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The Manufacture of Consensus: The Development of United Nations Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education

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Over the last 20 years, a number of agencies have developed guidance on the form that sex and relationships education (as it is called in countries such as the UK) and sexuality education (as it is perhaps better known internationally) should take. Much of the impetus for this work has derived from the erroneous view that talking to young people about sex encourages them to commence sexual relations irresponsibly and early. One of the earliest reviews, commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the early 1990s, sought to engage with precisely these concerns. It was funded because at the time country-level resistance (particularly in Africa and Asia) to the introduction of sexuality education for young people in schools was in danger of stymieing efforts to arrest and turn back the growing HIV epidemic.

Within this context, Mariella Baldo et al. (1993) reviewed 19 studies focusing in on the sexual behaviour of high school and/or college students who have received sexual education. Of these studies, 15 had been conducted in the USA. One study compared the USA with other countries. The three remaining studies were conducted in Mexico, Thailand, and Denmark. Not one of these studies indicated that sexual education contributed to earlier or increased sexual activity among young people. Findings from six of them suggested that sexual education caused either a delay in the onset of sexual activity or a

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reduction in overall sexual activity. Sexually active young people in ten of the studies adopted safer sex practices after attending sexual education. The most effective school programmes promoted both a delay in the onset of sexual intercourse and protected sex among those young people who were sexually active.

This initial study was followed by a more comprehensive review also commissioned by WHO and undertaken by Anne Grunseit and Susan Kippax in 1993. This time, 52 published reports were examined. Of 47 studies evaluating identifiable interventions, 25 reported that HIV and sexuality education neither increased nor decreased sexual activity and attendant rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Seventeen studies reported that HIV and/or sexuality education delayed the onset of sexual activity, reduced the number of sexual partners, or reduced unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD) rates (Grunseit et al. 1997). A later update was conducted for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). This time, no less than 68 published papers were identified, with the review findings once again providing good support for the efficacy of HIV and sexuality education in reducing unwanted outcomes of young people's sexual behaviour. Of 53 articles describing specific programmes or forms of intervention, 22 reported significant decreases in coital activity or its markers compared with controls, and 27 studies reported no effect (Grunseit 1997; Grunseit and Aggleton 1998).

In parallel, Douglas Kirby and colleagues in the USA were involved in work of a similar kind, conducting detailed analyses of the risk and protective factors associated with young people's sexual behaviour, as well as literature reviews and meta-evaluations of research on programmes designed to prevent teenage pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. These analyses sought to identify the characteristics of effective programmes, enabling the development of a 'blueprint' for the creation of new programmes of demonstrated effectiveness (Kantor et al. 2014). Two major reports—*No Easy Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy* (1997) and *Emerging Answers* 2007: *Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Disease* (Kirby 2007)—highlight the findings from Kirby's groundbreaking work and have been distributed over 700,000 times since their publication (Kantor et al. 2014). Between them, these reports identified 17 characteristics of effective sexuality education programmes (Table 3.1).

Summarising these findings, in 2007 Doug Kirby wrote,

> Our field continues to progress. The percentage of sex and STD/HIV education programs with positive effects on behavior continues to increase and the strength of their evidence has also increased. Moreover, there are now several programs

Table 3.1 Summary of the characteristics of effective programmes adapted from *Emerging Answers* 2007: *Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Disease* (Kirby 2007)

The process of developing the curriculum	The contents of the curriculum	Activities and teaching methodologies	The process of implementing the curriculum
Activities are designed using a logic model	Activities are focused on clear health goals	Ensure a safe social environment	Secure support from appropriate authorities
Activities are designed by a group of experts	Activities encourage specific types of behaviours that lead to health goals	Include multiple activities to change risk and protective factors	Employ strategies to recruit and retain participants
Activities address the needs and assets of the target group	Activities address risk and protective factors that affect and change sexual behaviour	Employ activities, methods, and messages appropriate to the target group	Train, supervise, and support teachers
Activities respect community values		Employ participatory teaching methods	Implement activities with fidelity
The programme is pilot-tested		Cover topics in a logical sequence	

> that have been evaluated multiple times, and the results suggest that when the original programs are implemented with fidelity in similar settings with similar populations of young people, their positive effects on behavior are also replicated […]. We also know more about which mediating factors (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, perceptions of peer norms, self-efficacy, intentions, etc.) are changed by the programs and in turn affect behaviour. (Kirby 2007, 6)

