

PREFERRED METHODS OF SEX EDUCATION IN AMSTERDAM

Sex education in Amsterdam:
What they do and why they choose to do it.

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Abstract

Sex education in the Netherlands has been regarded by many as exemplary. Around the world the phrase “Double Dutch” is known as the term of using both the condom and the pill. The actual effectiveness of sexuality education in the Netherlands has rarely been studied. The teachers themselves must decide what they believe will be the most effective methods of sexuality education. This begs one to question why a teacher chooses the methods they have chosen and what makes them believe that these methods are effective. Because there is no research on how sexuality education is directly influencing students, teachers must rely upon their own assumptions of how their classes affect their students.

To study these questions, five teachers in Amsterdam were interviewed about the sexual education that they teach. The teachers were asked about what methods they used to teach sexuality education, where they found the methods, why they thought these were effective, and what influence they felt sexuality education had on students.

Many of the teachers questioned were using methods to teach sexuality that had already been developed, such as *Promotie*, *Lang Leve de Liefde*, and the chapter in *Biologie Voor Jou*. They believed that these methods had already shown to be effective. To measure the effectiveness of their curriculum they relied on students reactions. All commented that students ask many questions and enjoy sexuality education. The teachers believed that by answering all the students’ questions the students would have no more questions. Students tend to learn more if they enjoy a subject, because the students enjoyed sexuality education the teachers believed the students would retain the information they learned.

Sex education in Amsterdam: What they do and why they choose to do it.

Introduction

When I was sixteen, I was part of SHAPE (Sexual Health and AIDS awareness Peer Education). Our mentor, Susan Caskey, showed our group a documentary, *Teens & Sex in Europe: A Story of Rights, Respect & Responsibility*, which she had helped to produce while doing a study tour in Germany, France, and the Netherlands with Advocates for Youth. It showed how wonderful the Dutch sexual education system was and talked about the incredibly low rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. After watching this documentary I made the goal to someday travel to Amsterdam and study sexuality education.

I came with aspirations of learning new teaching techniques and methods of teaching sexuality education to youth. I had a glorified concept of totally comprehensive sexuality education in The Netherlands. I believed I would be traveling to the utopia of open sexuality. I was surprised by what I found when I arrived. Although the Netherlands is more open and advanced in the realm sexuality than most countries in the world it was not as open as I expected it to be. The methods were open and discussed but not in every school and not always in an incredibly open way. I realized that schools were much different in Amsterdam than they were in the United States and because of this I have had to slightly alter my approach to my research. I am still extremely impressed with the Netherlands and the sexuality education system; there are a lot of things about sexuality education that the Dutch can teach me and the rest of the world. I have also realized that there are many other factors leading to the low teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates.

To study the effectiveness of a sexuality program takes many months and an extreme amount of work. That is why I decided that I wanted to study the methods of sexuality education used in Amsterdam schools and why those methods are the preferred ones. To carry out this study I have interviewed teachers from different high schools in Amsterdam about the methods of sexuality education used in their classrooms. I also looked at the materials they have used.

What I am learning about sexual education in Amsterdam schools will be helpful to me and other sexual educators around the world because we will see a new way of teaching sexuality education in schools. The opinions and attitudes of sexuality education teachers have great impact on the student's ability to open up and talk about sexuality with their teacher. If the teacher does not care and behaves closed off the students will do the same. If a teacher is open and frank with students and portrays that sexual health and responsibility is important, the students will reciprocate the same attitudes. By looking at Amsterdam's sexuality education teachers and their attitudes towards sexuality education we will be able to look inward at our own attitudes and see what we can change to make our sexuality education more productive.

This research will be helpful for the teachers of Amsterdam because they will be able to compare their opinions to those of other teachers. Some of the teachers have not contemplated how their attitudes towards their sexuality education methods have impacted their classes. By looking at this research hopefully they can hear about different techniques that are being used by other teachers.

Literature Review

The Netherlands is known around the world for its tolerance. The phrase “Double Dutch” is known around the world as the term of using both the condom and the pill. Many journals on sex education refer to how wonderful sex education in the Netherlands is and that many other western cultures could learn a thing or two from Dutch schools. I have firmly believed that Dutch schools must have the answer to effective sexuality education, because the teen pregnancy and STD rates are so low. In 2004 the teen pregnancy rate in The Netherlands was 12.8 pregnancies per 1000 females age 15-19, while the teen birth rate was 4.6 per 1000 females age 15-19 years old (Ferguson, Vanwesenbeeck, Knijn; 2008). This is much lower than the US rate of 41.2 and UK rate of 37.7 births per 100 females aged 15-19 years of age. These figures have led me to wonder what can cause such a striking difference.

The Netherlands has been set up along the pillar system which is called the “Polder Model”. Because of the many different religious and political groups the people of the Netherlands decided a system of 'I won't bother you if you don't bother me'. There are Protestant, Catholic, and non-secular pillars. This means that there are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and nonreligious schools, newspapers, TV channels, and political parties. All people used to stay within their own pillar, although now more and more of these pillars are mixing together. All the schools receive the same funding from the government, no matter what their pillar is, and have the ability to run their school in the way that they wish. There are curriculum requirements but very few restrictions.

Schools in Amsterdam are supposed to have some form of sex education in their classes but there is no regulated formula for how those classes have been set up.

Each school uses the methods they wish. Many schools use programs such as “Lang Lieve de Liefde” (Long Live Love) or *Promotie* (A teachers aid organization), or have speakers come in from the GGD (Public Health Service). Schools can choose to have as little or as much sex education in their schools.

“The national government prescribes very general criteria for the quality of education. The local school board determines the actual content of teaching. Especially sensitive subjects as history and sex education are largely left to local responsibilities” (Dankmijer, 1992).

Because the government does not have specific regulations on sex education it varies greatly from school to school. Because of this some argue that the sex education cannot be the only reason for such low rates of pregnancy in the Netherlands

There are many other factors to the low rate of pregnancy in The Netherlands. Dutch teens seem to be having sex guided by moral principle more often than their US or British counterparts. “In the Netherlands a majority of both males and females gave ‘love and commitment’ as their primary reason for first intercourse, with ‘opportunity’, ‘physical attraction’ and ‘peer pressure’ scoring much lower. In the UK, however, while ‘love and commitment’ scored high among girls, boys were more strongly influenced by peer pressure, physical attraction and opportunity” (Loon, 2003). The fact that there are easily accessible youth friendly services in the Netherlands is also a major contributing factor. Dutch girls do not need a parent’s permission or even a full medical exam to obtain birth control. This helps in leading to a very high use of hormonal contraceptives. Other reasons that the Netherlands has such a low teen pregnancy rate are given by Loon in his article, *Lessons in Dutch*

Mythology, are that teen parents do not get much help from the welfare system and that there is a large social stigma against teen and lone parenting (Loon, 2003).

Teen attitudes toward sex in the Netherlands contribute to their increased condom use. “The majority (63% of boys and 75% of girls) disapprove of sexual intercourse between two people who do not have strong feelings for each other.” (De Graff, 2005). Parents, school, and the media in the Netherlands emphasize that love is very much attached to sex, and that sex should not be casual. In the movie *Teens & Sex in Europe: A Story of Rights, Respect & Responsibility*, a teenage Dutch boy explains that “if you love someone you go double Dutch [use of both condom and hormonal contraceptive], you should want both of you to be safe and healthy.” This attitude is felt in some degree by many Dutch teens and contraceptives have become less taboo for teen use.

Dutch girls are able to receive free hormonal contraceptives from the GGD. The teens are asked very few questions and their visits are completely confidential. This allows teens to make their own decisions regarding the use of contraceptives. There is free and confidential sexually transmitted infection testing in the city of Amsterdam for all ages. People can walk in and be tested, so there is no need to worry about making an appointment. This service is offered at the Sexually Transmitted Infection Outpatient clinic and run by the GGD. The office sees over 24,000 people a year! The tests themselves are free and you do not need insurance so it does not discriminate against financial status.

