The essential link between the school environment and the teaching of and sexual education for the training of young people - a literature review

Janaina Barbosa da Silva¹, Bárbara Rafaela da Silva Dias², Maria José de Lima Silva Andrade³, Edvaldo Pedro da Silva⁴, Wanderson Cleyton da Silva⁵, Darlane Barboza de Farias⁶, Amanda Priscila da Silva⁷, Daniele Barboza Ramos⁸, Gilmaria Maria de Almeida⁹, Rute França de Almeida¹⁰, Marcos Vinícius Alves da Silva¹¹, Karina Kananda Isídio da Rocha¹², Mônica Istefne dos Santos Lima¹³, Maria José dos Santos Silva¹⁴, Emanuella Barros de Souza Oliveira Álvares^{*15}, Allyson Rodrigo de Oliveira Lopes¹⁶

1 Specialist and Science Teaching, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

2 Department of Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

3 Specialist in Educational Management with Emphasis on Human Resources, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

4 Master's students in education, FUNIBER, Professor of the State of Pernambuco, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

5 Department of Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

6 Department of Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

7 Department of Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

8 Department of Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

9 Specialist in Human Rights Education, Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil

10 Postgraduate in Life Sciences Teaching, UNIASSELVI, Recife, Brazil

11 Postgraduate in Life Sciences Teaching, UNIASSELVI, Recife, Brazil

12 Department of Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

13 Department of Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

14 Specialist in Biology Teaching, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão - UNIVISA, Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil.

15 Department of Biology, Center for Biological Sciences, Professor of the Degree Course in Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão (UNIVISA), Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil

16 Department of Biology, Center for Biological Sciences, Professor of the Degree Course in Biology, University Center of Vitória de Santo Antão (UNIVISA), Vitória de Santo Antão, Brazil

E-mail addresses: prof.janainabarbosa27@gmail.com (Janaina Barbosa da Silva), barbararafaeldias@hotmail.com (Bárbara Rafaela da Silva Dias), mlimaandrade2011@bol.com.br (Maria José de Lima Silva Andrade), edvalpe@yahoo.com.br (Edvaldo Pedro da Silva), professorwanderson2201@gmail.com (Wanderson Cleyton da Silva), darlanebarboza112213@outlook.com (Darlane Barboza de Farias), amandaprisciladasilva_outlook.com (Amanda Priscila da Silva), danibarboza72@gmail.com (Daniele Barboza Ramos), gilmaria98@hotmail.com (Gilmaria Maria de Almeida), francarute95@gmail.com (Rute França de Almeida), vinicius201653@gmail.com (Marcos Vinícius Alves da Silva), kanandarochaa@outlook.com (Karina Kananda Isídio da Rocha), monicaistefne1999@gmail.com (Mônica Istefne dos Santos Lima), mjsprofdecencias@gmail.com (Maria José dos Santos Silva), emanuella.barros@hotmail.com (Emanuella Barros de Souza Oliveira Álvares), allysonlopes85@gmail.com (Allyson Rodrigo de Oliveira Lopes)

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: The importance of teaching Sexual Education in schools is explained by its own context, but represents a theme of social relevance. The adoption of sexual education/orientation practices is a tool for health promotion. The present work aims to bring up discussions about the aspects that surround human sexuality from the historical and social perspective. From the

methodological point of view, this work is organized based on a brief bibliographic overview on the image of the female and male figure in the process of human reproduction, since the beginning severing; parallel to this, a diachronic study of the 20th century was carried out, in which the teaching of Sexual Education in Brazilian schools was portrayed as being mediated. The structure of the text consists of three parts that allow a better reading understanding of the socio-historical clashes involving Sexual Education in prejudices and taboos arising from common sense. In addition, some of the political demands that were made for the non-repression of Sexual Education in Brazilian schools were demonstrated. Thus, we emphasize the importance of teaching Sexual Education for the education of young people more aware of their decisions and attitudes within and outside the school context.

