

**LAW FOR CHANGE
STUDENT
COMPETITION 2019**

TEAM 3	PROJECT TITLE Regendering Gender and Sexuality
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OVERVIEW

Project Summary

The aim of our project is to reeducate members of society to embrace their sexuality while recognizing their role in preventing and protecting others from sexual abuse. The ultimate end is to move towards a society where sex education is not victim-oriented, but caters to all genders- simultaneously teaching males more about the importance of consent, responsibility, and healthy masculinity. Evidently, sex is regarded as a taboo in Hong Kong, so where schools should educate on sexuality and abuse, this education is inevitably restricted to how a female victim should react in an encounter with a sexual predator. This is insufficient, and our project will provide more holistic education for the next generation of adults in matters relating to sexuality, including emotional relations and responsibilities, human sexual anatomy, sexual intercourse, reproduction, reproductive health, reproductive rights, safe sex, birth control, and sexual abstinence.

Our project will engage NGOs who have the requisite expertise in sexual health teachings, with the aim of expanding their services in schools, and we will enable schools to access the services of these NGOs through a web-based app. This app will also provide children and students with up-to-date information on Sexual Health, puberty, and other sex-related issues. Video uploads, question, and comment sections are all facilities the app will be equipped with, to allow interactive discussion.

With the assistance of NGOs and professors, we will publish booklets which will be readily available in schools, and will contain basic information on sexual health and direct students to avenues where they can find out more information or seek help. These booklets will be distributed in schools, particularly during NGO workshops, where trained student representatives from schools will provide assistance, and head Sexual Health Clubs within the schools. Essay writing competitions and movie screening on the theme of sexual health will also be held to increase interest and understanding of sexual education. In wider society, these will be complemented by discussions by NGO personnel on radio stations and open screening movies, which will be followed by discussion sessions from a panel of experts.

Finally, in order to create a sense of urgency to reform the sexual education system and a drive to reform the existing protections for victims of sexual abuse, we will submit research, petitions, and data to the Legislative Council. This research will be assisted by Student representatives, and it will entail the inclusion of males and gender non-binary persons as victims of sexual abuse in the readings of relevant statutes, and the engagement of would-be offenders in sexual education efforts and sexual protection policies.

Need Assessment

The social justice issue in question: the right to protection and education.

Sex is an issue which affects every group in society on a daily basis, therefore, deficiencies in sexual education negatively impact sexual health and maturity, making it more likely that

- i) there will be more victims of sexual assault, unplanned pregnancy, and persons unwittingly contracting Sexually transmitted infections and
- ii) these victims of sexual assault will go unreported and unassisted, due to not knowing what channels to follow, or feeling socially unsupported, there may be an increase in abortions, and higher numbers of STIs contracted, with HIV/AIDS contractions increasing, and often going undetected.

The provision of sex education is a human right. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC,) all young people have the right to access information which promotes their physical and mental wellbeing (article 17), and states have a duty to develop preventive health care, guidelines for parents and family planning education and resources (article 24). Children have the right to education, which will help them to nurture growth in personality, talents as well as to assist them to develop their mental and physical competencies (article 29). Furthermore, the Convention on the Elimination of the Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) requires states parties to eliminate any stereotyped conceptions of gender roles at all levels of education, including revising text books and education programmes (article 10 (c)). Of note is the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action of

the UN Fourth World Conference on Women of 1995, which concerned adolescent sexual and reproductive issues similar to those contained in the ICPD and the CRC. This Declaration underscored a commitment to “ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women’s sexual and reproductive health as well as education”. These goals are handicapped when reproductive health and sexuality education are not sufficiently taught in official school curricula.

While universal primary education, per Millennium Development Goal 2, mainly relates to access to education, equipping young people, women and girls in particular, with the knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health can greatly influence the achievement of other goals: MDG 3 (attaining gender equality and empowering women), MDG 5 (reducing maternal mortality, as well as morbidity) and MDG 6 (fighting HIV/AIDS). Therefore, in order to afford young people the agency to make informed decisions on their sexual lives, the right to sexual education and gender based protections must be actualized.