Family conversation is considered to be more open in regards to love and sex. “Dutch parents tend to emphasize the love relationships and social responsibility of teenagers which makes sex a normal phenomenon.” (Schalet, 2000) Dutch parents realize that their children will be having sex and by talking about it there are able to

regulate their sex lives and make sure the children are making responsible decisions. It is not always the case that Dutch parents discuss sex with their children. With a rising Muslim immigrant population many teachers have pointed out that sex education has to be taught in schools because otherwise some students will not talk about safer sex. “Moroccan girls for example are not going to hear anything about sex at home so it is important for them to learn it at school” (Marling, 1994). Some parents also may not know all the answers about how birth control works or where to find it.

Many of these factors may influence adolescent sexuality but it is important to understand that schools can still have a large influence on their students. “Almost everyone says they have been given at least some information on sex at school; this applies to 92% of boys and 94% of girls” (De Graff, 2005). Even without government regulated sex education “In the Netherlands a majority of young people report having received sex education” (Ferguson, Vanwesenbeeck, Knijn; 2008). From the research I have found that many schools in the Netherlands do have very comprehensive sex education programs.

Sex education is a major factor in sexual responsibility. In a study done in 2005 “Multivariate analyses revealed that sexuality education was a predictor of sexual health outcomes. Respondents with less sexuality education were less likely to use adequate contraception, more likely to have had an STI, and more likely to have unintentionally impregnated a partner” (Dodge et al, 2005). Sexuality education can still impact adolescent’s behavior just not uniformly if is not regulated uniformly throughout the school system. Education must certainly be one of the factors contributing to the fact that “85% of Dutch young people report using a contraceptive at first intercourse” (Braeken, D., Rademakers, J., Reinders, J., 2002).

The biology of sex is examined in most schools as a part of biology class but there are many other things that are discussed regarding to sexuality. Social competency is regarded as very important in many Dutch schools. Not only are the advantages of condoms discussed, but also students are taught how to correctly put on a condom with the use of dildos, what to do when they are embarrassed about buying condoms, and how to convince their partners to use condoms. They are taught about how oral contraception works, where to find it, and tips on how to remember to take the pill (Ferguson, Vanwesenbeeck, Knijn; 2008).

It has been noted that some of the sex education materials are very in-depth going into subjects such as how to pleasure oneself, how to pleasure another and even an article “which includes advice about the hygienic use of dildos and vibrators”(Lewis & Klijn, 2003). Sex is not the only thing discussed in Dutch schools. “The Dutch texts stress the positive aspects of relationships and sexual intercourse (always referred to as 'making love', whereas the British refer to 'having sex')” (Lewis & Klijn, 2003).

Safer sex is not the only issue discussed. “Sexuality education is focused on encouraging young people to gain autonomy in their own attitudes and behaviors regarding sexuality.” (Braeken, D., Rademakers, J., Reinders, J, 2002). Students are guided toward becoming “social actors in their own right” and “Dutch youth policy is aimed at promoting self reliance and decreasing care dependence” (Braeken, D., Pacemakers, J., Renders, J, 2002). By treating adolescents as young adults, and giving the opportunity to let them grow into responsible adults the Dutch school system is helping to create a more responsible society. This attitude may be contributing to the openness and frankness of adults in the Netherlands.

Many schools also discuss what it means to be in a relationship, to be in love, and how to manage conflict resolution. “It [sex education] gives young people not only the medical and health knowledge they need but also the skills to negotiate relationships and understand the emotional as well as physical side of sexuality” (Bracken, D., Pacemakers, J., Renders, J, 2002).

It is commonly known that attitudes towards sexuality have been changing rapidly in the last century. “Dutch 'care' texts usually make some reference to the way in which attitudes towards sex, marriage and family have changed in the recent past” (Lewis & Klijn, 2003). One teacher describes how it is important to discuss this with students because it gives them a better insight to their parent’s sexuality and why their views may be different (Mariska, 2008). With the invention of the birth control pill, sex has been allowed to become more casual; with this, new responsibilities have been brought with the sexual revolution.

There has been very little research on Dutch teachers’ attitudes on sexual education. In my pursuit of this information I found various articles about teachers in the US, the UK, Germany, Austria, and France. This may be that there is no research published in English, which is highly plausible. I hope that this research can help fill the void for those who are looking for this information in English.

Method

Overview

I realized quickly that this was going to be a qualitative research study. For most of my research I conducted interviews with teachers at VMBO secondary schools in Amsterdam to find out what methods the teachers choose to educate their students about sexuality. I then asked the question of why they prefer to use the chosen methods. The in-depth conversations with teachers will bring me the best understanding of the sexuality education used in their school. I asked for lesson plans, course materials, and books used to get a better understand of what the course and learning objectives were. I found most of the contacts through the VMBO website which lists all of the schools in Amsterdam and their contact numbers. I also looked at education materials such as pamphlets, handouts, and books. I researched the already existing sex education programs in the Netherlands provided by *Lang Leve de Liefde* and *Promotie*.

Participants

My participants were mainly teachers of children aged 12-17, found in Amsterdam schools. I called various schools around Amsterdam and asked for the teacher(s) that was responsible for preparing sexual education in their school. I eventually found five teachers from different schools who were willing to meet with me. I met with Rick Appelman from Fons Vitea Lyceum, Mariska Borger from Parnassaischool, Bas Hoogendoorn from Tobiasschool, Jych Vanderning from Marcanti College, and Claudio Versace from Bredero College.

I also met with Yuri Ulrich a sexuality education professional from Rutgers-Nisso and interviewed him about sexuality education in the Netherlands. Yuri Ulrich

had given a presentation to SIT about sexuality education in the Netherlands, and is considered an expert on the topic of sexuality education in the Dutch context.

Design

This is a qualitative research project that reviews and summarizes the methods of sex education used in Amsterdam. The report then asks why these are the preferred methods. This will not be an experimental research project. The paper will be a summary of the interviews that have been conducted.

Materials/Apparatus

The materials most necessary to my research were a tape recorder, a telephone, and a computer. I contacted the interviewees through email and by use of the SIT office telephone. I created a questionnaire for the teachers that I administered during our interviews, which can be found in Appendix A.

Procedure

I administered the questionnaire in face to face and phone interviews. Many hours were spent doing research on the internet. Time was also spent in the Rutgers-Nisso Library in Utrecht to obtain some of the course materials.

Paper layout

This research paper is divided in to two main sections. To display the results of my study I will go through the answers to each interview questions that was given by the teachers. After the results the discussion will follow with a summary of each section.

Results

The age that adolescents receive sex education

The question of “when to start teaching children about sex” has been widely debated. Yuri Ulrich from Rutgers-Nisso believes that it was best to start from age 4, with very basic information, and that sex education should continue throughout the child's life, and does not necessarily need to end when they have become adults.

At the Parnassaischool, students are taught sexuality education in two segments. According to Mariska the reason for this split is because it is easier for students to retain the information if it is spread out over time. During their third year, students age 14-15 years old begin sexuality with the biology of reproduction, and learn about sexual health. It is important to Mariska for students to learn this information before they begin having sex. During the fourth year, which includes students who are 15-16, students learn about parenthood, what it means to raise a child, about social relationships, and living with a partner. Older students may be thinking more about relationships and parenthood, so it is better that they think about this at a later age.

The students at Marcanti College begin sexuality education from the beginning of their secondary school career but have most of their sexuality education during their second year when they are 13-14 years old, and it has been a regular part of the curriculum. During this year people come from the GGD to give the students education. Sexuality education then continues the next year during *versorking*, and students begin to focus more closely on biology and sexual health and look closer at relationship skills.

The students at Tobiasschool begin sexuality education in their first year when

they are 13-14 years old. Bas Hoogendoorn, the teacher at Tobiasschool, believes this is the best time to teach students because they are just realizing their sexuality, yet most have yet to begun having sex.