Keywords: School Environment. Sex education. Human Sexuality

1. Introduction

The importance of teaching Sexual Education in schools is explained by its own context, which is not limited to individual and/or biological aspects, but represents a theme of social relevance. In this sense, in times of high incidence of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), the adoption of sexual education/orientation practices is a health promotion tool. According to Possebon and Lazzarotto, (2005) Sex Education consists of a "socialization process in which people transmit sexual culture to new generations in order to integrate them into the cultural context of their group" (p. 23). Therefore, in the social layers where there are the lowest socioeconomic and educational levels, they are the places where contamination by STIs and early pregnancy occur so best.

In reality, low-income adolescents end up, most of the time, having the discovery of sex earlier and earlier, and end up without knowing their own body and do not even want to imagine the risk that this pleasure without knowledge can cause. Often adolescents receive distorted information from their own parents, sometimes because they are not prepared to give them this kind of situation, or perhaps because they do not have the knowledge themselves enough to answer their children's doubts.

Even though all the consequences of the lack of knowledge about sex are so evident, when education professionals approach the topic at school, they often come across parents who are immersed in concepts acquired by common sense and who believe that talking about sexuality at school is the same as allowing or encouraging students to start their sexual life earlier. Therefore, it should be noted that sexually educating a subject is the same as

[...] open possibilities, give information about the physiological aspects of sexuality, but mainly inform about its cultural interpretations, and its significant possibilities, allowing a lucid awareness. It is to give conditions for the continued development of a creative sensitivity in your personal relationship. A sex education class would no longer be just a cluster of established senses of biology, psychology and morals, which does not catch sexuality in what can give it meaning and authentic experience: the search for interpersonal beauty, the creation of a significant eroticism of love. (VASCONCELOS, 1971, p. 111).

Despite so much information in the media, the internet and other media, the percentage of people who do not have access to the information in order to educate and guide adolescents into sexual life is still relatively large, and these numbers grow even more when we take into account the socioeconomic factors of certain people. Therefore, and stabilizer a mutual work on the part of the school environment and family is crucial so that young people and adolescents can have the orientation in this phase of life, in which they are often vulnerable, always in search of the new, without measuring consequences for future.

2. Methodology

This is a study with data collection performed from bibliographic survey. For the survey of articles in the literature, a search was conducted in the following databases: Virtual Health Library (VHL), Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS), PubMed and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO).

The inclusion criteria determined for the selection of articles were: texts available in full, articles in Portuguese and English from 1997 to 2021; articles on the whole that portrayed the school environment and the teaching of sexual education for the training of young people. Exclusion criteria were theses and opinions.

3. Results and discussion

A brief contextualization on the historical clashes involving sex education in Brazil

The issues related to Sexual Education began to be debated and problematized more consistently here in Brazil from the twentieth century, specifically between the years 20 and 30, where health and education professionals sought to transmit information to young people and adolescents, aiming at the prevention of venereal pathologies. Nevertheless, the discourse of most of these professionals had eugenics and hygienist aspects, which directed the teaching of Sexual Education through "issues related to descent, "race" and the transmission of undesirable characteristics, [...] it was the knowledge that supported the "new racism" that supposedly had its bases in science

(CÉSAR, 2009, p.50).

In 1922, Fernando Azevedo began to assiduously argue that Sexual Education should be inserted in the school context as teaching content, where the learning process should take place based on the deepening of genetic studies involving human beings and on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases; all this, based on moralizing concepts. With this, to the demands stimulated by Fernando, gave rise to the Brazilian Association of Education, in 1924, causing several social changes in Brazilian education. In the same year, the National Congress of Educators took place, at which time the Sexual Education Program was approved, which would be applied to the teaching of young people over the age of eleven years.

The Journal *Diário da Noite* conducted a research on the teaching of Sex Education in the year 1930, obtaining positive returns from the majority of the interviewed population; however, the people who agreed with the proposal had some reservations related to the methods and contents to be used in the classroom. Shortly thereafter, Professor Stawiarki introduced as programmatic content to the discipline of Biology, teaching on Sexual Education and Species Evolution, at the Baptist College of Rio de Janeiro. These contents initially returned to the analysis of the female function in the propagation of species; only in 1935 was the male sex inserted in these studies. However, the creator of this teaching program ended up receiving a legal process that caused his resignation (GUIMARÃES, 1995).

