

Sexuality and Visual Limitations

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the goal of our Costa Rican organizations is to guide to facilitate in the users to achieve their personal autonomy, because of that, among other aspects against the elimination of all type of barriers, for the visually impaired people's right to choose, in order to use all the technological resources within their reach, but sometimes we forget the Education for Sexuality.

That becomes a challenge for the educators to facilitate spaces that they allows to people with visual limitations have access to the information, to elaborate their own speech, conjugating the information about the reality they live, with their feelings, necessities, attitudes, values, necessary for their personal realization. It is conceived that all rehabilitative process should be transformer and humanized, the free and harmonic practice of sexuality, it is inherent to the whole develop that people with visual impairments have.

Having aware of that necessity the Institute of Rehabilitation and Training Helen Keller has come working from 1987, in a constant search of methodologies that could be adapted to the people with visual impairments' conditions and that it facilitates them the analysis, the reflection and mainly to be carried out and live their sexuality in a responsible and conscious way in their time, their culture and their society. Since 1995 the education program for the sexuality was included in the basic curriculum of the users.

We are sexually beings since we born, independently of the intellectual endowment or the sensorial capacity. Visually impaired people don't have special difference about what concerns to their sexual necessities, regard to people with normal vision. The low vision and blindness don't produce limitations in the mechanisms of feminine or masculine sexual answer, but it bears an individual adaptation problem, of the parents and the social environment.

JUSTIFICATION

The aspects which gave origin to the Program of Education for sexuality with visually impaired people are:

1. Myths-taboos about sexuality:

Nowadays in Costa Rican society, it is not easy to talk about sexuality. In general, this is managed as a "taboo", where in occasions it is conceived as something sinful, bad, ugly, and dirty and it limitates the sexuality purely to the coitus act.

Also, there are myths and social stereotypes relating to visually impaired people's sexuality, some of them consider that they are more susceptible to the "sex", "more erotic", or to have visual limitations, it is believed as if they don't develop their sexuality, or that the blind person since born is unable to experience any type of corporal sensation, and they are considered like a population with specific characteristics that differentiate them with the rest of the society.

2. Lack of educational programs for the sexuality to people with visual impairments:

In Costa Rica, after a series of debates and criticisms, it was until final of 1997 that the Ministry of Public Education approves the use of Methodological Guides of Education for Sexuality, to be applied in Educational Centers. But, this and other existent programs are directed to sighted population.

3. Learning about sexuality:

Another aspect that shows the necessity of this program constitutes the form and means that people with visual impairments have access to receive information and interact with the environment (socialization process).

Contrary to the sighted people, whom the sense they use more is the visual one, in order to learn, people with visual limitations cannot perceived

clearly the differences between a the masculine body to the feminine one, neither the form of the man's behavior and the woman's. Their biggest source of information is auditory, smell and tactile, this last one is one of the main sensorial sources that use to know the objective world, even though in our environment the physical contact is a socially restricted behavior.

Joined it, during the socialization process the non-verbal signs facilitate the person an important social exchange; visually impaired people cannot perceive those signs in the same grade, they could express insecurity when they have not the support of the messages and expressions of interest to other people, as well as in social activities, where they are also limited and experiment some marginal situations or isolation of the group.

4. Characteristic of the population:

An 83% of the users in the institute are adolescent and young adults. Many of the causes of their blindness are congenital type, degenerative and progressive character. The fact to have a visual deficiency and to be able to transmit it to their children influences in the handling of the sexuality and in couple's relationships.

There is someone who affirms that the person who has inherit-family illnesses, is not entitled to the procreation while there are positions that are founded in the premise of the individual rights, there is a base on educational process that allows them to analyze and deepen on the consequences of the procreation under these conditions.

These factors and many other long ones of enumerating, led the institution to find a solution that it adjusts to the conditions to the population with visual impairments, giving us the task of experiencing a new and participative methodology, it is an instrument able to allow the training of individuals who can respond in a creative and permanent way, to the outlined problem.

OBJECTIVES

General: Generate a theoretical mark - methodological about sexuality, which responds to the necessities to the visual impaired people.

Specific of the Educational Program for the Sexuality:
The participants:

1. Have a reflection space about their sexuality.
2. Identify the internal and external obstacles that hinder the full development of their own sexuality.
3. Begin in active form, a learning process and descodification of the reality of the sexuality in their own environment, and relate it objectively with their own experiences.
4. Sustain their values and attitudes in front of the sexuality with the purpose that they live in a conscious and responsible way inside their time, culture and society.
5. Have access to an appropriate Education for Sexuality that allows them to put in practice their right to the sexuality, with freedom, knowledge and responsibility.

THEORETICAL POSTULATES

The Sexuality is the expression as human beings, in its form of being, think, feel and act. It is the interaction and the process of coexistence which allows us be defined and assume us as woman and man, in a certain socio-cultural context.

The Education about Sexuality is a dynamic and continuous process, to the life, love and pleasure.

The sources of knowledge about sexual information begin from the birth and during the whole human development, in other words, in all process of human socialization where intervene actively; parents, family, friends, school, religion, professionals, media communication, the State, and the legislation.

METHODOLOGY

The workshops are directed to three very defined groups, adolescents, adults and parents; in the first group the ages oscillate between 14 and 22 years and they also have in common characteristics like; they are students in some of the formal systems, III and IV Cycle of the Education. In the second group, the ages are between the 23 and 50 years and their common characteristic, is that they have a high-priority goal, being integrated to

the labor market. The third group conforms it the parents of the group of adolescents.

The workshop about sexuality is implemented using a participative methodology as part of the total language, considering that starting from it, the topic is approached with more freedom of speech, in an "play" environment, of trust and not formal, in contrast with the traditional form, which is treated in the schools and also in their participants' homes.