Given the weight of evidence, it might be supposed that debate about effects and effectiveness (i.e. about 'what works') in sexuality education would have been laid to rest. But this was not to be. The 'sex wars' (Correa et al. 2008) that raged first in the USA between 2001 and 2009 under George W. Bush's administration, and then internationally (where they were encouraged at least in part by a somewhat 'unholy alliance' between a then Republican US administration, fundamentalist Islam, and the Holy See), had a profound effect on available discourses about sex and sexuality. Influenced by religious and political narrow-mindedness, conservatives sought to question anything that hinted of any form of sexual freedom. Regardless of the scientific evidence, sexuality education that moved beyond the promotion of abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it was deemed morally suspect. As a result, no less than $1.5 billion came to be wasted on abstinence-only and abstinence-only-until-marriage education

programmes in US schools through programmes, which comprehensive reviews by Kirby (2002), Hauser (2004), and Santelli et al. (2007), later deemed to be totally ineffective.

At the same time, however, numerous developing country governments across Africa, Asia, and Latin America struggled with the issue of how best to protect young people from the growing threat of HIV. UNAIDS and its co-sponsors sought to promote risk reduction among both young people in general and groups at special risk of HIV, including gay and other men who have sex with men, sex workers and their clients, and people who inject drugs. But how could they achieve such a goal without explicit education about sex, sexuality, and relationships?

It was into this space that efforts to develop the first United Nations (UN) guidance on sexuality education stepped. The process of developing the *UN Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education* started in December 2007 and lasted for a period of two years until the guidance's publication on World AIDS Day in December 2009. The Guidance sought to provide education and health authorities worldwide with the rationale for sexuality education (what is it and why should it be taught?) as well as an overview of the basic minimum package of age-appropriate topics and learning objectives that should be integrated in the curriculum (what does it include?).

Looking back in time, the development of this document can be described as a technical as well as a political process. The development of the *UN Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education* was strongly influenced by three types of politics: the politics of silence, the politics of what might be described as the 'international arena', and the local politics surrounding the Guidance's scientific development. From start to finish, the development of the guidance was indeed a deeply *political* process.

The Politics of Silence

Since the very earliest days of the HIV epidemic, activists and stakeholders engaged in the HIV response have struggled with the development of effective educational programmes for children and young people. This has mainly been the result of a refusal to accept children and young people as sexual beings (Robinson 2013) alongside cultural and religious opposition to the provision of sexuality education in formal educational settings. Significantly, public denial of children and young people's sexuality closed the doors for open discussion about ways of protecting them from an STI.

This 'politics of silence' has much to do with public refusal to engage with and 'own' HIV and sexuality education. Since the start of the epidemic, HIV has been construed as a problem of 'others': of nations and people far beyond domestic boundaries, and of groups (sex workers, gay men, people who inject drugs) whose existence within a domestic frame of reference has been contested or denied (Treichler 1999; Patton 1990). Few teachers find it easy to educate young people about sexuality and relationships, about safer forms of sex, or indeed about serious illnesses such as cancer and AIDS. As a result, silence too often prevails, and reasons are found either not to undertake this kind of work (e.g. there is insufficient time, the curriculum is too crowded), or else it is left to outside 'experts', some of whom may be equally poorly equipped to deliver what is needed (Boler 2003).

At the institutional level, a similar silence has prevailed, with respect to sexuality education at least. Indeed, until 2009, no UN system agency dared to enter into or 'own' the technical area of sexuality education, although various agencies had hitherto been involved in population education or sexual and reproductive health education, pregnancy prevention, HIV-related education, and life skills-based HIV education. When they had done so, such as in the examples cited above, this was in a limited way: commissioning reviews of effects and effectiveness, for example, rather than offering explicit guidance on what needed to be talked about and done, where, when, and by whom.

This refusal to engage explicitly with sexuality is perhaps most evident in the area of life skills education in schools, an HIV prevention approach heavily supported by UN system agencies. While variations exist, most forms of life skills education for HIV prevention have focused on the acquisition of various (1) communication and interpersonal skills, (2) decision-making and critical-thinking skills, and (3) coping and self-management skills.