According to Guimarães (1995), until 1960 the Catholic Church exercised great control in the Brazilian educational system, which was one of the factors that gave rise to a strong prohibition on the teaching of Sexual Education in schools. Never the more, a small number of books related to sexuality did not fail to be published, highlighting: *Methods of Fertility Control and Our Sexual Life (s/d)*; and *Our sex life - Guide and counselor for all with answers to all questions* (1951). The works had the intention of clarifying doubts regarding sexuality and reproduction in a clear and objective way, addressing the biological demands that originate fertilization.

In 1964, the Military Coup generated sudden political transformations that have blunted the entire country. In the midst of so many social transitions, the preservation of principles and norms through repressive practices is emphasized; with this, all pedagogical initiatives aimed at Sexual Education in schools were rudely prohibited. Throughout this period, the Brazilian educational system underwent several interventions with initiatives aimed at moralistic ideas, which were supported by the military regime (CÉSAR, 2009).

According to Guimarães (1995), several initiatives for the implementation of sexual education teaching were made over the period from 1963 to 1968, through pedagogical projects that were developed in some public schools in the city of São Paulo. The impacts of these programs were so positive that a college in Minas Gerais include the teaching

of Sexual Education in the curricula of students in the junior gym (currently, 9th grade). However, due to the governmental situation that the country was going through at the time, the college regrade with the proposal for only three years.

In Rio de Janeiro, schools such as Pedro de Alcântara, Infante Dom Henrique, André Mourão and Orlando Rouças inserted the teaching of Sexual Education for all grades, from elementary school to high school. All this occurred between 1964 and 1968; however, several people suffered government reprisals, where many professionals were exonerated and some students suspended from classes for long periods. This whole context was marked by "a throwback to closed puritanism and increased censorship. There was no law prohibiting Sex Education, but fearful school administrators emptied programs in public schools" (GUIMARÃES, 1995, p. 66).

The whole of Brazilian society followed the reopening in the political scene at the end of the 1970s, when the changes occurred with strong intensity in all social areas, including the debate on issues related to sexuality. It is in these circumstances that the claims related to feminist causes put pressure on the government, and also proposes ways for the population to better understand what sexual education in schools actually meant (CÉSAR, 2009).

Private institutions of the education network developed congresses on Sexual Education in schools between 1978 and 1979. Through the debates held during these meetings that education professionals showed a remarkable interest in the theme, since the lectures had an audience of approximately two thousand people. At the end of the 1970s, new governmental institutions were created, aiming at controlling birth rates in the country; highlighting BEMFAM (Civil Society of Family Welfare in Brazil), responsible for planning the 1st Technical Seminar on Sexual Education. Based on this chronological analysis, it is possible to notice that:

Only from the second half of the 1980s, in Brazil, sexuality (and homosexuality) began to be discussed much more in various social instances, including in schools. The concern to engage in the fight against the disease (AIDS) caused official bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, to stimulate sexual education projects, and in 1996, the MEC included the theme, as a cross-cutting theme, in its National Curriculum Parameters (the PCNs, the new guideline for the country's education). It is worth noting, however, that the conditions that allowed the expansion of the discussion about sexuality also had the effect of bringing it closer to the ideas of risk and threat, putting in the background the association with pleasure and life (LOURO, 2008, p. 36)

In 1990, the National Curriculum Parameters – PCNs added in their guidelines the term "Sexual Orientation" as a cross-cutting theme. At the time, the event generated reflections and criticism stemming from some researchers and educators. According to Martelli (2009), the divergent opinions occurred due to "the non-materialization [of Sexual Orientation as a cross-sectional theme] involves teacher

education, the precarious Brazilian educational system, but, above all, the denial of sexuality as something inherent to human life in different age groups (p. 129).