Fulfilling the need

The most daunting sign of the need to update sexual education in Hong Kong, is the fact that the curriculum of the Guidelines on Sex Education in Schools (hereafter “The Guidelines”) have not been amended since they were adopted in 1997. The curriculum and content of the sex education which is currently in place is not standardised. It is not unusual for schools to allocate only a brief period of time to teaching children about pubertal developments, nor is it unusual for schools to teach students about these developments only during their adolescence, at a time when some would already have experienced these bodily changes, with others having little time to ready themselves for the changes they will then be experiencing.

The End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation, in an interview, criticized The Guidelines as being too expensive, making them difficult for teachers and schools to manage. In addition, it is not compulsory for schools to teach sex education to students as schools are not required to include it in the curriculum by the Education and Manpower Bureau. Without the incentive to teach students sex education, and with no workable teaching structure, it is no surprise that the Guidelines are barely functional.

A questionnaire survey conducted by the Research Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat (the Research Office) revealed that 25% of the respondents felt that they did not receive any proper sex education in the 2017-18 academic year. Unreassuringly, 75% of those who received this education received only 0 to 4 hours of sex education at school in a year, at best, only a fifth of the 20-hour-per-year standard recommended by the 1997 Guidelines. Students then turn to social media, the internet, and other conventional sources to fill the knowledge gap, and are often misled by improper values and stereotypical expectations.

A subject as important as sexual education is not adequately taught when left to the discretion of individual schools, propped up only by loose guidelines. When the Research Office set different questions about sex knowledge in a questionnaire based on the Guidelines, only 3.1% of secondary school respondents and 8.5% of primary school respondents answered 4 or more questions correctly out of 5. Though the questions were based on the students’ knowledge level, few could answer them correctly. According to the ‘Report on Youth Sexuality Study 2016’ conducted by The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, local secondary 3 to 6 students could generally only answer 8 of 12 sex-related questions. Worse still, Teachers are not adequately trained in sex education, most receiving no training in sex education as it is only an elective subject in the teacher training. Thus, there is no guarantee that teachers can teach and answer students’ questions sufficiently well. Between March and May 2015, The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups School Social Work Unit conducted a study which saw them interviewing 582 teachers from 51 schools. 40.5% respondents were not familiar with sex-related knowledge and sex-relevant teaching skills, which complicated the learning of sexual education.

According to the Department of Health, the number of reported HIV infection cases rose from 181 in 1997 to 692 in 2016. Among these 692 cases, 28% of the persons diagnosed with HIV were aged between 20 and 29. Between 2014 and 2016, The University of Hong Kong conducted a study which reflected that the prevalence of Chlamydia trachomatis was as high as 6% among females aged 18-26, and 5% among males of the same age-range, who reported having sexual experience in the past year. These figures reflect the results of

shortcomings in sexuality education. In 2016, about 19% to 34% of the surveyed S3-S6 students who had sexual intercourse considered that they had insufficient knowledge about contraception. 57% of the surveyed S3-S6 students and 40% of S1-S2 students considered that schools should provide more sexuality education. Indicatively, when the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong conducted a Youth Sexuality Study in 2016. Therein, S3-S6 students generally scored of eight correct answers out of the 12 key questions about conception, STIs and HIV/AIDS in 2016, a decrease from nine in 2011. The average score of S1-S2 students, only six in 2011, further fell to five in 2016. Around 45% of the youths aged 18 to 27 had experienced sexual intercourse, mostly starting from the age of 19. However, around 9% of these sexually active youths had not used any contraception in the six months preceding enumeration.

Adolescents, unarmed with knowledge of their sexuality, are more vulnerable to misinformation from their peers and pornography. The 2016 survey also reflected that about 33% of secondary school girls and 59% of boys had ever viewed pornography, up five percentage points from 2011. One in five boys who had viewed pornography had done so over than 15 times in the past month. Among all respondents, around 15% to 20% females and 30% males received pornographic messages or pictures on their mobile phones. With social media and sexualisation in popular culture becoming more common, there is an urgent need to revamp sexual education.