> While this marked a move away from a focus on generic life skills, it is open to question on what basis these particular HIV-related life skills were selected, and whether they represented priority learning needs, including the prevention of high-risk sexual contact, which is the most common means of HIV transmission among young people. Few of the skills exemplified focused on the specific behaviours required to prevent HIV infection, an approach which has been documented as a key characteristic of effective sexuality education programmes by Kirby and colleagues. The exemplified skills do not include the practical or psychosocial skills required for the correct and consistent use of condoms, for example. (Clarke et al. 2015)

Indeed, it is perhaps the very inexplicitness of life skills education, its obfuscatory character, and its refusal to engage directly with issues of sex, sexuality, and relationships that provides it with the greatest appeal to conservatives. If sexual life can be reduced to 'abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life' (WHO 1994 p. 1), then there need be no explicit mention of sex at all. Moreover, by refusing to acknowledge that children and young people are sexual beings who have the right to information about their bodies, and the right to learning about intimate relationships and ways of protecting themselves from harm, high-level UN system organisations were, for decades after the advent of HIV, complicit in a politics of silence that prevented an explicit focus on sexuality education for young people (Clarke et al. 2015).

The Politics of the International Arena

UNAIDS was launched in 1996 as a joint and co-sponsored programme, bringing together a range of UN system agencies in pursuit of a common agenda. While it took quite some time for a properly developed sharing of responsibilities to emerge (UNAIDS 2008), by late 2007 there existed a relatively clearly defined technical division of labour between UNAIDS' co-sponsors and the work of the agency's Secretariat.

Within this division of labour, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was assigned lead responsibility for HIV prevention education in the formal education sector with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the WHO, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and others. For example, UNFPA partnered with UNESCO to provide HIV prevention education to young people in out-of-school settings, and ILO developed a Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work. While formally integration, coordination, and impact were the name of the game, the reality on the ground often looked very different—particularly with respect to school education—as the result of UNESCO's often limited presence at country level.

In August 2008, senior staff in UNESCO discussed the idea of creating a global programme on sexuality education with colleagues from UNFPA at the International AIDS conference in Mexico. UNFPA reacted favourably and immediately pledged its support (both financial and logistical) for the development of a potential minimum standards document for sexuality education. Other agencies were not directly approached because they were known to be more equivocal in their support for such an enterprise.

What members in the UNESCO team were not aware of at the time was that UNFPA had been lending simultaneous support to an independent working group chaired by staff members of the Population Council for the development of a similar document called *It's All One Curriculum*. On learning of this, UNESCO contacted colleagues at the Population Council and asked them to join an international consultation scheduled in February 2009. Three members from the working group came, and courteous conversations were had. The first author of this chapter (EY) drew up a document that outlined the similarities and differences between the two documents. There were many important differences (Yankah 2016). The independent working group's document was aimed primarily at women aged 15 years and upwards and aimed to be more practical in nature, including ready-made exercises, for example. The UNESCO document on the other hand was designed for advocacy purposes, targeting education and health authorities. It was developed to address the needs and circumstances of all children, and young people in primary and secondary schools globally.

At around the same time, the UNESCO team became aware of two additional groups who had or were in the process of publishing other 'minimum standards' documents: the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) with its headquarters in London, and WHO's European office in cooperation with the German Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), based in Cologne. The work of the BZgA was supported by an expert group of European sexuality educators. To enhance cohesion, UNESCO and UNFPA were invited to become members of the European expert group. IPPF was already a member. As a result of the enlarged membership, the European expert group benefited from the experiences of developing the IPPF *Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education*, *It's All One Curriculum*, and the *UN Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*.

The three months before the publication of the *UN Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*, September until November 2009, involved intense e-mail deliberations chaired by Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director, and senior staff members at UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO. During this time, the document was restructured, facts were checked, language was refined, and detailed appendices were added. For political reasons, the document was split into two parts: Part I providing the rationale for sexuality education, and Part II focusing on age-appropriate topics and learning objectives. Part I carries the logos of UNESCO, UNAIDS, and three other supporting UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO). Part II carries the logos of only UNESCO and UNAIDS. The most sensitive topics such as the recommendation to start age-appropriate sexuality education as early as five years and reference to masturbation are contained in Parts I and II, respectively.

