



VET specialists competencies development in the field of positive parenting teaching (POSITIVE)
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REPORT OF NATIONAL RESEARCH “YOUTH SEXUALITY AND THE REQUIREMENT OF SEX EDUCATION AND INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONSIBLE PARTNERSHIP IN GERMANY”

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Introduction

This report provides information about the situation of German teenagers regarding to sexuality, contraception, teenage pregnancies and how the German society deals with these subjects. Statistical data are mainly taken from the Federal Office for Health Education (Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung). 3500 youth between 14-17 years were participating in the official survey regarding youth sexuality in 2015. Relating to the credibility of the youths answers to the sensitive topic of their sexuality, research leader Elisabeth Pott commented: “At certain points, you can compare the statements of young people with other data and studies. There is a high correlation between the answers of their responsible dealing with contraception and the very low number of teenage pregnancies in Germany. The fact, that teenagers care about contraception is also demonstrated in studies that have been carried out in the context of AIDS campaigns.” [1]

Nevertheless, various conversations with teachers of secondary and high schools, social workers in public service and teenagers, show, that there is still a serious need of projects that provide information about responsible partnership and sexuality.

1 Statistical data

1.1 Start of sexual life

With the age of 17, 50 % of German teenagers had their first sexual intercourse. Only a small part starts already with the age of 14 (3-6%). 90 % of the girls with german origin had their first sex with an age of 19, girls with foreign origins at the age of 21. Boys mostly start 2 or 3 years later than girls. The assumptions of critics, that the youth start sexual life much earlier because of the early access to the Internet, cannot be confirm. The survey shows that most of the young people are waiting with



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their first sex until they find the right person to have a serious partnership with. Noticeable is, that 28% of young girls with a foreign origin don't start their sexual life because it's not right before marriage but this point doesn't affect to the boys with the same cultural background. [2]

1.2 Teenage pregnancies

In 2014, there were 6.631 teenage pregnancies in Germany by a total number of 814.642. Expressed as a percentage, teenage pregnancies take 0,81% of all pregnancies in Germany.[3] The average age of a mother at the birth of her first child was 29,3 years in 2013. [4] 53,7% of underage girls and 11,9% of adult women didn't continue their pregnancy. At this point there is serious need for action relating to the possible psychological consequences of an abortion.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
under 15	779	659	542	494	475	399	440	374	373	322	369
15 - 18	7 075	6 588	6 048	5 681	4 872	4 510	4044	3652	3462	3297	3191
18 - 20	9 662	9 165	9 161	8 814	8 428	7 974	7458	6887	6654	5969	5246

Fig.1 Federal Statistical Office 2015: Abortion 2004 – 2014 [5]

The survey also shows a correlation between teenage pregnancies and a difficult social background of the girls. Low education and problems in the family heighten the probability of an early pregnancy. Other studies show, that it is not just about economical poverty, drug abuse, but also mistreatment and sexual abuse in the families. Later, young mothers have problems to finish school because the education system is not prepared for it. So most of them are not able to practice a qualified profession. The result is an increased risk of poverty. (6)

If young mothers/ father don't have any support from their families they can life in special facilities "mother-child-houses". In 2010, public and private/church organizations provided 329 of these facilities. [7]

1.3 Contraception

The actual behavior of youths relating to contraception is good. 90% talk with their partner about contraceptives before their first sexual intercourse and 73% of the 14-25 year old use a condom. With this, they use the safest method, which not only prevents pregnancy, but also protects against STDs (sexual transmitted diseases). [8]



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2 Access to information

According to the youth-survey 2015, 95% of German teenagers get sex education in school. But whether and how youths use this information in their everyday life cannot be said. Practical Experience shows, that a lot of the content from this class in school just passes by like every other instructional topics also. [9]

An other important contact to get information about sexuality are the parents, especially mothers. Up to 64% of the girls say, that the mother was one of the most important parts regarding to sex education. Most important contact for boys are teachers in school (up to 45%) or their friends. Mainly boys with a migration background prefer friends or teachers to talk about this sensitive issue. (10)

2.1 Extracurricular information

The German Federal Office for Health Education (BZgA) provides on it`s internet page www.familienplanung.de an overview of ca. 1.600 state-approved counseling centers. Users can search for the next center in their town and get information to contact and number. Furthermore, this website provides a large variety of information about pregnancy, contraception, teenage pregnancies, fatherhood, abortion, the morning after pill and much more. [11]

A lot of counseling center provide an anonymous online advice. Through this, teenagers can act in a protective space for them. Example for online-counseling:

http://www.donumvitae-onlineberatung.de/onlineberatung_start.