Sexual abuse increases with miseducation, and non-education on sexual affairs. The sexual abuse figures released by the Social Welfare Department and the End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation, highlight the glaring need to enhance the education on how to keep oneself safe from coercive or abusive sexual encounters. In 2016, the Social Welfare Department recorded 294 reported child sexual abuse cases, an increase from 233 in 2006. The End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation also recorded undertaking 66 inquiries on suspected child sexual abuse cases in 2016, 54% of which involved victims below 10 years of age. The End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation resultantly advocated for enhancing sexuality education at home and in schools, and starting sexuality education during kindergarten.

Clearly, an insufficient, optional curriculum on sexual education is not only leading young adults to engage in risky behaviour, but is also making them more vulnerable to sexual predators.

A matter of urgency

Evidently, the deficient sexuality education has taken its toll on young adults, inhibiting their growth, and maturation of adults who conduct themselves responsibly in sexual matters. Teenagers may violate the law due to ignorance of the age of consent or contact sexually-transmitted diseases because of insufficient knowledge about contraception. Sexual abuse has also seen a rise, with victims being younger and younger, and more ignorant about what constitutes sexual abuse, and how to report it and seek help. Conservatism around sex only means that youngsters cannot discuss the problems they are encountering, and the school curricula need to adapt to the need for sexual education. Legislative reform is also essential to widen the protections afforded to sexual abuse victims to non-binary gendered persons, and to make it mandatory for teachers to be provided the training that they need to be competent educators in matters relating to sex.

The steep rise in contractions of sexually transmitted infections, sexual abuse reports, and the indications of student lack of knowledge from surveys conducted by various departments are a plea for reform in sexual education. This reform should come sooner rather than later, so a generation of students can be offered the opportunity to embrace their sexuality and engage in healthy and safe intercourse, if they so choose. Without such reforms, the ills of pornography, with its misunderstanding of sexual relations beyond physical intercourse, will play out in the lives of young adolescents. It is time to finally recognize and deliver on the right that all children to have sexual education and protection from sexual harm.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals

- 1 To enhance sexual education among youth
- 2 To increase awareness and discussion of sexual affairs in society
- 3 To secure legislative backing to fortify protections of all vulnerable persons and potential victims

Objectives

- 1 To institute a comprehensive curriculum which caters to the need for sexual education
- 2 To provide schools with ease of access to teaching facilities, and NGO support
- 3 To raise enthusiasm and interest in sexual health through screenings, discussions, competitions and media influence
- 4 To furnish analyses and date to the Legislative Council with regards the need for sexual health education, and better protections for potential victims of sexual abuse, including (but not limited to) males and transgender persons.

DETAILED ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

App

Stakeholders engaged: student volunteers, NGOs

As access to online information on sex-related issues is an efficient way for teenagers and adolescents to independently learn about sexuality and forming healthy sexual relationships, we will launch a web-based app, which will grant visitors access to information on various subjects from contraception, puberty, what constitutes sexual abuse and how to report it, to websites where information on sexual issues is freely available. Apart from this content, video uploads will be allowed (after screening by the app operator for appropriateness,) with question posting facilities and chatrooms to encourage interactive discussion also available. Through this app, schools will also be able to reach out to NGOs offering workshops and services related to sexual education. NGOs will also be able to invite schools to enlist for their assistance and indications on which NGOs are available will be visible. This will help to increase the number of hours which students are taught about sexuality and related issues.

NGO engagement

NGOs will be pivotal in ensuring that the content on the website is accurate and suitable for the children to understand. Questions posed by website visitors will also be answered by NGO personnel, and videos uploads and chatrooms will be mediated and supervised by Social workers and NGO staff.

Workshops at schools

Stakeholder engagement: NGOs, Professors in related fields, Student Representatives

To achieve our aims, we will form partnerships with local NGOs which specialise in sex education and gender awareness. As these NGOs already provide their services to some schools, and hold workshops therein, we will increase their influence, which institutions will readily welcome as these NGOs are well recognized, trusted educators in this field. Among primary and secondary school students, these workshops and

sharings from NGOs will be supported by student representatives from the respective schools. These student representatives will attend specialized trainings from NGOs to enable them to appropriately assist in conducting these workshops.