At Bredero College students begin sexuality education during their second year because the second year biology book covers sexuality in its fifth chapter. The time of sexual education was not chosen by the school or by Claudio but by the makers of the textbook.

Fons Vitea Lyceum is much like Bredero College in the fact that they use the same set of *Biologie voor Jou* books. Because of the second year chapter on sexuality, sexuality education is taught during the second year when students are 14-15.

Class Size

Sexuality can be a very touchy subject. Some students find that it is easier to ask questions in a small class room. Other students wish for the anonymity of being with a large group of other students so that they do not have to share their own opinion. This is why I felt it important to ask teachers about the size of their classes and the reasons behind that size.

Parnassaischool is a school for students who need extra help with schoolwork and who plan on working in a field geared more towards manual labor than intellectual labor. As the teacher Mariska Borger put it “these students must work with their hands”. Many of the students have attention deficit and hyperactive disorders. For this reason most of the classes at the school have less than 10 students, so that the students can concentrate better and receive more individual attention from the teacher. Sex education is taught within the *Verzorging* or life skills class. Her class has 8 students. This way the students are able to pay more attention and have more

connection with the teacher. Tobiasschool is much like Parnassaischool because it caters to special needs students. There are no classes at the school with more than 16 students.

Marcanti College is a more general VMBO school. There are a large number of students attending the school, the classes sizes are almost always 25 students per class. When it comes to sexual education, the students are asked if they would like to split the class according to gender. When this happens, the class size can be reduced to 8-10 students in the classroom. Jych believes that this is better for the class because the students will open up more to talk about sexuality with students of the same gender. In these smaller groups students have more room to ask questions.

Bredero College and Fons Vitea Lyceum both include sexual education during the biology class. At both schools the normal class size is 25 students and that remains the same during sexual education. At Fons Vitea Lyceum during one of the classes the students are split into gender groups to open up for questions and conversation.

Time spent on sexuality education with students

Another question that is commonly asked is “how much time should be devoted towards sexuality education”. In the United States the amount of time spent on sexuality education can vary from one hour to forty hours of education, that is if even any time is spent on sex education at all in that school. It is interesting to see how much time each school spends on teaching their students about sexuality.

Sexual education is a part of the *verzorging* or life skills education class at Parnassaischool. The students spend four hours a week for about four to five weeks during their third and fourth years at the school. This means that sixteen to twenty hours are spent on sexuality education throughout the student’s secondary education.

Mariska allows time to talk about sexuality education and if the topic has not been fully covered by the end of the allotted four weeks she continues until everything has been discussed.

Marcanti College has a short program with the students in the second year in which speakers from the GGD (the general health office) come in to speak to the students about sexual health. This takes only a few hours. In the third year students spend about fourteen school days talking about sexuality. This totals to about twenty hours of sex education during their secondary school experience.

At Bredero College eight weeks with three hours per week are devoted to sexuality education. This totals to about twenty-four hours of sexuality education. Some classes become very in-depth. A class about religion and sexuality took up an entire hour, and the students had wished there was more time for discussion.

The students at Tobiasschool spend half of their first year discussing sexuality. They only have sexuality education for one hour a week, but in the end it totals to about twenty hours of sexuality education class time.

Only four weeks are devoted to sexuality education at Fons Vitae Lyceum but students spend two to three hours each week on the subject. In the end students spend about ten hours in sexuality education.

Administration, sex education

Most of the schools I visited had been teaching sexuality education for many years. When the current teachers arrived the methods of sexuality education had already been chosen. Most teachers had added on or adapted to the underlying methods, the teacher at Tobiasschool was the only teacher who had purely created the curriculum themselves.

When Mariska Borger was applying for her job to teach the life skills class at Parnassaischool, she was told that as part of that class she would also be in charge of teaching sexuality education during her class. The school had already chosen the *Promotie* workbooks (see next section) as their main method for teaching sexuality education.

The teachers at Bredero College, Fons Vitea Lyceum, and Marcanti College were all the regular biology teachers at their school. They had chosen to become teachers of biology, and had not thought much about teaching sexuality education before they had become a teacher. Sexuality education was just a part of their profession as a biology teacher. Sexuality and reproduction are included in many of the Dutch biology books and it is common for sexuality education to be a part of the biology class. In the biology books they had chosen, sexuality was a chapter and sex education was taught when it came time to review that specific chapter. The teachers had also collected other resources to complement the book. They all had boxes that showed the different types of birth control and dildos to practice how to put on a condom. All three teachers also used various types of movies to show the students.

Promotie and Lang Leve de Liefde

Lang Leve de Liefde and *Promotie* are two programs that are widely used throughout the Netherlands to help schools teach sexual education.

Lang Leve de Liefde was developed by SOAAIDS and Rutgers-Nisso and was first used in schools in 1994. The most recent teaching package was released in 2001. The package prepares the teachers for six lessons on sexuality and included movies about the emotional aspects of sexuality, posters, magazines for the students, and a student workbook.. *Lang Leve de Liefde* is considered to be a package on *sexual*

voorming (sexual forming) which focuses on more than just the biology of sex. Sexual forming included lessons on communication skills, and the emotional aspects of sexuality. In the package there are movies, games and discussion topics to help students. Jych at Marcanti College used the movie which is about sexual relationships and knowing when one is ready to begin having sex. A song is used throughout the movie and each character has a part in the song. Each character portrays different adolescents encountering different stages in their sexuality.

Mariska, from Parnassaischool, had been given the *Promotie* method of *sexual voorming* (sexual forming) as a starting point for her sex education class, she decided to add onto what was used in the *Promotie* package. There is one main book called *Sexual Voorming* (sexual forming) which has 4 sections. There are 4 workbooks that are used with each section from book. The first two, *Een: Contact* (Contact) and *Twee: Veilig Vrijen* (Safe Love (sex)), are used during the 3rd year. The second two, *Drie: Een Baby* (a baby) and *Veer: Samenleven* (living together).

Een: Contact (*One: Contact*) is about what it means to be sexual. It talks about the first sexual feelings one may have. It discusses making the first contact with someone you may like, what it feels like to be in love, and how to know if you may be ready to begin having sex. It then teaches about the differences between men and women, what the menstrual cycle is and then explains the reproductive biological basics. Students use the workbook to think about these subjects through activities.

Twee: Veilig Vrijen (*Two: Safe Love [sex]*) discusses the subject of sexual health. Contraceptives are discussed in-depth and in the workbook there is a quiz to help one find out what the best contraceptive method for them would be. There is also information on sexually transmitted infections, and how to prevent them. Mariska felt like the book did not go as in-depth as she would like on the subject of sexually

transmitted infection. She has been using the website sexwoordenboek.nl, which is an online dictionary of sexual terms with very in-depth information on many topics related to sexuality. There is also an English version of the website called sexdictionary.com. Mariska would print out and make overheads with pictures of the different sexually transmitted infections. She would have each student research a different sexually transmitted infection. The students then give a short presentation in front of the class about their assigned infection. Mariska also has a box acquired from the GGD with the many different types of contraceptives so that students can see what each contraceptive method looks like and learn about how each one works. Mariska purchased 10 wooden dildos so that all the students in the class could practice using condoms. Because all the students in the class do it together, they are less embarrassed and it becomes fun for them.

Drie: Een Baby (Three: A Baby) discusses what it means to have a child. It goes very in-depth to what pregnancy is and its stages. The book gives an overview of all the expenses it takes to raise a baby to adulthood to show how expensive raising a child is. Mariska thought it was interesting that some of her students would become shocked at the amount of money it cost to raise a child. She felt like these numbers alone affected some student's decision to use contraceptives and practice safer sex. As a part of the class all the students have to learn how to care for a baby. They must learn how to change a diaper, how to make a milk bottle, and how to calm a colic baby. Mariska observed that many of her students really enjoyed this section. Many of the girls would get very into to "playing mother" and even some of the boys would get very excited that they were learning how to take care of a child. The workbook has a worksheet on how to decide when one may be ready to become a parent asking the student if they are financially, physically and mentally stable and if someone else

will help them to care for the baby.