The Politics of Guidance Development

The firm recommendation for UNESCO to develop a programme of work on sexuality education came from one person, Tania Boler, former leader of the Programme and Technical Development Team in UNESCO's Section on HIV and AIDS. Before working for UNESCO, Tania had been Senior Adviser for Education and HIV/AIDS at ActionAid International in London, from where she had founded and led the UK Working Group on Education and HIV/AIDS. Between 2004 and 2006, the UK Working Group developed a body of work on best practices in the field of HIV, and prior to Tania's departure to join UNESCO there had been discussion of utilising sex and relationships education as an approach to HIV education in schools.

At this time, other working groups, including the Inter-agency Task Team on Education and HIV convened by UNESCO, and a range of international non-governmental organisations and national government departments were having similar discussions, but no one had come forward to lay claim to this area. The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) in New York had been one of the first organisations to develop basic minimum standards for sex education in the mid-1990s. However, these guidelines were targeted to an audience based largely in the USA, and the use of the SIECUS Guidelines was sporadic at best, considering the restrictive political climate of the George W. Bush years (Santelli et al. 2006).

The Right Time for UNESCO

At the time when UNESCO first considered the development of a Global Sexuality Education programme in 2007, it would be fair to say that the Section on HIV and AIDS was looking to make its mark and develop an area of work for which it would be recognised by its UN colleagues, and more widely. Christopher Castle, Chief for the Section on HIV and AIDS, and Mark Richmond, Global Coordinator for HIV and AIDS, took a major risk by backing Tania's idea. However, at the same time, they knew that the rewards were potentially great. So it came about that within the space of about two months, UNESCO's Global Programme on Sexuality Education was established. Tania Boler left UNESCO in August of 2008, and after her departure, the first author of this chapter (EY) took over the helm, coordinating the development of work on the Guidance document.

A Global Advisory group of eight influential members in the field was established. The second author of this chapter (PA) was one of the members of this

group. The first Global Advisory group meeting took place in December 2007, establishing clear goals for the next two years of UNESCO's programme. In particular, Global Advisory group members suggested that UNESCO should focus on:

1. Developing guidelines for minimum standards for sexuality education.
2. Commissioning case studies of existing national sexuality education programmes in developing countries.
3. Commissioning a study on the cost and cost-effectiveness of sexuality education for HIV prevention.
4. Conducting a workshop activity on the challenges of scaling up sexuality education programmes.

A proposal was put together for the first task: namely the development of guidelines for minimum standards in sexuality education. Global Advisory group members were asked to disseminate a request for proposals in early 2008. Within weeks, Global Advisory group member Doug Kirby had signalled his interest in the first part of the work, documenting the evidence base for sexuality education. Nanette Ecker, former Director for International Education at SIECUS in New York, responded to the request for proposals on the development of topics and learning objectives. A third consultant, Peter Gordon from the UK, was hired to bring both pieces together.

An initial draft of the Guidance document was presented to the first author of this chapter (EY) and Christopher Castle in December 2008. This draft was sent out for consultation and review to members of the Global Advisory group and also to members of a global consultation group. A first technical consultation for the development of the Guidance document was held at the Hewlett Foundation headquarters near San Francisco in February 2009. The group present at this meeting included sexuality education experts from 11 countries as well as representatives from UNESCO, UNFPA, and the Population Council. In order to recognise and honour the work that had being undertaken in parallel processes, UNESCO invited two members from the International Sexuality and HIV Curriculum working group convened by the Population Council.

Using collated feedback from the global consultation meeting as well as electronic feedback from experts who were unable to attend the consultation meeting, UNESCO produced a second draft of the Guidance document informed by the outcomes of the consultation meeting in San Francisco. In June 2009, UNESCO and UNFPA decided that draft 2 was ready for sharing with a wider audience. The draft Guidance document was then presented

at the World Association for Sexual Health meeting in Sweden in June 2009 and at the International Sex and Relationships Education Conference in Birmingham in September 2009.