We will run supervised screenings of movies along the theme of sexuality, some of which will be open to the general public. The adult screenings will include an entry fee, and will be followed by discussion sessions, which will be enlightened by a panel of professionals and commentators. These screenings will be held in the event spaces of NGOs, or in schools. Thus, we will be able to increase interest in and knowledge around the subject of sexuality, both inside and outside the classroom. For the wider society, we will engage social workers and educators in sexuality on social media and through popular channels such as radio broadcasts and television, to foster knowledge and discussion.

For University Students, as they would have already passed through the schooling system with limited sexual education, we will encourage Offices of Student Affairs and General Education Departments to institute a mandatory course on sexual education, or mandatory attendance of lecture series on sexual health topics. The course on Sexual Education would initially be on a pass/ fail basis, and it on the discretion of the individual Institutions, the course will be awarded credits.

Engagement of Professors and Experts in Sexual Health related subjects

We will also approach Professors in Sexual Health and Gender related fields, and with their assistance, posters, activities and teaching materials exploring sexual health will be designed. These professors and experts will be welcomed to assist in NGO workshops, and they will be given the opportunity to share information with parents on how to teach their child about sex and sexuality, during parent-teacher meetings. Workshops will also be held where these professors and experts, along with NGO staff, can teach school teachers more about sexual education and how to address the curiosity or confusion of adolescents during puberty. Professors will also assist in encouraging their Faculties and Departments to adopt a mandatory Lecture Series, or Course on Sexual Education for University Students.

Student representatives engagement

Student representatives will provide research and technical assistance during the designing of teaching materials which NGOs will use in schools. These students will assist in printing materials, designing posters, and facilitating the smooth operation of workshops and learning sessions. These student representatives will be able to head Sexual Health Clubs in their individual schools and assist in the running of essay competitions and movie screenings.

Booklets

Stakeholder engagement: NGOs, student representatives, professors and experts

With the assistance of NGOs, legal practitioners, and professors specializing in sexual education and gender related fields, we will also publish two booklets (primary to secondary, and tertiary to adult), which students can read and learn from, containing exercises, and tasks to complete.

These booklets will contain information on the following topics:

- Human development (including puberty, reproduction, gender identity, and sexual orientation)
- Relationships (including families, friendships, dating, romantic, and sexual relationship)
- Personal skills (including decision-making, negotiation, and communicating)
- Sexual behaviour (including abstinence and sexuality)
- Sexual health (including contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy)
- Society and culture (including pornography, inclusivity, gender roles, and sexuality in popular culture)

These booklets will be tailored to the ages and developmental stages of the students, and will contain phone numbers of social workers and helplines students can call if they are being abused, or if they are looking for more information. We will support

these booklets with essay and poetry competitions on the subject of sexuality, abuse and its prevention, and sexual education in general, essays, which will have a minimal entry fee. Winners will be awarded a prize in the form of money, sexual education resources, including the aforementioned booklets, and a certificate issued by one of the NGOs overseeing the competition.

NGO engagement

NGOs will provide assistance in running the competitions, reading submissions and hosting award ceremonies. Winning submissions will be posted on the websites of the NGOs, and the certificates which awardees will be given will have the logos of the supporting NGOs.

Professors, expert and student engagement

These booklets will be proofread for quality by assisting professors and student representatives. The latter will also be tasked with distributing the materials to different classrooms, and providing technical support before competitions i.e. creating fliers and distributing them, disseminating information on schools on competitions, and providing logistical support during the competitions and award ceremonies.

Legislative Council Research and Data Submission

Finally, through petitions, liaisons with Legislative Councillors, and by providing research on the need for sexual education, we will create a current of support for comprehensive sexual education in schools and an increased awareness of the need to reform the stipulated Guidelines on Sex Education in Schools.