Another access to information teenagers can find in the print media. The popular youth magazine „Bravo“ publishes a column about teenager`s questions regarding sexuality. Furthermore, the BZgA provides information material, which is shared during sex education trainings or in youth centers.

If schools have cooperation with agencies, which offer a sex educational program, pupils can participate in this offers which are designed for various target group ages. Main focuses in these events are responsible partnership, sexuality, contraception and pregnancy. Here, teenagers can discuss their issues with education professionals. Through this project it was possible to reach 517 teenagers in the Rhein-Hunsrück district in 2015.

2.2 Access to the morning after pill

The morning after pill is sold in pharmacies without a prescription. The pharmacist also gives a consultation. This pill costs about 18-35 Euro but for women under 18 it can be covered by health insurance, if a physician prescribes it(women under 20 only have to pay for the prescription charge). A physician or a pharmacist can do the consultation. Young girls under 14 need their parent`s permission to buy the pill and if the girl is between 14 and 18 years old the pharmacist or the physician can decide if they sell the pill to her and if she is able to deal with the self-medication and its related consequences or not. [12]



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3 Social cultural context

Concerning the dealing with sexuality, the German society can be described as liberal. Sexuality is a private matter and therefore there are no sanctions from society in situations of partner changes, divorces and pregnancies. The bigger the cities the less interested are the people for this purpose. Only very rural regions may lead to social pressure, which can strongly influence the decisions of the concerned person (e.g. aborting a child or not). Soft porn magazines are placed face up in kiosks and book about sexuality are available in every bookstore, public library ore online retailers.

To homosexual cohabitations, the society gets increasingly tolerant. The government has established the legal institution of “registered partnership” that is fiscally and legally almost equivalent to marriage. There is also the possibility for a homosexual couple to adopt a child. But In manhood-dominated areas such as football, army and right-wing parties the acceptance of homosexuals is still very difficult. Often very restrictive, is the attitude towards sexuality among people of Muslim faith. Male adolescents with an immigrant background show the same sexual behavior as all the boys in Germany but to young women, however, this looks quite different. From conversations with young people of Muslim faith is known, that many expect from their future wife, that she is a virgin. While they themselves have already sexual experiences.

Dealing with contraceptives is seen as a matter of course in the society. Condoms are available in every drug store and many supermarkets. Contraceptive pill and spiral are very popular. Young women from 16 years can get the prescription for the pill from their gynecologist. Until the age of 18, insurance company cover the cost and up to the 20th year the girls just have to pay the prescription charge.

The school law states, that sex education is a mission of the school. As an education for responsible sexual behavior it is part of the overall education and it is carried out across the disciplines.

For the government, the protection of unborn life is very important. Therefore, it has the law to prevent and manage conflicts of pregnancy and granted the right to benefit a free consultation for all citizens. [13]

Corporal punishment is prohibited since 2000 by law in Germany: “Children have the right to a non-violent upbringing. Corporal punishment, psychological injuries and other humiliating measures are prohibited.” (Article 1631 Civil Code) Also Article 16 of the Social Welfare Code Book 8 was complemented. Several family support measures should promote a non-violent conflict resolution in the families. Support institution is the government office for youth welfare. ¹

¹ See <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/assets/pdfs/states-reports/Germany.pdf>





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4 Teens opinion

Teens in Germany experience a liberal country in which they can shape their lives on their own. There are hardly any traditions, which prescribe them how to act and to live their lives. As individuals, they have the freedom of choice, but, and this is increasing being found as a problem: the requirements of decision-making. To this they often feel unable to cope and overwhelmed by the many options. Moreover, they are no (loner) able to assess the consequences of their decisions; whether in school or in relationships. The adolescents often experience a precarious future, which means that no long-term life planning is possible for them. This also has an influence on their desire to have children. (20)

Over several years, we offer projects to the topics of responsible partnership and sexuality to secondary schools. These projects do not take place in the premises of the school; the teenagers come to the counseling center or to agencies of youth welfare.

As this is a very sensitive and personal issue, young people give again and again the feedback, that the choice of the location is very good and thereby the projects gets a different weighting. Because the topic is so personal, it is transmitted differently in their living world. Another topic of the project is to take a look at role models in our society. It can be discuss with youths in secondary school and even with pupils in primary school. It is about the examination of "I am a girl/ I am a boy", the classic role models and how the youths are thinking about it in their own relationships. Very important point is also, how role models had changed in our society.