Veer: Samenleven (Four: Living Together) looks at relationships and what it means to be part of one. It talks about how to have good communication with ones partner and how to handle anger within a relationship. The book discusses domestic violence and what to do if you encounter it in your own relationship or what to do if you see it happening within someone else's. The book helps to give practice on communication skills with your partner about various things even about cleanliness in the home. The book asks about what it means to be in love and what expectations are within a relationship.

Mariska thinks that the *Promotie* books are very helpful and well laid out; she feels that these books have been very helpful with teaching the students sexuality education and plans to keep using them. She suspects the next teacher will use them also.

Methods used

Although many of the teachers had not designed the sexuality education methods used purely by themselves, the methods used varied from school to school. This is common for most classes in the Netherlands because of the pillar system. There are guidelines to follow but they are lenient so that classes can be taught in accordance with the beliefs of the school.

During the first year at Marcanti College, students attend a two hour class with presenters from the GGD. The basics of sexual health are covered in this short lesson. During the next year sexuality is covered in-depth during biology. For this section Jych at Marcanti College used the *Biologie Voor Jou* book. He complements the book with many other methods. Jych had collected a box with different types of

contraceptives from Rutgers-Nisso. He also used many of the movies from Lang Leve de Liefde (see previous section)

The card game Carrouselspel is played in his classroom. The card game focuses on real life scenarios and requires students to think about what they would do in certain situations. This allows the students to role play over one hundred different relationship scenarios, and to allow them to form and to speak their own opinions.

Last year as a part of the sex education class, the students were taken out to the movie theater where they watched *Juno*, a movie about a young teen who becomes pregnant. After the movie the class had a discussion about teen pregnancy.

The students at Bredero College also used the book *Biologie Voor Jou*. To supplement this Claudio Versace also had a box of contraceptives from the GGD. There was only one styrofoam dildo for showing students how to put on a condom. When he shows the class how to correctly put on a condom he has one student volunteer show the class how to correctly use a condom. Two movies are also shown to the class. The *Miracle of Life* (1983) by NOVA which is the only movie that shows full video of conception and of a baby growing inside of a woman's womb. This is a scientific film to show what pregnancy looks like from the inside. Claudio wished that he could find a more recent film like this, but the NOVA (?) special has been the only movie ever made in this way. Also shown was *The Human Sexes* (1997) by Desmond Morris which is about the biological differences between the male and female sexes and how societies around the world either exaggerate or downplay these differences. He chose to show *The Human Sexes* to have a conversation about what it means to be a certain sex or gender, and how those roles are displayed in society. The students in the class are asked to create a presentation on sexually transmitted infections, but they can also choose to do the presentation on another topic of sexuality. Claudio has had

students in his class do presentations on the Kama Sutra, Islam and sexuality, and on very rare sexually transmitted infections.

Bas Hoogendorn has created the Tobiasschool's sexuality education program. He found his materials from a variety of sources; magazines, books, and the internet. He has been compiling all of his lesson plans and materials in a box so that when he leaves the school another teacher can still use the same methods and not have to start from scratch. His lessons have been changing every year according to the students needs. The class starts with Bas asking the students to write down their questions about sexuality and put them in a box for anonymity and then he starts with answering the questions. Much of the information is included in the student's biology book, and he uses this to explain many of the basics. Videos are also used, but he did not explain which ones.

Sexuality education is a part of the biology class at Fons Vitea Lyceum. During the discussion on sexually transmitted infections students look at a few different viruses and bacteria that causes sexually transmitted infections. The students also look at what our reproductive organs look like up close. The students play a game to show how sexually transmitted infections can be passed from one student to another. Students are also required to split into groups and research different subjects on sexuality and present it to the class. Some students have done research on interesting things such as sex in other cultures.

Where teachers found out about the methods used

Many of the teachers were introduced to the methods they had used by the school they worked at. Parnassaischool had been using the *Promotie* materials before Mariska arrived and she thought that it would be best to keep using the methods

because they were well produced. She had heard of sexwoordenboek.nl from another teacher. The dildos had been ordered after she had seen the one that is included in the contraceptive box from the GGD. She figured it would make the students less embarrassed about practicing if they all practiced together as a group.

Biologie voor Jou is a very popular biology book used in the Netherlands, and is used by Marcanti college, Bredero College, and Fons Vitea Lyceum. All three teachers had said that this book has been used at their school for most of their career, albeit they are now using the updated version. Claudio at Bredero College said that another book was used for a year but the students and the teachers both agreed that *Biologie Voor Jou* was better and so the school switched back. Claudio has been using the videos in his class since he began working and could not remember how he had found them.

Many different media outlets were used when Bas Hoogendoorn was developing his sex education program for his students at Tobias school. He used the internet to find many fun games and pictures to describe sexually transmitted infections. The standard biology book at the school was used as his starting point for the students but he has also used copies of magazines articles to help start discussions in his classroom.

The soaids.nl website and their links to Lang Leve de Liefde have proved to be very helpful for Jych at Marcanti College. The teacher at Fons Vitea claimed not to have done much research on his own, and did not stray far from the biology book.

Why teachers prefer to teach students using the methods they have chosen

Promotie was chosen by the administration of Parnassaischool, and Mariska believes that the books are very helpful and well produced, and therefore she chooses

to continue using them. She fills out most of the workbooks with her students but still adds on other activities.

At the beginning of the class Mariska asks the students what they would like to know. She allows the students to write in questions, and she makes sure that these questions all are answered throughout the course. She does not want her students left with unanswered questions.

Mariska likes to show the students all how to put on condoms together with the use of wooden dildos so that the students have fun together and do not get embarrassed, also by watching all the students she can make sure that they can use a condom correctly. Mariska chose not to only have one student practicing putting a condom on in front of the whole class because she felt like that would cause embarrassment for the student in the front on the classroom. By having all the students practice together it becomes a fun game with the students competing on who can put the condom on correctly the fastest.

The students at Parnassaischool each have to do a presentation on a sexually transmitted infection. She chose to have them each focus on one specific sexually transmitted infections because she believe they will put more effort into a presentation and remember it more than if they just listened to her lecture. She promotes the use of sexwordenboek.nl because it has many links about many sexual things and students can find answers on their own and find information about things that they might not have known to ask questions about. At the beginning of her class she has the students all call out different names for the words sex, vagina, and penis. During this exercise she asks students to say all the words that come to mind even if they are seen as profane. Then the students must all yell out loud the words penis and vagina. This makes the students more comfortable with saying these words. This becomes a very

fun activity for the students. They laugh and then for the rest of the semester they don't snicker as much when sexual terms are used.

Claudio at Bredero College only has one student demonstrate how to put on a condom. This is because there is only one dildo and he does not feel it is necessary for every student to try because it will take too much time to pass around the one dildo. When discussing contraceptives Claudio likes to pass each form of contraceptive through the classroom so that all the students can truly see how each method works and what it looks like. He feels this makes the students more comfortable with the idea of contraception. The *Biologie voor Jou* book was chosen over other biology book because it has the information very well laid out. There are many pictures and side boxes to explain different things in Biology. Claudio was not sure if the chapter on sexuality was a factor when the administration of the school chose the book.

The program at Marcanti College has been traditionally based from the *Biologie Voor Jou* book. Another person at the school had suggested the idea of having a presentation from the GGD. The idea to take the students to see the movie Juno had been brainstormed by Jych and a few of the other biology teachers at the school. Jych had found the movies from “*Lang Leve de Liefde*” after speaking with other biology teachers who had used it at their schools.

Yet again the *Biologie Voor Jou* was the basis for sex education at Fons Vitea Lyceum. Rick Appelman had not made most of the decisions about what movies to show or what lessons to teach. He relied mostly on methods adapted from other teachers in the school. Rick Appelman was looking for new movies to show the students that were more updated. He ask what movies other teachers were using and I told him about the movies from “*Lang Leve de Liefde*” and mentioned the new movie that was being produced by Rutgers-Nisso as I had been discussing this new movie

with Yuri Ulrich hours beforehand.