Surveys of participating schools will be held, and feedback will also be taken through the app on the effectiveness of the sexual education that is being provided, as well as the skills and competencies the students resultantly develop. This research will be submitted to the Legislative Council.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Activity	Time
STAGE 1: Stakeholder Recruitment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacting NGOs, student volunteers To assist with the app and booklet, for first-hand information Contact Legislative Council members To seek their assistance in initiating discussion on gender laws and sex education Contact sex education experts To seek their input on content of workshops, booklets etc. 	<p>Feb 2020</p> <p>Feb 2020</p> <p>Feb 2020</p>
STAGE 2: Preparation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing content for proposed activities Draft the content for the app, school workshops, booklet and LegCo research. 	Mar 2020
STAGE 3: Implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacting IT specialists to develop the application The user interface that allows dissemination of information, discussion forums etc. Work with NGOs to pitch new curriculum to schools To show the proposed plan and pitch to schools to add the new curriculum to their teaching 	<p>Jun-Jul 2020</p> <p>Jul 2020</p>

INNOVATIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Innovativeness

Our project is innovative because we will be the only body which is assisting children to fully actualise on their right (i) to sexual education, and (ii) to greater legal protections. While a number of NGOs are providing these same services, they are provided on an individual basis, and are not sufficient to comprehensively educate children on their sexuality. By allowing student engagement, and reaching out to educators, parents and legislators, we will cultivate change and the development of an environment where children will be able to increase their sexual comprehension.

Sustainability

The sustainability of our project lies mainly in how we give agency to those who can benefit the most from it—the schools, which can recruit the services if NGOs with greater ease, the students who can make use of our app to access accurate information on sexual health, the parents and teachers, who, equipped information and

guidelines on how to educate students on sexuality, will be able to carry out this mandate on their own, and the society, which will be able to discuss issues relating to sexuality in a judgement-free, respectful environment.

We hope that by equipping educators and students with the tools that they need to acquire information on sexuality, they will share this information with their loved ones and their peers, thereby creating a multiplier effect. In terms of sponsorship, this project is sustainable as it can generate funds to offset its operational costs through the entry fees of student essay competitions, and movie tickets. We hope to attain additional funds from donors and sponsors such as law firms, university sponsorships, and organizations such as the Hong Kong Jockey Club. In terms of operation of the project, we will welcome anyone able and willing to assist to join an executive team, and we will renew membership thereof annually. We will also have a buddy-programme in local schools where current student representatives will be able to pass on whatever skills they learnt to incumbent student representatives, who will also be able to take over the operation of Sexual Health Societies.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring

To monitor progress made, each team member will be responsible for coordinating and assisting specific schools, and monthly meeting will be held to monitor the progress that is being made.

Student representatives

Student representatives from schools will also report on the progress which their Sexual Health Clubs are making, and how many topics they have explored. These reports will be given after each club meeting, and alterations will be discussed.

NGOs and professors

Meeting will be held with NGO staff, where increases in service recruitment from schools will be evaluated, and the operation of the website assessed. Student enrolment for essay competitions and movie screenings will also be recorded. Professors will also be asked for feedback, and their engagement with teachers and parents will be monitored through their own reports and those of teachers and parents. The performance and attendance of students in Sexuality Education Courses will be recorded and discussed.

Evaluation

We will primarily evaluate the project through the same assessment methods which the Research Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat utilizes to evaluate the success of schools in following the guidelines on

sexual education. As our project will more thoroughly and comprehensively cover topics related to sexuality, students from participating schools will rank well in these assessments. We will also have internal assessment methods, crafted with the assistance of NGOs, which will look to the effectiveness of workshops, and will correspond with guidelines utilized in other countries and approved by international bodies.

An increased openness towards discussing sex will be difficult to evaluate for the general public, notwithstanding, we will take into consideration the feedback and evaluations of attendees of screenings and discussion panels, as well as listeners of radio broadcasts. Feedback on our app will also be used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the project and to make adjustments where necessary.

Research and data compiled and submitted to the legislative council will be evaluated according to its influence in Consultative Bill Committees, and in debates on amending legislation and education guidelines.

Conclusion

Sexuality is instrumental to all persons, particularly those whose bodies are newly experiencing development towards adulthood. Thus, education is of vital importance to the growth, safety, and legal security. With this project, we hope to have sexual education recognized as a right and legal reform recognized as a mandate, thereby regendering gender and sexuality. ■