relationships field in the Swedish school system have been issued. Over the years, the terminology in this area has changed. The first guidelines were published in 1956, when the area was termed “sexuality education”, and were reissued in 1967. The second guidelines, which were much more extensive, were published in 1977 under the heading “education in personal relationships”.

The third guidelines were issued in 1995, as a “reference”, and the Lpo 94 and Lpf 94 curricula called the subject area “sexuality and personal relationships”.

## Curricula

The relevant curricula have little to say about education in sexuality and personal relationships. This topic area is only mentioned in Lpo 94 – which covers preschool classes and day centres in addition to compulsory basic schooling – under the head teacher’s responsibilities heading. The head teacher’s responsibilities include contacts with parents, pupil participation, remedial teaching and efforts to counter racism and mobbing. Sexuality and relationships are covered by the phrase: “*interdisciplinary areas are to be integrated into educational programmes* in various subjects. Interdisciplinary areas include environmental and transportation issues, equality, consumer matters, sexuality and personal relationships and the risks involved in the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs”.

The curriculum for senior secondary education (Lpf 94) includes the following passage: “In the case of senior secondary and special senior secondary education, the head teacher has special responsibility for ensuring that “pupils receive information about sexuality and personal relationships, transportation issues and the risks involved in the consumption of tobacco, alcohol, narcotics and other drugs”.

The curricula also state that sexuality and personal relationships is a mandatory subject area both for compulsory (primary and junior secondary) education and for senior secondary schools.

## Syllabus for compulsory schools

According to the targets which pupils are expected to achieve after nine years of school education: “the pupil is to be capable of utilizing his or her

knowledge of nature, human beings and their activities as arguments for standpoints on issues concerning the environment, health and personal relationships”.

Biology is one of the subjects covered under the general science heading, and the targets include the following brief lines on health and personal relationships:

“The aim is to endeavour to:

- ♦ develop the ability to discuss questions concerning health and personal relationships on the basis of recent biological findings and personal experience”.

The presentation of sub-topics in the biology area also states that:

“Biology treats the human being as a biological entity. This includes information about cells, internal organs and their functions, and the manner in which they are coordinated. Questions such as health, drugs and functional impairments are to be discussed. Issues concerning love, sexuality and personal relationships are to be dealt with from the perspective of the need to take care of oneself and of others”.

The targets pupils are expected to have achieved in the fifth year of biology are defined as follows: “The pupil must:

- ♦ be aware of key organs in their own bodies and their functions, and
- ♦ have insights into human reproduction, birth, puberty, aging and death”.

After nine years of biology:

“The pupil must:

- ♦ understand the meaning of conception,



- ♦ understand the biological aspects of sexual life, contraceptive methods and sexually transmissible infections,
- ♦ be aware of key organs and organ systems in their own bodies and the manner in which they function jointly,
- ♦ be able to discuss sexuality and personal relationships and, in this context, show respect for other people’s standpoints and for different types of relationship”.

In the case of the nature and structure of the social subjects area, the syllabus reads as follows:

“These subjects include discussion of, and reflection on, concepts such as identity, sexuality, love and equality. This subject area also covers personal and other relationships, views about humanity and linguistic usage, with the aim of utilizing opportunities to discuss value-related issues in this context”.

The syllabus for religious knowledge covers personal relationships as follows:

”This subject elucidates personal relationships and equality from a religious and philosophical perspective. This also includes discussion of the consequences of standpoints on religious issues on vital decisions and relationships between human beings”.

## 6 Ways of using this Guide

There are several different ways of applying this Guide. It may be used by school administrators, by work groups in a particular school, in an individual context, or at all three levels simultaneously. Naturally, the user must decide the degree to which the Guide is to be used extensively or at an in-depth level.

In the case of school administrators and work groups, it is recommended that the first step should be that everyone concerned should think about and answer the questionnaire individually, and then compare notes. The group can decide whether responses to the questions should be oral or in writing. The advantage of written responses is that this ensures a clearer basis for discussion with colleagues and also provides a reference point for subsequent answers to questions such as: “*What progress has been made?*” and “*How would I respond today?*”. Written responses are also a simple way of documenting aspects of the process.

The questionnaire is relatively extensive – even after the process of selection and elimination which it has undergone. All the questions have a purpose. This does not mean, however, that the Guide has to be followed in every detail. Use the sections and questions which you consider to be relevant for your workplace. Skip questions (for the time being) which do not seem to be particularly important. Perhaps there are certain questions which you want to start with, or which you want to concentrate on.