By September 2009, however, a media storm had halted the relatively smooth development process. In August 2009, a small religious fundamentalist media outlet in the USA picked up the news that two US experts had been involved in the development of a technical guidance document on sexuality education. The result was a highly critical article in a local newspaper in a Midwestern state in the USA. The journalist quoted content from the topics and learning objectives section of the Guidance document without referencing its proper context. Suddenly, UNESCO was accused of encouraging five-year-olds to masturbate. The use of the word 'masturbation' lay at the centre of the media storm. Within days other religious fundamentalist newspapers had picked up on it, and by September 2009 the story was headline news in the *International Herald Tribune* (later renamed the *International New York Times*). It was from this point onwards that an exceedingly wide range of individuals and groups started to take notice of the work UNESCO was engaged in. The majority of the reactions were positive. Other reactions were those of anger, in the form of hate mail from conservative groups in the USA, and extreme caution as some UN colleagues threatened to withdraw their support to UNESCO. There was a very real possibility that the Guidance might be canned.

Leadership from UNAIDS

A significant individual in preventing this outcome was Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS, who came to the aid of UNESCO and UNESCO's Director General at what was a critical time. Prior to the media storm surrounding the Guidance document Michel Sidibé had accepted UNESCO's invitation to speak at the agency's headquarters on International Literacy Day. His visit to Paris was carefully planned. His intention was to get a full picture of the political battles concerning the Guidance document from behind the scenes. The day after Literacy Day, he first met with UNESCO's then Director General (Koichiro Matsuura) and members of the senior management team followed by a meeting with the Section on HIV and AIDS. In these meetings, he gained enough reassurance about the robustness of the Guidance document to decide that UNAIDS would be a key ally in the endeavour. Significantly, that same year UNAIDS had just published its *2009–2011 Outcomes Framework* which made specific mention of the importance of work with young people and sexuality education (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 2009–2011 UNAIDS Outcomes Framework (excerpt from p. 8)

We can empower young people to protect themselves from HIV:
By putting young people's leadership at the centre of national responses, providing rights-based sexual and reproductive health education and services and empowering young people to prevent sexual and other transmission of HIV infection among their peers. By ensuring access to HIV testing and prevention efforts with and for young people in the context of sexuality education. And by ensuring enabling legal environments, education and employment opportunities to reduce vulnerability to HIV

Through his visit to Paris, Michel Sidibé provided UNESCO's Director General with the necessary assurances and political support to continue work on the Guidance document. His next step was to facilitate a meeting between relevant heads of agencies (UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO) during the forthcoming UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting in Geneva. At this meeting, he encouraged relevant heads of agencies to pledge their support to UNESCO so that finalisation of the Guidance document could be completed in time for World AIDS Day on 1 December 2009. The meeting with heads of agencies in Geneva was the decisive shift that pushed through the final development phase of the Guidance until its launch as planned on World AIDS Day.

Delivering the Goods

The process of editing the Guidance document started in September 2009 with the involvement of the heads of agencies from UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO. A senior member at UNAIDS was asked to coordinate input from UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO. The majority of the work took place by e-mail. E-mail messages were sent from UNAIDS, and responses were copied to UNESCO. Team members at UNESCO incorporated these changes into the draft version of the document as they came in.

The first significant change that occurred was that the document was renamed as Guidance (It had originally been called Guidelines). Colleagues at WHO assisted UNESCO in weighing up the options of producing a binding or non-binding document on member states. It was quickly decided that the use of the document should be voluntary and therefore non-binding for UNESCO's member states. Experts at WHO also provided other useful technical advice concerning language that had been successfully used in relevant international agreements. For example, with WHO and UNFPA support an Appendix detailing international conventions and agreements related to sexuality education was added.

Table 3.3 UN Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, Volume 1 (excerpt from p. 4)

This volume focuses on the 'why' and 'what' issues that require attention in strategies to introduce or strengthen sexuality education. Examples of 'how' these issues have been used in learning and teaching are presented in the list of resources, curricula and materials produced by many different organizations in the companion document on topics and learning objectives.

The second significant change that occurred was that UNESCO was advised to split the document into two separate volumes. Volume 1 was to provide the rationale for sexuality education. It responded to the questions such as 'Why should stakeholders be concerned about sexuality education?' and 'What is sexuality education?'. This part was endorsed by all four collaborating UN agencies. Volume 2, on the other hand, considered to be the more controversial volume among the two, responded to the question: 'How is sexuality education taught?' and contains age-appropriate topics and learning objectives contributing to comprehensive sexuality education (Table 3.3).