When preparing the new sexuality education curriculum at Tobiasschool, Bas Hoogendoorn used a variety of different methods. He asked other teachers that he knew about their methods. Rutgers-Nisso was very helpful for him to find out about methods that have been promoted for use in the Netherlands. He also finds magazine and newspaper articles for him and his students to discuss in class. The internet has been the most valuable tool in creating the curriculum and every new class Bas is looking for new methods to incorporate into his lessons. He leaves a box for questions at the beginning of the class and then throughout the lessons tries to answer all the questions. He feels that this should be more of a conversation about sexuality than a lecture.

Do teachers believe the methods of sexuality education they use are effective?

To study the effectiveness of sexuality education program is extremely hard and can take many years. Teachers must rely upon their assumptions about what is working. I wished to look at with what makes teachers believe that their sexuality education program is effective. It is a false assumption that only methods believed to be effective will be used.

Mariska Borger believes that the sexuality educational at Parnassaischool is effective. When I asked why she believed this she gave me a few different reasons. For one, her students asked many questions and she and the students found the answers for almost all of them. Secondly, the students seem excited about coming to class, and seem eager to learn. Mariska has been told by a few of her students that they decided to start a hormonal birth control method and/or get tested after the class. Mariska told me of a day when the class went over the cost of raising a baby. A girl

then asked Mariska about where she could go get birth control because free contraceptives are much cheaper than having a baby. She felt that this interaction showed her that the sexuality education is effective.

Rick Appelman was unsure of the effectiveness of the sexuality education at Fons Vitea Lyceum. He said that the students do well on the tests, and that is the only thing he can quantitatively measure. He notices the students are very interested about the topic and get excited to come to class. To him this shows that the education is more effective because students are more willing to learn about something they are interested in.

To quote Jych at Marcanti College “Yeah, well I think 50/50, half the girls and the boys are thinking about it while we read and some of the boys are thinking about it, but for them [the students] the biology and the technical stuff is not easy for them. Some of the students are very interested in learning about birth control. But some students are not interested in it at all. Some of the Muslim girls cannot even listen to it and do not care to hear it.” He wondered how he could make the education for the Muslim students better. He felt that the education was not effective for some of his Muslim students and he wonders what he could do to make it more effective for them.

“I hope so!” Claudio at Bredero college, “they know a lot, and for what they don't know they ask a lot of questions.” Claudio felt that there was no way to truly know if the methods are effective. The students do well on the tests and seem to enjoy the class, so they appear to be learning a lot. If the information is more important to the student they will remember it for a longer time. The boys forget about what happens during menstruation very quickly, while the girls seem to remember the full process. Claudio hopes that the information on having safer sex is important for the students so that they will remember to practice safer sex in the future.

Bas Hoogendoorn at Tobias school also responded immediately with “I sure hope so.” He believes that the education is very effective because the teens open up and really seem to enjoy the lessons. The students ask a lot of questions and help find the answers by taking initiative on their part to learn the subject. Some of the students at the school are not thinking about sex yet. Bas worries that this will not be enough education for them because at this point in their lives they do not care about sexuality so they do not have as much of an urge to learn about it.

Teachers view of their sex education class' influence on their students

Teachers may have an idea of what types of methods will be effective but are still unsure about how exactly the education will influence the students in the future. Many wonder what the students will take with them after receiving the information. This has been a very hard topic to study because there is not a simple cause and effect when it comes to education about sexuality. There are many other factors that can influence a teen to have safer sex. Students also receive information from a variety of sources such as parents, friends, and the media, which combined with school, can give students variable amounts of knowledge on the subject of sexuality.

Mariska was unsure about how sex education had influenced her students. She knows that the class has influenced many of the girls to start looking at hormonal contraceptives and to consider how long they want to wait to have children. She is sure that the students know how to use a condom after the class, but is unsure about whether or not they are influenced to start using condoms all the time. She hopes that some of the lessons on how to talk to a partner will help her students be able to talk openly with their partner, and build good communication skills. She also believes that the section on caring for a child will be remembered when the students have children

of their own.

Jych is sure that after the lessons most students know at least how to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, but he is unsure whether they will use the information given to do so. Every year about one girl has become pregnant at the school. He has known that these girls had the information to prevent the pregnancy but they discarded the information. He hopes that he can influence his students more effectively so that this does not happen.

“I cannot say they know the basics, I give them everything, but I do not know what they do at home” Claudio at Bredero College. In the ten years that Claudio has worked at Bredero College there have been three teenage pregnancies. He believes this was lower than other schools with similar backgrounds as Bredero College. And he hopes this is because the students are being influenced by the information.

“I hope it [sexuality education] makes them use condoms more.” Bas talks with his students about the difficulties with relationships and the dangers of sex and how to avoid them. He hopes these discussions influence the students the most.

At Fons Vitea Lyceum Rick Appelman quotes: “I don't think the influence is very big” “I think that afterwards they know a bit more but I don't think they will remember on Friday night to be safe.” Rick believed that TV and the internet are bigger influences on the student's sexuality.

Student's reactions to sexuality education

Sexuality is a touchy subject for many people around the world. During the teenage years sex becomes a joke and is often laughed at. Sigmund Freud held the belief that humans laugh and joke about the topics that make them the most uncomfortable. This can be seen with teens during the first sexual education classes.

“The first time they make jokes and laugh, but when I ask if they think it is important they say 'yes it is' and then they become much more serious, because they are ready to learn” Jych say that his students may laugh and joke at first but by the end of the subject the students have become very engaged and ask lots of questions.

“The students laugh the first day, and sometimes throughout the class.”

Mariska. She claims though that eventually the students become interested and are not as embarrassed to talk about the subject with their class. At the beginning of her class she has the students all call out different names for the words sex, vagina, and penis. During this exercise she asks students to say all the words that come to mind even if they are seen as profane. Then the students must all yell out loud the words penis and vagina. This makes the students more comfortable with saying these words. This becomes a very fun activity for the students. They laugh and then for the rest of the semester they don't snicker as much when sexual terms are used.

“They laugh, but then get over it. They really like it” Claudio. Claudio then tells me that the students know that sex education is coming up and will start to get excited and talk about how they wish they could finish chapter four in *Biologie Voor Jou* so that they can talk about sex. Some girls become uncomfortable and do not like to look at the pictures and cover them up. Many of the boys make inappropriate jokes and laugh but by the end become a little more serious.

Personal style of teaching

In his classroom at Marcanti College Jych keeps condoms and pregnancy tests for his students. He wants his students to feel comfortable talking to him about these issues and asking him for help. Every year about two girls come to his class to ask for a pregnancy test. “The trust is very high with my students, if I did not have high trust

with my students I would suggest that someone else teach the class”. As I arrived into the classroom there were four girls sitting and talking with Jych. Although I could not follow the Dutch conversation the girls were smiling and laughing, and appeared to like him.

Mariska loves to teach the sexuality education at Parnassaischool. She feels that she has created a space for the students to feel comfortable and ask questions. “Sex can be fun and I want students to know how to make that happen” quotes Mariska. She does not want to lecture her students on what they should or should not do she would like them to make their own opinions

Rick Appelman did not feel that he had his own personal style of teaching sexuality education. Rick Appelman had dreamed of being a biology teacher but the fact that he might also have to teach sexuality education did not dawn on him until he accepted his first job as a biology teacher. “I guess my style is the same as other biology teachers”. Rick wanted the students to be safe and wished to give them the means to do so.

Teaching biology had been a dream of Claudio Versace and he knew that teaching sexuality education was going to be a part of his job as the biology teacher at any school. He doesn't feel like he has his own personal style but does not know what other sexuality education teachers are like so he felt like he had nothing to compare himself to.