In this sense, Furlani (2009) brings a reflection on the definition of "Sexual Education" and "Sexual Orientation", present in the PCNs (2000). The first term is directed to the understanding of information related to sexuality that is presented informally to young people in the family environment and that the subjects see what are considered moral standards (these patterns, in most cases, are forced by the social bonds to which the young people are inserted). On the other hand, the term "Sexual Orientation" is classified through a method of intervention intentionally organized to provide a universe of action and reflection, resonating doubts and bringing to light values and information about the manifestations of human sexuality.

However, corroborating the conceptions proposed by Altmann and Martins (2007), we consider that:

[...] in social movements and, in general, in international bibliography, sexual orientation is a term used to indicate which sex (male or female) by which a person is attracted or chooses as an object of desire and affection [...]. Sexual Education, in turn, refers to educational practices that have sexuality as a theme. (p. 132)

In view of this, we will emphasize throughout this work the nomenclature "Sexual Education", since we consider that the term "Sexual Orientation" brings another semantic value to the proposal now addressed in our research.

With regard to THE PCNs (2000), we felt that their guidelines have led to new debates and the development of research on the topic of sexuality, developing discussions and proposals for the reformulation of curricula in public and private schools throughout the country and making cross-cutting themes observed from the work with the "content of formative value, which permeates the curricular disciplines in order to articulate among themselves contents worked from the school curriculum" (NUNES, 2000, p. 63).

Still, it is important to point out that:

Although the importance of working with the theme of sexuality with students and elementary school students is considered relevant, a biologizing view of sexuality prevails in plans and teaching practices, taking off from economic, cultural, social, political and historical constraints. (MARTELLI, 2011, p. 01)

Even if the relevance of this document is not considered, we understand that the statements contained in it point to the issues and doubts related to sexuality, directs them to the prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and pregnancy in youth. In this way, we believe that:

[...] the guidance recommended by the PCN needs to be interpreted as a proposal of Sexual Education and not as Sexual Orientation. As a sex education or an "education for sexuality", we expanded the discussions to aspects that guide human relations: social, economic, ethical, ethnic and historical. Thus, we have managed to defused ourselves from

minimized or superficial practices, which are even in force in school when it is intended to treat sexuality in a fragmented way in specific actions through transversal themes [...] (SANTOS and ARAÚJO, 2009, p. 18).

Therefore, when elaborating this topic of work, we observed that the teaching of Sex Education in Brazil is for a series of events that were full of achievements and recessions. Therefore, we corroborate with Guimarães (1995), because we understand that the historical context that culminated in the discussion about the teaching of Sexual Education in Brazilian schools was conducted through "isolated and sparse movements, which occur in a sporadic way [...]" (p. 68).

Thus, we rely on the idea that sexuality is composed through countless meanings, which involve prejudices, beliefs and behaviors linked to mythologies, which have been standardized and permeated by society over time. Moreover, there are people throughout the historical process of social formation who understood sexuality in a plural way, and therefore understood that it is inherent to any human being and can be changeable, since we are always constantly changing and connect to the other "by exchanges with the world, which lends a new meaning and meaning to each day" (GUIMARÃES, 1995, p. 31).

Sociohistorical references about human sexuality

Since the most distant times, sexuality has brought indicators that individualize the forms of human relationship, evidencing the cultural transformations of each individual. According to this perspective, Valladares (2002) points out that in the process of formation of prehistoric families, the female figure was the main responsible in the face of parental control, where his relationship with the son was the only one specifically demarcated. With this, the male function in the family conception was only observed from the moment civilizations began to survive sedentarily.

Based on these historically perforated repression contexts, Vitiello (1997) states that the forms of revulsion projected to sexuality arose amid the formation of the first bands of hominids and originated while these individuals developed culture. This type of ostentatious positioning was presented to subjects who were departing from heteronormative standards, as this was a means of social organization for the institution of marriage and reproduction to continue to happen. The author also analyzes the means used for sexual inhibition within Jewish, Roman and Greek cultures, indicating that at the heart of Western society there is a rather distorted perception of human sexuality. In these cultures, many punitive practices were applied to subjects who expressed sexuality by fleeing normative standards; however, the punishments were even more severe when the individual in question belonged to the female gender.