A third significant change that occurred was the addition of carefully chosen example boxes in Volume 1. Examples include Box 1, which was entitled 'Sexual activity has consequences: examples from Uganda', and Table 3.1 headed 'Common concerns about the provision of sexuality education'. Technical experts from all four collaborating agencies helped by sourcing examples and carefully crafting the language to describe the issues and activities. Colleagues from UNFPA were particularly involved in making the desired changes to Volume 2. By accommodating these changes, each agency was given a chance to 'own' a particular piece of the guidance document. The then Executive Director of UNFPA was particularly concerned about the cultural sensitivity of sexuality education in the Middle East and North Africa. She and her team assisted with refining much of the language in Volume 2 (Table 3.4).

The last three months prior to the publication of the Guidance was a period of guided compromise. Overall, the gains outweighed the losses, and the document was published with strong political backing only months after the media storm had first begun. The learning objective about masturbation that had caused so much uproar in the first place remained. But not all the compromises made were seen as successes. At the time of publication, several HIV and AIDS team members were highly disappointed that the Guidance document had been split into two parts. In hindsight, this was in fact a clever

Table 3.4 Sexual activity has consequences: examples from Uganda (excerpt p. 7)[a]

It is important to recognise that sexual intercourse has consequences that go beyond unintended pregnancy or exposure to STIs including HIV, as illustrated in the case of Uganda:

1. 'Ugandan boys and girls who have sex early are twice as likely not to complete secondary school as adolescents who have never had sex.' For many reasons, 'currently only 10 % of boys and 8 % of girls complete secondary school in Uganda' (Demographic and Health Survey Uganda, 2006).
2. In Uganda, thousands of boys are in jail for consensual sex with girls aged less than 18 years. Parents of many more have had to sell land and livestock to keep their sons out of jail.
3. Pregnancy for a 17 year old Ugandan girl may mean that she has to leave school forever or marry a man with other wives (17 % are in polygamous unions). About 50 % of adolescent girls in Uganda give birth attended only by a relative or traditional birth attendant or alone.

Source: Straight Talk Foundation Annual Report 2008 available on http://www.straight-talk.org.ug

Table 3.5 Key concept: 5—sexual behaviour, 5.1—sex, sexuality, and the sexual life cycle (excerpt, p. 26 Volume 2)[a]

Learning objectives for Level I (5–8 years)	Learning objectives for Level II (9–12 years)
Explain the concept of private parts of the body	Describe sexuality in relation to the human life cycle
Key ideas:	Key ideas:
Most children are curious about their bodies	Human beings are born with the capacity to enjoy their sexuality throughout life
It is natural to explore parts of one's own body, including the private parts	Many boys and girls begin to masturbate during puberty or sometimes earlier[6]
	Masturbation does not cause physical or emotional harm but should be done in private[6]
	It is important to talk and ask questions about sexuality with a trusted adult

Source: McCary J.L. 1978. *McCary's Human Sexuality*. 3rd Edition. New York: D. Van Nostrand and Company, pp. 150 & 262. Strong, B., DeVault, C. 1988. *Understanding Our Sexuality*. 2nd Edition. Eagan MN: West Publishing Company, pp. 179–80. Haas, A., and Haas, K. 1990. *Understanding Sexuality*. Times Mirror/Mosby College Publishing: St. Louis. p. 207. Francoeur, R.T., Noonan, R.J. (Editors). 2004. *The International Encyclopaedia of Sexuality*. Volume 5. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group

decision that alleviated the fears of collaborating agencies in the event of ensuing negative press. In the end, the negative press never came. The publication of the document went smoothly. And today the *UN Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (UNESCO et al 2009)* is one of the most downloaded documents from the UNESCO website (Table 3.5).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have tried to show how the development of UN-endorsed international guidance in the field of sexuality education was as much a political as a technical process. Much of this politics was concerned about making sure that the interests of all UN agencies involved were adequately represented. Another political concern was the cultural acceptability of such a document in the most conservative regions of the world, where it was hoped that carefully worded guidance would have traction. By taking its place alongside UN conventions, technical guidelines, and technical working group reports, the Guidance provides sexuality education with status that it has never had before. While not all will agree with its contents, and while critics may debate some of the fine detail, for the first time ever sexuality education ended up being debated, discussed, and agreed upon by those working at the most senior levels of the UN system. The challenge now lies in ensuring the implementation of the Guidelines at country level—a process that most would judge to be a very much more difficult task.

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