Bas at Tobiasschool does not wish to teach sexuality education in the same “classical style” that he teaches biology. He tries to create an open atmosphere in his classroom. “I try not to tell them what they should or should not do, we do it together.” This is because in biology class hard facts are used and taught, an apple always falls toward the earth. Many subjects in sexuality do not have right or wrong

answers; there are a lot more opinions. Bas attempts to discuss this with the class and help them to decide for themselves what is right and wrong. Bas expressed the wish that after his lessons his students would understand what is right for them to do.

Motivation for teaching sexuality education

At Parnassaischool, Mariska Borger teaches the *Verzorging* translated as care or life skills class. The class teaches students life skills that will be helpful for them as they become adults. The students learn how to cook for themselves, how to buy groceries, what it costs to live as an adult, and how to handle finances. The students learn about taxes, loans, credit, and other financial matters. *Sexual Voorming* (sexual forming) fits well into the context of this class and that is why sexuality education is a part of the class. Mariska had never thought about wanting to teach sexuality education before coming to her school. She is very happy to teach it and has “so much fun!” doing so.

Sexuality education is included as a part of many of the biology books used in the Netherlands and so sexuality education is included as a part of the biology class in many schools. Rick Appelman is one of the second year biology teachers at Fons Vitea Lyceum; he had wanted to be a biology teacher for many years because he was good at science. Bas Hoogendoorn is the biology teacher at Tobiasschool, but he volunteered to put together all the materials for sexuality education at the school because he feels that it is important that students learn about healthy sexuality. Jych is the third year biology teacher at Marcanti College, and enjoys teaching sexuality education. He feels that “most of the children have no difficulty coming to me with questions, we have high trust”.

Claudio Versace is a biology teacher at Bredero College, He had been best at science as a student and wanted to be the biology teacher. The idea that he would have to teach sexuality education did not occur to him before becoming a biology teacher at Bredero College.

Sexual diversity

The Netherlands has been known the world round as a place of tolerance. It is one of the few countries that grant the same legal rights to marry to same-sex couples as to heterosexual couples. The government has been very tolerant with regards to sexuality; this does not however mean that society is completely accepting of homosexuality. While researching her own Independent Study Project Elizabeth Greenblatt was surprised to find that “In many [Dutch] schools, homosexuality is barely discussed within the sexuality lessons.”(Greenblatt, 2000)

Mariska Borger at Parnassaischool holds a few discussions on homosexuality in her class. She believes that “she cannot tell them what to believe”. She does not want to tell students that they are wrong when they say that they think homosexuality is “gross”. To put the issue into perspective she asks students about what they would do if they found out their best friend or their sibling was gay. She asks them to discuss how they would feel about this and if they would treat their friend/sibling differently. Mariska also tries to include sexual health for homosexual students. She wants all of her students to know how to stay protected and wants the students to know that safer sex can be practiced within all forms of sex.

At Marcanti College the subject of homosexuality can be a difficult subject to discuss. Many of the boys in the class make jokes and homophobic remarks. Jych finds that it is much easier for the girls to discuss the topic of homosexuality, and that

the girls seem much more accepting. “It remains a difficult subject but we talk about it.” A special program created by the COC to target young Muslim males has come to Marcanti to talk to some of the students

Rick Appelman at Fons Vitea Lyceum glided over the subject of sexual diversity. He said that it was discussed and that was the end of that conversation.

Bas Hoogendoorn at Tobiasschool tries to help the students form their own opinions but explains that homosexuality is not a disease and that it is perfectly normal. “We try to be very open with the children.” Bas tries to keep the classroom open for discussion, and make sure that all students can be able to open up. Forms of safe homosexual sex are also discussed.

Claudio Versace at Bredero College had a very deep discussion about religion and sexuality the week before our interview. He had given an article about the Pope's condemnation of homosexuality, condoms, and abortion. The class discussion had become very heated and he noticed the students still discussing the topic at lunch. He finds that most of his students are tolerant but hopes to make sure they realize the harmful effects of discrimination. “Some boys will say 'gays are dirty, but we like watching two women making love', and then I tell them that they must be a little gay because they like to watch gay sex”. He asks the students about how they would react if their sibling was gay or lesbian and how would the students react if their best friend was gay or lesbian.

Ethnic diversity

Amsterdam is a very diverse city with about 45 % (Amsterdam in cijfers) of the population defined as non-ethnically Dutch. This diversity has created some problems when talking about sexuality in schools because of the cultural differences

between students. Every teacher I talked to mention the effects of ethnic students and sexuality education. When looking at cultural differences of teens in the Netherlands, research showed that Antillean, and Turkish girls of secondary school age claimed to have found most of their information from school. Ethnically Dutch boys and girls say that they do get information from school but that most of their knowledge of sexuality comes from parents, friends and the media. Muslim boys claimed that they learned very little from school and obtained most of their knowledge on sexuality from youth work programs. (de Graff et al, 2005)

Mariska commented that many of her Muslim female students cherish sex education and ask her many questions because “they do not talk about it with their parents, this is the only place they can ask questions... Some girls mothers did not even tell them what menstruation was, they came to me to ask”. When the class at Parnassaischool discussed homosexuality Mariska noticed that the male Muslim students had the hardest time talking about homosexuality and was the most likely to act disgusted by the act.

Marcanti College is in a very ethnically diverse neighborhood many of the students come from different cultures. Jych says he must take this difference into consideration.

“Some Muslim girls have difficulty even listening to the discussion, so I give them a choice, they can read some stuff I give them and if they have questions they can come to me or another teacher who they trust, but I do not push it on them if they do not want to come to the class.”

-Jych at Marcanti College

At Bredero College some of the Muslim boys have stated in class that “gays are dirty”, Claudio was unsure how to deal with this because he doesn't want to tell his students what to believe. He does not feel like he should tell students that their opinions are wrong because this is only his opinion. He also mentions the fact that Muslim girls tend to become very uncomfortable in class and cover up the pictures in the book with sheets of paper.

Bas Hoogendoorn and Rick Appelman not to mention ethnic differences in our interviews. I did not visit Tobiasschool so I do not know the diversity of the school. When I visited Fons Vitea Lyceum I noticed that the school seemed mostly ethnically Dutch, and was in a higher income neighborhood.

What teachers wish they could improve within sexuality education?

At the end of my interview I asked teachers what they wish they could improve about their sexuality education class. Each teacher took a moment to think about this question. Some teachers seemed like they think about this questions more often while others were caught off guard.

At Marcanti College the teachers are adding a new aspect to the sexuality education curriculum. In the past students during the third year while in a social sciences class, students are asked to do a presentation on sexuality and society. Next year the students are going to have to do a much bigger project. He hopes that the students will go to the GGD, the hospital, conduct interviews and do research for themselves and that the students will venture into the community. He wants there to be more active education. “I hope that the school and other teachers should make it [sexuality education] more important, they should put it on the map.” “It must be taken more seriously and should be embedded though out the whole program.”

Claudio Versace wishes he had better movies to show his students at Bredero College. He is looking for a movie that portrays different aspects of sexuality, and hopes that it is not too pornographic. He also wishes that he could do something to help the reserved and quite Muslim students in his class.

Rick Appelman at Fons Vitea Lyceum also wishes that he could have better videos for his students to watch. He would like something that had to do with current events and discussed current issues in sexuality. He hopes to find a movie that the students in his class could relate to.

Reaching out to the students at Tobiasschool who are not currently thinking about sex has been hard for Bas Hoogendorn. He hopes to find better methods to help these students understand the importance of sex education. He would like to teach sexuality education again in the later years of the school so the students who were not listening the first time can hear the information again. He wants to find a way to help the shy students open up and feel comfortable talking about their feelings.

Mariska hoped to have more discussion about homosexuality. She hoped that she could have a panel with presenters from the COC. Rick thought that the education was fine at Fons Vitea Lyceum he only wished that he could find better movies to show in the class. He hoped to find a movie that the students could relate to.

