

Headline **We need to get right module for sex education**  
Date **04 Mar 2010**  
MediaTitle **The Star**  
Section **Nation**  
Journalist **N/A**  
Frequency **Daily**  
Circ / Read **293,375 / 1,026,812**

Language **English**  
Page No **L-N45**  
Article Size **171 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
Color **Black/white**  
ADValue **3,104**  
PRValue **9,313**



# We need to get right module for sex education

DEBATE regarding the teaching of sex education in school has been ongoing, with the recent comment from the teacher's union saying that teachers are not trained to teach sex education.

I agree with both the need for sex education in school and also the reservation of teaching sex education. I disagree, however, that sex education will lead to more premarital sex. But poor handling of the subject can lead to students being exposed to half-truths that can be detrimental.

How can we approach sex education in schools? First, we can introduce a half-weekly counselling office in all secondary schools staffed by a qualified nurse trained in counselling adolescents.

Such a person should be qualified to handle sex education. The counsellor or nurse can have an office three days in a week, with perhaps two-hour contact sessions per day. He can also be tasked with teaching lower secondary school children on how to take care of both their

physical and mental health.

I remember in primary school that we used to have classes on how to brush our teeth. What I am suggesting is of course more complicated, but along the same lines.

A professional nurse can teach young adolescents how to take care of personal hygiene and mental health. The nurse can also have other practical uses in a school.

Second, we must know how we want to deliver the sex education message. We cannot take it too lightly. What sex education mod-

ule is right for our schools? What should we call it? Sex education is not just about sex, it should be broadened to include themes in adolescent sexuality.

How should the subject be approached? Conservatives do have valid criticism as we simply haven't done enough local studies to create a locally relevant module on adolescent sexuality.

As this is a practical course, it has to reflect the local realities and perhaps more room should be given in getting students to bring their

issues and knowledge to the discussion. Such a programme perhaps has to be less top-down but more participatory. But before that can be decided on, some objective research needs to be done. The curriculum would have to reflect local needs.

Finally, when should sex education be introduced? In lower secondary or upper secondary? I feel that it would be more useful to introduce the programme from lower secondary, running all the way through upper secondary. It should be about coping positively with one's sexuality.

We may be still some way from introducing an effective sex education module in school, but we should all start thinking about it not only in light of the risk posed by HIV/AIDS, but also to educate our adolescents about the risk of teen pregnancies, STDs, as well as coping with the challenges that emerge from the shaping of one's sexual identity.

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