It is obviously desirable that all the questions should be answered or discussed, but if time is a critical factor, it is better to make a selection of the questions which you want to cover rather than not use the Guide at all. It is also better to try to answer/think about some of the questions in detail rather than skim them all and make superficial responses which are not particularly useful.

The Guide can also be used over an extended period, possibly over a full school year or even longer. This involves periodic concentration on certain sections of the Guide, and giving the process of working with the Guide (and the programme/subject area) a chance to develop over time.

A few of the questions are of a “yes/no” nature, but most of them are not. If there is no simple answer, it is best to avoid unduly brief responses. Concrete and precise answers are more useful.

**Example 1:** *Give examples of the content of sexuality education.* A response such as “Relationships” does not help much. The answer needs to be more concrete – for example: “Masturbation, the first time, information about contraceptive pills, morning-after pills and condoms, homosexuality, how to make contact, value-training concerning attitudes to girls/boys who have many partners, anatomy, etc.”

**Example 2:** *How do the contents handle gender myths about male and female sexuality?* If you answer “Questions and discussion” this gives no indication of what you actually do. A better response might be: “For example by discussing whether there are different norms for sexuality among boys and for girls. A historical flashback on the rights of women and men. Separate group discussion for girls and boys on their expectations and how they think boys/girls should behave”.

Further thought is required for questions under the Discussion and Reflection heading. Do the responses reflect personal attitudes or the school’s? It is helpful to discuss these questions with colleagues – both with members of the staff involved in sexuality and relationship education, and with other members of staff who are not involved in this kind of teaching.

# 7 The Questions

The questions are divided into four sections, and are consecutively numbered. It does not matter what order the questions are dealt with. In some cases, further information may be required before making a definite response – skip this question for the time being and return to it later.

## a) Prerequisites

This section provides a checklist of the existing prerequisites for successful programmes in the sexuality and personal relationships field. It covers areas such as support, resources and in-service training – in other words it indicates the basis for implementation.

1. In what ways does the school administration support/facilitate the education assignment for sexuality and personal relationships?
2. Do you feel that sexuality education has the support of the teaching staff?
3. Does the school have a budget item specifically earmarked for conducting sexuality education?
4. Is there some opposition to education in sexuality and relationships within the school? Who lies behind it? What forms does it take?
5. Does the school have the National Agency for Education's "You feel love, but do you understand?" reference material for sexuality and personal relationships? Have you read it?
6. What teaching materials\* does the school use? Perhaps you should prepare a list which is available to all members of staff.

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\* We regard all materials utilized by the school in its education programmes as teaching materials, including textbooks, handbooks, brochures, works of art, newspaper articles, films, fiction (literature), comics, textiles, visual arts, etc.

- 7.** Are there any other teaching materials missing from your list? If so, what are they?
- 8.** Who do you turn to if you want to obtain teaching materials or to get help in finding materials?
- 9.** Does the staff have opportunities for in-service training in the sexuality and relationships area, if they want to receive such training?
- 10.** What type of further education/training or in-service training have members of the staff already received?
- 11.** Have the staff had an opportunity to learn various interactive teaching techniques, for example group discussion or values classification methodology/training?
- 12.** Are members of staff aware of the existing opportunities for further education/training or in-service training?
- 13.** Is there a need for in-service training, or do staff members wish to receive such training? If so, give examples of what is required.

### **Discussion and reflection**

- 14.** What do you know about young people's sexual behaviour today?
- 15.** Are there questions/themes which one or more people regard as particularly difficult to discuss? What are they? How can this problem be solved?

- 16.** Discuss the staff's prerequisites for tackling issues concerning sexuality and personal relationships.

### **b) Contents and methods**

This section deals with some aspects of the contents and methodology on which the programme should be based. Fact-oriented and specifically anatomical questions are not included – not because they are less important but because this type of information appears to be fully catered for already, according to previous reports.

- 17.** Give examples of the contents of sexuality education.
- 18.** Give examples of the teaching methods you normally use.
- 19.** In what ways do pupils have an opportunity to reflect on their opinions and attitudes to sexuality and personal relationships, and to process them? Give examples of themes and methods.
- 20.** What do you think about the balance in the teaching programme between factual information and opportunities for reflection?
- 21.** Is the content of gender myths about the sexuality of men and women analysed? If so, how?
- 22.** Give examples of the way in which equality and equality of opportunity issues are tackled. Are they handled in the same way for boys and for girls?
- 23.** How are homosexuality issues integrated into the programme?