Discussion

The age that adolescents receive sex education

Most students begin sexuality education during their secondary education years. At the schools studied, the ages of the children who received sexuality education were 12-16 years old. This is a time in adolescence when sexual feelings begin to emerge. The teachers all agreed that students need sexuality education at this point in their lives so that they can practice safer sex when they do decide to become sexually active. Yuri Ulrich from Rutgers-Nisso believed that sexuality education should be taught throughout the lifetime. This can be important because sexuality is one of the major activities of life that is needed for survival of the human race, so it should not necessarily just be a short part of education, but incorporated throughout their lifetime.

Class Size

Class size varied from eight to twenty-five students at the different schools studied. The smaller class sizes were small for the purpose of making the student more comfortable. When the class size was twenty-five the number was due to school policy, whereas the small student class sizes were a conscious decision to make the students more comfortable. Yuri Ulrich believed that class size should be relatively small for sexuality education to allow room for the students to open up. He also encouraged having the class split into different genders, because students tend to open up to other students of the same gender.

Time spent on sexuality education with students

The time spent on sexuality education varied, averaging about twenty hours of education. Fons Vitea Lyceum had the shortest amount of time, with ten hours devoted to sexuality education, while most of the other schools spent about twenty hours. Rick Appelman did not make it seem that sexuality education was an integral part of education at his school. This may be why the shortest amount of time was spent at this school. Jych at Marcanti College wishes that sexuality education was woven through the rest of education more and wished for even more time to be spent discussing issues regarding sexuality. This corresponds more with the wish of Yuri Ulrich who wishes that sexuality education was integrated throughout the whole education of a student's life.

Administration and sex education

Sexuality education is not controversial in the Netherlands like it is in the United States or England. There have been no political battles over what is allowed to be discussed or shown in the classroom. Each school has the ability to teach what they wish about sexuality, but most choose to teach comprehensive sexuality education, which includes information on reproductive biology, safer sex, communication confidence, and the emotional aspects of sexuality. There are no governmental guidelines preventing schools from teaching about the use of condoms and it is encouraged by organizations such as Rutgers-Nisso and the GGD that all forms of contraceptives are discussed. Although the methods of teaching sexuality education varied slightly, all the schools I interview covered many aspects of sexuality from the biological to the emotional.

Methods used to teach sexuality education

Many of the methods used at the schools seemed to be very well produced. The boxes of materials they used had a wide variety of every different type of contraceptives that are used in the Netherlands. There are very good resources in the Netherlands such as Rutgers-Nisso, SOAAIDS, The GGD, *Promotie*, and *Lang Lieve de Liefde* that produce materials to support teachers with sexuality education. Having these resources at hand has proved to be useful for many of the teachers I have interviewed. It seems that these resources are taken for granted and many of the teachers were surprised to find that there are very few resources for teaching sexuality in the classrooms of the United States. In fact Claudio and Mariska were both shocked to find out how regulated and suppressed sexuality education was in the United States. To both teachers it seemed ridiculous that the government would intervene into education in a way that was harmful to students.

Where teachers found out about the methods used

The internet has proved to be a valuable resource for teachers in learning about new methods of teaching sexuality in their classrooms. Because sexuality education is supposed to be taught in every school in the Netherlands, teachers are also able to learn about the methods used by other schools. The teachers also used print media such as magazines and newspapers to discuss current issues regarding sexuality. It is important to publicize resources that may be helpful for teachers so that they can continue to expand their knowledge of sexuality education.

Do teachers believe the methods of sexuality education they use are effective?

I think that many factors led teachers to believe that their methods of sexuality

education are effective. Many of the teachers claimed that the students asked many questions and that the teachers and students together tried to find all the answers. This belief has arisen from the thought that if students ask many questions they will have all their questions answered. Asking the students what they want to know is very important because it allows the students to ask the questions that might not be answered by the book. Some of the teachers also allowed their students to write in questions anonymously. By allowing their students to ask questions anonymously they give their students the opportunity to ask questions about embarrassing subjects that they might not be willing to ask about in front of the whole class. This way, teachers can give their students all the answers they are seeking. The teachers try to give their students as much information as possible with the hopes that the students will use the information.

All the teachers said that their students enjoyed studying sexuality and would get excited to come to class. They commented that students eagerly anticipated their sexuality education. This made the teachers believe that the sexuality education was more effective because students tend to learn more when they are interested in a subject. The teachers try to make sure that sexuality education is fun, so that the students are more willing to learn.

Why teachers prefer to teach students using the methods they have chosen

Many of the teachers did not have a definitive answer to this question. The methods were already commonly in use in the Netherlands and they used them because they worked in their classrooms. Within the schools, there had not been much debate about what and what not to teach. Most schools found it important to talk about many aspects of sexuality. It did not seem like the decision to teach with any

certain method over another was debated. Bas and Mariska both commented that each year the sexuality education was slightly different depending on the students in the class. They tried to meet the needs of their students.

Sexuality education is considered an important part of education as a whole and methods that were already in use were used widely in the schools studied. The *Biologie Voor Jou* book came with a chapter on sexuality to be used as a starting point for sexuality education. *Lang Lieve de Liefde* and *Promotie* produced workbooks and movies to give teachers extra resources when teaching sexuality education.

The GGD and Rutgers-Nisso has provided schools with boxes of sample contraceptives to show the students. Every school I visited had one of these boxes and all found the boxes to be a great resource to help show the students what contraceptives look like and how they are used.

Motivation for teaching sexuality education

I was surprised by the fact that none of the teachers had made a conscious decision in their lives that they wanted to teach sexual education. It was just a part of their job description. Most of the biology teachers took sexuality education as a part of their job; it was not something they had strived to teach. They accepted the methods that were provided to them by the administration and used them without a second thought. At Parnassaischool, Mariska was told that as a part of her *Verzorging* class she would have to teach sexual education. None of the teachers had received outside training to specifically teach sexuality education. This is much different than in the United States.

One reason that this may be is that sexuality education is not considered taboo or an odd job. It does not require a strong-willed and determined person to become a

sexuality educator. Sexuality education is also taught within the rest of the school lessons and it is not needed for there to be a special teacher devoted to sexuality education. It is accepted to teach sexuality education, so the job profession does not require the applicant to be brave or extremely devoted to their job because many of the hardships that American sexuality education teachers face, such as parents calling the teacher a pervert or immoral for talking about sex with their children

Although none of the teachers had planned to be a sexuality education teacher, most of the teachers seemed to love their job and take it seriously. Mariska wanted her students to be safe and to be able to live as healthy and happy adults. Bas had felt that sexuality education was very important for his students because sexuality was such an integral part of life. Jych wanted to create trust so that his students would have him as resource for questions about to have safer sex.

This seemed slightly different for Claudio and Rick who both enjoyed teaching sexuality education at their school, but did not seem to feel it to be an extremely important part of their profession.

Personal style of teaching

After reviewing the recordings of the interviews I realize that I wished I had made the question of “what is your personal style of teaching?” clearer. I had made the mistake of having this question conjoined with the question of what motivated them to teach sexuality education. The language barrier also may have contributed to this because they may not have known how to explain the teaching style terms in English.

Claudio and Rick both did not feel that their teaching style was anything out of the ordinary. Neither teacher had many other teachers to compare themselves with.

Some of the teachers expressed that as part of their teaching style they had to create a space of high trust between them and the students. Without this trust the students would be unable to open up. Jych believed this trust made him a better teacher of sexuality education because it leads his students to be very open, and even to ask embarrassing questions. This trust has also created a space where the students can talk to him privately if they had questions they did not want to ask in front of the whole class. Mariska loved to joke with her students and make them feel comfortable to ask her anything. Bas wish to form his teaching style to his student's needs, and teach in the style that was best for them to learn.

Mariska, Jych, and Bas all believed that active, hands-on learning was the best way to teach the students. Both Bas and Mariska taught at schools with special needs students. Because of the high amount of students with learning disabilities, they felt that the students needed to learn with their hands. By using techniques such as role playing and practicing proper condom use on dildos the students will be able to use the techniques in real life situations.

What other classes do the teachers teach?