Another condition is, that teachers do not participate in the project. The young people think that this fact is very pleasant, because during the project they often speak about personal things like the first sexual intercourses, information and undifferentiated knowledge about contraceptives. For young people these subjects are uncomfortable to talk about to teaching staff and for this reason the program is carried out without teachers. These conditions have already proven themselves in age-appropriate sex education in primary schools and even the little children give the feedback that these conditions are perceived as pleasant.

In these projects we are working in a team of one man and one woman. This gives the opportunity to work in gender homogenous groups and even this is given as a very important and well-received point by the teenager's feedback.

Often, young people give the feedback, that the project was too late available or not enough offered by the school. Teenagers want more information from the school, since these issues are not adequately discussed in their parental homes.



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5 Beneficiaries needs

The sex education in schools in biology, or even when it comes to partnership and abortion, in the subjects of religion and ethics is not sufficient enough. Mrs. Ulrike Busch, professor of family planning at the FH Merseburg says: "One problem is, that sex education as a pure transfer of knowledge, like it is offered in schools, is not sufficient enough. Abstract explanations in two lessons, as important as they are, are simply not true-to-life. When young people have their first time sex and really need knowledge about contraception, the situation is very different: surprising, spontaneous, exciting – just not as in the textbook. I think, that schools should cooperate with sex pedagogues even more. Organizations such as Pro Familia can emotionally accompany the teenagers on their way to their own sexuality." [15]

This statement is consistent with our experience, when we work with young people from different secondary schools. The knowledge of the biological processes in puberty and sexuality is, if it exists, not connected to their living reality and experience. Therefore, principals and teachers from various schools are happy, that we are offering a complementary action.

The schools are first and foremost knowledge mediators. For this purpose, the teachers are formed. Pedagogical skills during studying are mostly taught in a very small impact. However, the living conditions of the pupils have changed and school is confronted with this new situation and has no opportunities to respond. Therefore, for example, social workers and pedagogues are active in all schools in the Rhein-Hunsrück district. They primarily offer non-formal educational support. Educational offers in terms of class community, conflict training and sex education of counseling and youth centers are gladly accepted.

It is important to the students and the teachers, that such offers do not take place in a school setting, but in premises outside the school. Also the teachers recognize, that process-oriented and methods on individuals cannot be accommodated in a 45-minute grid. In our area networks were created to offer specific projects to schools. (e.g. interactive programs on topics such as love, contraception and AIDS). In these networks, social workers from different fields of activity work together. In addition, materials for age-appropriate sex education have been developed that can be borrowed to schools or other educational institutions. Access to these materials is published on our website or by word of mouth recommendation.

5.1 Qualification: Further training in sex education

The Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) provides several information about further education for specialists regarding to sex education. Contacts to associations, institutions and specialist companies which provide this qualification are list on the website.

It concerns the following responsible bodies [16]:



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- State or denominational organizations
- Specialist companies for sex education and sexology
- Institutions of the federal province for teacher training
- Universities

Sex education is compulsory in the curriculum but only a few universities offer sex educational training for aspiring teachers. They can assume offers from training institutions of the federal province on a voluntary basis [17].

The aim of the BZgA is, to make existing sex educational offers known for various multipliers and to promote networking:

- cooperation with experts
- provision of material for sex education practice
- regulary publication of research results of studies, representative surveys, expert opinions, evaluations and pilot projects

Conclusions

The national analysis shows, that there is a need for action in the following areas:

- 1) 3560 underage pregnant women did an abortion in 2014. Scientists are discussing about the psychological consequences of abortion and the post-abortion syndrome. One thing is certain, however, that there are women, who aborted a child, suffering from this decision. Teenagers get pregnant because they don't use contraception, because they want to give meaning to their life's or because they project all there longings to their child. For teenage mothers, it is difficult to become financially independent and take care of the child alone, because often time they don't complete vocational training. Therefore, it is necessary to show the young girls and boys, that it is better to postpone pregnancy until a time when they feel up to the challenge of having a child. Methodically the baby simulators of real care[®] can be used as a suitable medium, to give young people a sense of what is required in a child's education. This medium is a appropriate opener to work with young people in the issues of responsible partnership with all include facets.
- 2) 94% of German girls and 94% of the boys (98% of girls and 90% of boys with immigrant background) use contraceptives at the first sexual intercourse. To keep these values and to improve, it is still necessary, that young people not only get biological sex education, but also get familiarized with contraceptives. The best way to enable this is to have cooperation between schools and extracurricular places like counseling centers or youth centers.



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- 3) Not described in this analysis, but occurring in the society, are rapes of minors and the new phenomenon of “teen dating violence”. This makes offers relevant, where the ability of young people, particularly girls, to say “NO!” will be strengthened. This is about the support of self-consciousness. With the boys has to be worked on the subject “violence is not a solution”.



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