Only in 9000.c., the association between cures and fertilization was, in fact, discovered. However, over a long

time, the man understood that it was inherent in the nature of the woman to go through the experience of becoming pregnant and/or breastfeeding for a considerable part of adulthood. In the same way, it conferred on the sexual act nothing but physical satisfaction. Therefore, the convergence between sex, procreation and morality was introduced late in civilization (VITELLO, 1997).

Adding to the above, Garcia (2005) indicates the link between sexuality and religious aspects about 500,000 to 10,000 a.c., where men and women had places and services established in the societies in force at the time. All criteria related to women's work were linked to organizing society through its power of seduction and fertility.

Equally, Loyola (1999) elucidates that mythology provides a strong representation of sexuality in Classical Antiquity, especially through Literature and Art, where paintings, myths, legends, sculptures and literary productions show marks of sexual behavior and social behaviors practiced by these peoples.

Based on this diachronic trajectory, it is worth mentioning that research directed to sexuality does not have an input originating in the Human sciences, where the term began to be studied only in the early nineteenth century. In addition, terms related to sexuality could be used to validate the conduct of individuals in society, justifying their interests, pleasures, emotions, longings and behaviors.

Also, in the 19th century, studies on human sexuality began to be developed in the areas of Psychoanalysis and Psychology. However, the research was based on an analysis that favored heterosexual subjects, seeking interventions based on formal and/or drug procedures (LOURO, 2003).

In 1975, the World Health Organization (WHO) presented an official communiqué, which discusses sexuality from a perspective inherent to human subjectivity:

Human sexuality forms an integral part of each person's personality. It is a basic need and an aspect of the human being that cannot be separated from other aspects of life. Sexuality is not synonymous with same-like and is not limited to the presence or not of orgasm. Sexuality is much more than that. It is energy that motivates to find love, contact and intimacy, and is expressed in the way of feeling, in people's movements and how they touch and are touched. (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 1975)

Through the statement granted by the WHO (1975), it is revealed that sexuality involves much more than the practice of sexual act, since it integrates the personality of each subject, and, therefore, is constituted through cultural, affective and physical aspects. This positioning allows a direct reference to Foucault's (1993) research, where the author argues that sexuality is part of a set of characteristics that develop singularly in social circumstances. Thus, the study and standardization of sexuality, which are based exclusively on heterosexual subjects, cause enormous damage to other individuals who do not fit this pattern, reinforcing prejudices and limiting debates in favor of gender relations.

All questions directed to the debate on sexuality still

remain synonymous with taboos in our society. This happens, most of the time, because what is emphasized on the subject concerns negative and pernicious concepts. Therefore, we corroborate brêtas e Silva (2005), when the authors declare that "professionals who deal with topics related directly or indirectly to Sexual Education are faced with two practical options: to work on the theme ostensibly or from a biologically and psychologically positive perspective" (p. 36)

From this perspective, it is important to emphasize that every approach on issues involving sexuality should not be carried out in a biased way, because the sanding of information is not able to generate an educational message, especially to young people who are inserted in the learning context. According to Loyola (1999), the fragmentation of information can cause the approach of Sexual Education in schools to be seen only as the transmission of knowledge about reproductive sex, when, in reality, the intention is that students can understand and reflect on human behavior through social relationships, gender issues, sexual orientation and respect for differences.

The importance of sex education in school

Aiming at a better reading understanding, explain what concepts and purposes involve the teaching of Sexual Education interschool environment. Therefore, at the initial level of understanding, the conceptions surrounding the theme in question are designated as a means for young people to obtain information and address doubts that cover sexuality and its particularities. All this is directed so that subjects can observe the nuances that involve the human body, sexual relationships and sentiments addition, the teaching of Sexual Education promotes debates about the moralizing principles that are characterized as values and that are surrounded by myths and prejudices linked to sex. (NOGUEIRA *et al.* 2016)

Strengthening such placements, the United Nations Educational, Science and Culture Organization (2018) emphasizes that:

Sexuality education plays a central role in preparing young people for a safe, productive and satisfying life in a world where HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancy, gender-based violence (VBG) and gender inequality still pose serious risks to their well-being and understands and ensures the protection of their rights throughout their lives. (p.12)

From this perspective, we understand that mediating the teaching of Sexual Education in the school environment is relevant so that students can perceive all the complexity that involves human sexuality, and thus be able to be more cautious when making decisions. With regard to relationships between young people, (whether affective or not) the choices for safe, conscious and healthy actions will be made more often, strengthening a respectful positioning. That's why:

The school and educators have a fundamental role, and can contribute positively to an integral, social and culturally

liberating education, in which knowledge goes beyond the technique and content of the curricula of the disciplines, making clear the relations between knowledge and everyday life. (VIEIRA, *et al.* 2017, p. 15)

Another focus presented to the discussions of Sexual Education at school is related to issues of gender and diversity, making students observe the importance of combating prejudice in our society.

However, it is important to emphasize that the work presented here does not disease family responsibility in view of the guidelines they should give to young people with regard to Sexual Education. Therefore, we also support our research according to what the authors Moreira and Folmer (2011) emphasize, since both ensure that the dialogue on topics directed to Sex Education needs to be initiated in the family community since childhood; thus, the school will serve as a support for the approaches involving Sex Education to be carried out in a clear way, without judgments and without prejudice.

Also, according to Moreira and Folmer (2011), Sex Education should not be understood by common sense as a way for children and young people to be encouraged to engage in sexual intercourse, but rather a means to ensure that students have access to the correct information about the aspects that surround the nuances of sexuality and thus be able to make more assertive decisions.

In addition to the reasons mentioned, the teaching of Sexual Education in schools is of paramount importance for young people to have access to the correct information and knew the necessary measures that should be taken to prevent STIs and unwanted pregnancy. Cases of sexual violence are also reported through classroom dialogue; this is because, in most cases, sexual abuse happens in an intrafamilial way and ends up being neglected or not observed by people closer to the victim, providing little or no visibility to the fact, and occurs "because most of the aggressors are close people who inspire confidence in children and adolescents, which also hinders the effectiveness of the complaint" (SILVEIRA; PEREIRA, 2017). In view of these circumstances, the school and teachers also have the responsibility to assist young people who experience some kind of abuse, and must take the appropriate measures according to the indicated by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA).

Thus, it is basic that the school offers a space for teachers and students to be able to debate and reflect the relevance of Sexual Education in youth. This action causes vulnerabilities linked to lack of self-knowledge to be minimized, and thus students can signify the issues that involve the concepts of gender, desire, pleasure, responsibility and ethics.

4. Conclusions

The school environment is a space in which teachers and students deal daily with aspects related to sexuality. Therefore,

it is important that these subjects can understand Sexual Education as a way for human sexuality to be observed through a biological perspective, which, in turn, is also fraught with cultural and social stigmas. In addition, debating the themes that involve Sexual Education allows students to understand the best ways of speaking about the individual and the collective, manifesting positions and socializing experiences in favor of themselves and the other.

Furthermore, it is possible to observe how important it is to approach and instruct young people during Sexual Education classes about the contraceptive methods available to prevent early pregnancy and contamination by STIs, as well as the signs that indicate sexual violence, because, in many cases, adolescents suffer abuse in an intrafamilial manner and do not understand the possibilities of obtaining help and punishing the aggressor.

Promoting debates and bringing knowledge about Sexual Education in the classroom goes beyond theoretical concepts, because it provides students "with the awakening of their potentialities, favoring the expression of their creativity and sensitivity" (LOURO, 2003, p. 51). Thus, it is essential that the teacher develops empathy to dialogue about the personal experiences of young people, and, with this, seek to resignify these experiences related to sexuality.

Therefore, we understand that the teaching of Sexual Education is a challenge for teachers who deal daily with young people and adolescents with different personalities and life experiences. Therefore, it is necessary that educational institutions (whether public or private) provide a space for the developed activities that emphasize the importance of Sexual Education in the lives of students and in the education of these subjects.

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