I found it very interesting that most schools taught sexuality education within biology class. The reason is because reproduction is a major part of biology and sexually transmitted diseases and reproduction fit into this category well. During the biology classes other aspects of sexuality that are not necessarily biological are also discussed such as communication skills, gender issues, and relationship skills.

The *Verzorging* class impressed me because it taught the students about very necessary parts of living one's life as an adult. Many people never learn about how to handle their finances, cook, or care for a child, they are just skills learned through trial

and error. I personally wished that I could have had a class such as this to prepare me for adulthood. I think that schools in the United States would do well to have a class of this sorts included in education.

Sexual diversity

All teachers claimed that homosexuality was covered in their classrooms. All the schools held discussions in some form or another about sexual diversity. All claimed to teach their students about safe gay sex. My conversation about sexual diversity at Fons Vitea Lyceum was very short and I did not receive any information about how sexual diversity was included only that it was. By Rick's reaction to the question, I would presume that he himself is not entirely comfortable with the subject. This may have an adverse effect if there are in fact LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered) students in his class.

Mariska Borger had hoped that sexual diversity was included more into her program and that she could help her students to accept it more. She did say that while discussing sex, LGBT safer sex was also discussed.

Teachers view of their sex education class' influence on their students

I was surprised to find how unsure the teachers were about their influence on their students. The answer in some form of "I hope so" was given by every teacher when asked this question. Because effectiveness is so hard to research the teachers must rely on their own intuition to answer this question.

Claudio hopes that his students are affected positively but he cannot know what they do outside of class. Rick Also felt the same way that he "does not know what they do on a Friday night". Mariska knew that her class at Parnassaischool had

influenced some students to use contraceptives, and to get tested for sexually transmitted infections, but that was the only solid facts that she knew about her influence. Jych knew that he gave the students as much information as he could but does not how the students will use it.

Influence of sexuality education needs to be researched further. It does take effort and time to study this but I think that the results would be very beneficial to teachers of sexuality education.

Student's reactions to sexuality education

Teenagers are similar around the world. During their teenage year they begin to develop crushes, and make fun of their friends for doing so. Sex becomes something funny to joke about. In all the schools that were researched the teachers stated that students laughed and made jokes at the beginning of sexuality education. However over the course of the curriculum the students began to become more serious about the topic and became eager to learn.

What teachers wish they could improve within sexuality education?

It took a few moments for the teachers to think about how to answer this question. Most of the teachers had ideas of how they wished to improve their sexuality education. Considering improvement is always a sign of a good teacher. Bas at Tobiasschool updated his curriculum for every new year of students. Jych and his colleagues were already planning on how to better their sexuality curriculum with a new project for the students in the third year.

What surprised me?

I was surprised by one conversation in particular:

“Sometimes the students have stupid questions, very stupid questions” Claudio Versace

“Like what” Coral Hackler

“Well, a few weeks ago some boys asked me if women could cum, what a, such a stupid question, because of course they can cum. I don’t know why they would ask me such a question.” Claudio Versace

This part of the interview stuck me. I did not know how to respond. Most of the things I had been told by the teachers I agreed with, but for this comment I had many objections. “No question is a stupid question” is a phrase used throughout the educational world. In my previous education classes this phrase is stated at the beginning of class and I have been told it is especially important for touchy subjects such as sexuality. By saying a question is stupid you lose trust between the teacher and the students. By being told that this is a stupid question, the students may lose confidence to ask other questions. They may be left with many unanswered questions because they have lost the ease to ask their teacher for advice.

The second reason why this statement shook me so much was the content. Girls do cum or orgasm, but many people around the world are unaware of this. Many cultures deny women the right to satisfaction, and claim that it is not possible. The question of whether women can cum could lead to a very enlightening conversation within the classroom. A large center of sexuality is pleasure. This question could have lead into a discussion on how to pleasure a woman and make her orgasm, and the reasons why women have been perceived as not to find much pleasure from sex.

All of the teachers used many of the same methods that I have seen used at home in the United States. Before the program I thought I would learn about many new methods for teaching about sexuality but many of the methods used were the same as what I have used while teaching about sexuality at home.

Does teacher attitude affect students?

Attitudes about sexuality education were different between the teachers. A few of the teachers were very devoted to teaching their students about sexuality and found that it was very important for the students. Two of the teachers did not find sexuality education to be any more important than other classes taught during secondary education. This attitude may affect the students. During this research I did not look at how teacher attitude affected the student's attitude towards sexuality education. I think this would be an important subject to research and hope that maybe someday this can be studied in Dutch schools.

None of the teachers I interviewed seemed to hold the belief that sex is dirty, shameful, or sinful. This is much different than many of the teachers in the United States. All the teachers portrayed to me that sexuality was a normal part of life and that teaching sexuality education was a normal part of the curriculum. This has led me to believe that this positively affects the student's attitudes towards sexuality. The teachers gave the impression that sex was normal and fun, and better if practiced with caution. As long as they are in a healthy relationship, using contraceptives, and are willing; then sex is ok.

Constraints

There were many other resources I would have like to have found and studied more in-depth for this project. Time was a very big factor in conduction of this research. I feel like a month was not long enough to complete this project and wished I had had more time to find more interviewees and do more research on the methods used. It was unfortunate that the allotted research time fell over the same time as spring break for many of the schools; this prevented me from obtaining more interviews with teachers. There are many other aspects of the sexuality education that I wished I could have had the time to study while in the Netherlands.

The language barrier was a large constraint for me in this project. There were studies I would have like to have found but I did not know where to search for. Some of the interviews would have been much more in-depth if I could speak and understand Dutch.

Conclusion

Sexuality education is seen as common part of secondary education, and is as fundamental as math and science. There is no controversy in the Netherlands about what should or should not be taught. It is taken for granted that sexuality education is a natural part of secondary education. Teachers are provided with many resources to help them educate their students about sexuality.

Teachers try to give their students as much information as possible with the hopes that it will positively affect the student in the future. Teachers hope that the sexuality education will influence their students to practice safer sex, and have healthy relationships.

The attitudes of all the teachers seemed positive and none tried to preach to their students about the immorality of sex. Instead, sexuality education is taught in the context that sex can be fun and healthy if practiced with caution and within a healthy relationship. This attitude along with many other factors has helped to bring the Netherlands' teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted rates to the lowest in the westernized world.

After this research new questions have arisen for me and still need to be answered. How does the teacher's attitude of sexuality education effect student? Do students believe their sexuality education has proven effective for them? What styles of teaching are used in sexuality education classrooms? Once these questions are answered many more questions may arise – but that is the movement of knowledge.

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Appendix A
Interview Questions for Teachers

1. What is the age of the students you teach? Why do you teach students at this age?
2. How many students do you teach per sexuality education class?
3. How much time do you spend on sexuality education with students?
4. Does the administration of your school provide a planned curriculum for sexuality education programming? If so, please explain what that plan, vision, or support system entails.
5. What are the methods you use to teach sexuality education in your classroom? Are you using an existing program such as “Lang Leve de Liefde” or have you developed your own program on sexuality? Please explain.
6. Where did you find out about the methods that you use?
7. Do you believe these methods of sexuality education are effective, and if so why?
8. Why do you prefer to teach students using the methods you have chosen? / What made you choose these methods over other methods?
9. What motivates you in teaching sexuality education, and what is your style of teaching it?
10. How is sexual diversity included in your sexuality education program?
11. How do you think your sexuality education program influences the students that you teach?
12. How do your students react to sexuality education?
13. Is there anything you wish you could improve in the sexuality education you teach?

Table 1
Class size

School	Class size	Gender split?
Bredero College	25	No
Fons Vitea Lyceum	25	Yes
Marcanti College	25	Yes
Tobiasschool	16	Yes
Parnassiaschool	8	No

Table 2
Time spent on sexuality education

School	Weeks spent	Hours per week	Total hours
Bredero College	8	3	24
Fons Vitea Lyceum	4	2-3	8-12
Marcanti College	5 weeks	4	20
Tobiasschool	18	1	18
Parnassiaschool	4-5	4	16-20