The Education for Sexuality is considered as a permanent process and it is developed in a real context, it cannot leave of paradigms, it should be flexible, personal and in constant transformation.

In the total language, the learning is conceived like an endogenous and permanent process which makes "the one learners are creative, modernizing, making their own human being, becoming for the communication with other men actor and recreate the history" (1) Translated Version

This methodology is based in the following principles:

1. Participative process, free and democratic: Participation is the way in which each person and the group are related with the fact or situation studied, in equality rights and duties, and mutual respect to the feelings, ideas and opinions.
2. Process of dialogue and horizontal communication: It implies an exchange of messages among educator and educating, both are issuing and receivers of messages. These messages as regards sexuality generally come off of the reality, what allows a descodification, the action and the reflection that it leads to the change of the same one.
3. Creative process: The creative expression means personal liberation, it stimulates the participant's creative capacity and it invites them to be authentic, to discover information to consent healthy experiences and gratification.
4. "Play" process: To work and to learn playing, help the spontaneity, the joy, the happiness, the satisfaction of BEING. In a motivate atmosphere, the participant can face and solve the problem and not simply to make routine tasks or to listen other people passively.
5. Process that is born as consequence of the reality: It is otherwise of the own experience and the participants' knowledge that it should start from

the learning process, because it risks that the reception of the information could be ineffective.

6. Flexible and dynamic process: The participant is an active, dynamic, critical entity, because sexuality is also in constant change.

EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The main moments of the educational process are:

I- SITUATIONAL STUDY: All methodological process is seen as the study of the reality in that the participants live and their relationship with this. It is originated in the taking conscience of the social and economic reality, politics religions aspects where they live. Information and results of this study will be the axes that will help to implement the objectives and activities to develop during the workshop. The primordial objectives of this first step are:

- A) Investigation of the perception of the group in terms of values, expectations, possibilities, necessities, doubts and worries;
- B) Knowledge in the way of that the reality is thought and lived by the participants of the process.

II - GENERATING NUCLEI: Later on the units or generating nuclei are elaborated:

. Gestation of the generating nucleus: In the structuration of the nucleus have to be given some characteristics at least, which can guarantee their validity, such as: generate the process, cause interest, reflect the reality and be dynamic

. Analytic study of the generating nucleus: It is carried out by three readings: the connotative, it consists in that the "I" of each participant face subjectively with the coded reality in the nucleus. Denotative reading, it is the taking of conscience of a reality that it needs to be objective and also the one that should come off the susceptible elements of being known (descodification of the reality that is looked for to study). Structural reading, it tries to find the meaning of the facts, its causes and possible consequences, is the compressive reading of our world.

. Synthetic study of the generating nucleus: For the previous steps it is discovered and understandable the thematic world related directly with the generating nucleus. Once selected the "significant" "topics" it is proceed to the elaboration of the units or investigation projects.

III - FINAL EVALUATION: The evaluation is a permanent and creative process, the participants as subject of the process, are the most suitable to know up to where the change has taken place and in consequence a learning.

IV - ELABORATION OF THEMATIC UNITS: Examples of significant topics developed up to now are:

- Anatomy and human physiology: The anatomical - physiologic aspects of the human being are approached, looking for to face the participants with their own beliefs and images (perception) that they have of the physical characteristics of the human body and in particular of the sexual organs and to take them to confront that image with the scientific fact.

- Gender and visual limitations: The sexual manifestations and the roles assigned for each one of the sexes are analyzed, for the family, the religion and the society in general. It is emphasized in the behavior barriers of the society regard to the disability versus sexuality and gender, confronting them with the conception of the group, to later on meditate about those roles or attitudes that affect us and they are susceptible of transforming.

- Interpersonal relationships: Basic elements of the communication are known and the group defines strategies that help the harmonious interpersonal relationships, so much at couple level, parents, and children.

- The courtship: It is meditated on the courtship relationship, as previous and important stage for the beginning of stable relationships.

- Procreation and Methods of Family Planning: It is informed on the existent alternatives for the family planning, their economic, religious, psycho-social and physical implications. The participants analyze their own personal position and the relation between visual limitations and possibility of procreation.

- Orientation to parents: The attitude of the parents is analyzed inside their own sexuality and the repercussions in the formation of their children. Assertive communication channels are valued that allow an appropriate education for the sexuality.

- Sexual Dysfunctions: Topics of interest like homosexuality is approached, sexual impotence, precocious ejaculation, and some perversions on those that the group wants information and elements of psychological, social type, medical and religious are valued.

- Sexual transmission illnesses: According to the reality of our country, it is investigated on the different predominant illnesses of sexual transmission, their characteristics, health implications, prevention and treatment.

RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOPS

1. The program responds to the characteristics and the participants' necessities, what allows to the institution to be pioneer in programs with that kind of characteristics.

2. The institute has qualified facilitators in the application of the participative methodology whom also had been descodificated its own sexuality, it allows them to establish a horizontal relationship with the group.

3. The execution of the workshops, has favored the detection of other necessities, which have been created alternatives to achieve a bigger socialization, for example; popular dance, corporal expression, theater and extra-institutional informal social activities.

4. The Education for Sexuality, with an own theoretical and methodological mark, was incorporated since 1998 like part of the basic curriculum of the users.

5. The participative methodology generates a process that allows to the participants, to express its sexual speech, descodificate their own reality and to assume a critical attitude about it.

6. Nowadays, the workshop is also imparted to the parents, to complement and to transcend to other groups, linked with the population in puts.

(1) Gutiérrez, Francisco. Pedagogía de la Comunicación como alternativa