- 24.** In what ways do pupils have opportunities to discuss and think about the messages girls and boys receive about sexuality (for example from society as a whole, their families, friends and the church)?
- 25.** Do pupils have an opportunity to talk about or discuss issues in a small-group format? If so, how often and what are the topics?
- 26.** How do you handle sexual harassment in the programme?
- 27.** How do you handle issues concerning contraceptive techniques (condoms, contraceptive pills, emergency contraceptive pills, morning-after pills)?
- 28.** Does the school distribute condoms in connection with lessons?
- 29.** Are pupils able to obtain condoms at the school in some other context?
- 30.** Is there a teacher or another member of staff who is responsible for the distribution of condoms? If so, who?

### Discussions and reflections

- 31.** What do you think are the key issues in education in sexuality and personal relationships? What priority do you give to the subject content?
- 32.** To what extent does the school have a gender perspective in its education programme? What attitudes do the staff have to male/female aspects?

- 33.** Do members of staff involved in education in sexuality and personal relationships discuss the sexuality of girls and boys? What is your view of the norms that apply for boys and girls? What norms do you think should apply for boys and girls?
- 34.** To what extent do you think that the school provides a supportive environment and promotes a satisfactory interaction between girls and boys?
- 35.** Is education in sexuality and personal relationships dealt with from a risk perspective or with a promotive emphasis? How should a programme which is promotive/supportive be designed?

### **c) Organization**

This section is concerned with the manner in which the school draws up its sexuality and personal relationships programme – for example who conducts it and the way in which the school ensures that pupils receive an equivalent education.

- 36.** Does the school have a permanent work group for the sexuality and personal relationships programme? If so, who are the members of this group?
- 37.** Does the school have an overall plan for the way in which sexuality and personal relationships are handled in the various age-groups, ranging from grades 1-9 in primary and junior secondary education to senior secondary schools? Do you consider that the time you devote to this area in the school year, or the time that you have at your disposal, is sufficient to achieve your aims?



- 38.** According to the curriculum, sexuality education should be an interdisciplinary course. How is this achieved? What core subject areas deal with sexuality? What other subjects cover this area?
- 39.** Which teaching and other staff categories conduct sexuality education? List them.
- 40.** Do you work with external organizations or individuals? If so, name them.
- 41.** In what way do you cooperate with your local advisory centre for young people (social and medical counselling)?
- 42.** How do you evaluate or follow up sexuality education? Who does it?

### **Discussion and reflection**

- 43.** How do you guarantee that all the pupils in your school receive roughly comparable or equivalent education in this area? If there is no such guarantee, what is the reason?

### **d) Planning and responsibilities**

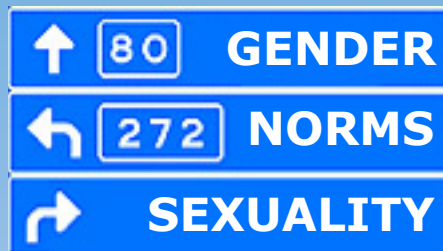
This section covers issues such as the goals for education in sexuality and personal relationships. It is important, for example, to have a work-plan that includes evaluation or monitoring of the programme in order to maintain or improve its quality. The targets established and the aims of the programme have an impact on the contents and on the methods employed.

- 44.** Does the school have a written work-plan for its sexuality education programme?

- 45.** Which staff member/s is/are responsible for sexuality education?
- 46.** What are the school's objectives in this area?
- 47.** Has the school formulated an approach to sexuality in its work-plan on which you can base your assignments? If so, what is this approach?
- 48.** Does the work-plan contain any explicit messages about sexuality and personal relationships? If so, what are they?
- 49.** To what extent do pupils participate in drawing up the sexuality education programme?

### **Discussion and reflection**

- 50.** Why is sexuality education important?
- 51.** Does your teaching contain unconscious or unintentional messages? Does this also apply to the underlying message about sexuality which "we" (private individuals, schools and society) may give young people? Is there any difference in the impact on girls or boys?
- 52.** What is implied by the phrase "a positive view of sexuality"? What does it mean for you?



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