

The Practical Problems and Progress of Western Mainstream Sex Education Models*

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Abstract: The contemporary western mainstream sex education models are “Abstinence -Only Sex Education” and “Comprehensive Sex Education”. Reflection of the two models’ practices in China reveals that Abstinence-Only Sex Education, by means of “moral bundling”, tend to employ the old morality to repress adolescents’ sexuality; Comprehensive Sex Education is inclined to the “sexual abetting” with indulgent in the teaching and adjustment of sexual knowledge and sexual psychology. To solve the practical difficulties between the two models, it is necessary to establish a new sex education model based on the morality which integrates the advantages of the two models.

Key words: Sex Education Models; Moral Bundling; Sexual Abetting; Morality

Currently, sex education has attracted widespread attention around the world, and most western countries have formed their own distinctive education models. Among the wide variety of education models, there are greater differences between “Comprehensive Sex Education” and “Abstinence-Only Sex Education” in the purpose and content of the course, which represent the two endpoints of the adolescents’ sex education models (Jiang, 2009). It is a benefit to achieve innovative education models by reflecting the two models’ practices in China.

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1. ABSTINENCE-ONLY SEX EDUCATION WITH “MORAL BUNDLING”

1.1 The Acceptance and Identity of Abstinence-Only Sex Education

It has been less than thirty years since sex education started in China; therefore, in such a short time it is difficult to form a unique education model (Xue, 2009). Learning from the experience of other countries is definitely an inevitable way to develop sex education in China. Considering the western education models, abstinence-only education model is undoubtedly the most accredited one which corresponds to the traditional Chinese sex education notions. Historically, China builds her society on agricultural patriarchal families, in which the most basic sex morality advocates that "sexual activity must be controlled and restricted by marriage or it shall not be tolerated or accepted." (Pan, 1988) For a long time, with the interpretation and intensification of Confucian culture, the moral standards have been rooted deep into people's hearts, which are similar to the views held by abstinence-only sex education model. It promotes the basic education notions, for example "the sole purpose of sex education is to teach adolescents to realize that only banning premarital sex can give them a good social status and healthy constitution both physically and mentally"; "No extra-marital sex is the standard that all students receiving sex education should recognize"; "It enables students to understand that abstinence is the only effective way to avoid wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and other diseases efficaciously", which can be easily recognized by the education authorities in China. (Tulin, 1995). Although the abstinence-only sex education model is easy to accept in China, many people do not regard it a necessity to set up a dedicated course for its being fit with our traditional values to a great extent. In order to deal with the recent increasingly-extrusive adolescents' sex problems, the model is being implemented in school. Therefore, it is the time to implement abstinence-only sex education model in China while the model seems fairly acceptable.

1.2 The Practicing and Refuting of Abstinence-Only Sex Education

“Chastity lesson” established in Zhejiang University's in 2008 may be a famous practice of abstinence-only sex education model in China. As the practice of this sex education was covered by the media, a nationwide debate was aroused and discussions were also stirred up on some top sites such as Sina, Phoenix, etc. In this regard, some scholars enumerate arguments ---"chastity lesson is a kind of sexual intimidation education" and "chastity lesson is far away from reality" and itemize "chastity lessons' harm" to refute abstinence-only sex education (Fang, 2008).

In fact, abstinence-only sex education attempts to use morality to bind adolescents' sexual behavior, which explains why abstinence-only sex education gradually fades away from the central stage. At the present times, adolescents' precocious puberty has been very common. Young people around 12 years old have already entered adolescence while they will not get married until they are about 24 or 25 and even 30 years old. It is very difficult to use morality to suppress human nature for nearly 20 years, which is totally different from that in the ancient time. "In the ancient time, male at the age of 16 and female of 13 may get married" (Dong, 1998). One reason why the sexual morality in agricultural society can obtain long-term attachment in China may be that the sexual morality at that time did not constrict the ancients for such a long time. It was in accordance with sexual maturity period. In addition, nowadays teenagers are in a more open culture atmosphere, and they have a strong desire to know more about sex and obtain their own right for sex. With the popularization of internet, a large number of pictures and videos filled with sexual stimulation and sexual temptation make any sexual blockade and depression easily rout. Due to ignorance of Chinese juveniles' current living environment, abstinence-only sex education has been criticized as “false sex education”, whose assertion that using the negative sexual reports to "scare" students is increasingly unpopular.

2. COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION INVOLVING SEX ABETTING

2.1 The Practice of Comprehensive Sex Education Model in China

With the influx of the western notions "sexual liberation" and "sexual freedom", teenagers nowadays, especially the college students, have marked a significant change on "sex" in attitude. Professor Zheng Yuhuang of Central South University did a survey in 2003 over the undergraduate juniors of Grade 1999 - 2000 including majors in science, engineering, medicine and culture, coming from some four universities in Hunan Province. The survey shows: "Among the 825 respondents in the survey, more than 50% of the students agreed about premarital sex; more than 30% agreed with the idea of having multiple sexual partners and extra-marital affairs; 16.9% authorized commercial action and about 10% approved of urningism and homosexual." (Gao, 2003:875) Facing this situation, the previous sex education model which takes "the mortification of the flesh" as the core appeared to miss in action. Therefore, comprehensive sex education model quietly enter the school classrooms, whose core notions are focused on comprehensive objective sexual knowledge, development of students' ability to make rational choices and preparation for independently entering the democratic community in the future. Under the new educational model, the pedagogues start to teach the sexual knowledge which was in the past obscure and slightly to cross; the students also start to obtain the knowledge which is related to the reproduction process, the sex orientation, the pleasant sensation, the transmission of sexual diseases, the contraception and so on through the official education. The sex education has been greatly carried on in schools of all levels. For example, in 2007 Shenzhen Population Birth control Bureau and the Birth Control Service Center carried out a research, the "Shenzhen pattern" of the integration sex education", which attracted lots of concerns in the educational world; Moreover, recently, Professor Hu Zhen started the sex education curriculum in Chengdu University, and unprecedentedly, many students attended the lecture, seemingly enthusiastic in the classroom. Everybody can honestly face some sensitive, awkward topics and seek for advice modestly (Zhang, 2010).

2.2 The Practical Problems of Comprehensive Sex Education

According to optimistic suppositions of the comprehensive sex education model, after having grasped the sexual knowledge, the contraceptive method and so on, the students will recognize their own bodies' natural phenomenon more rationally and treat their own natural desires more reasonably. In this way, the current teenagers' sexual problems will be easily solved. However, the implementation of sex education under the guidance of liberalism has such a defect that it is blind with optimism, so does the political implementation. In fact, after receiving a comprehensive sex education, the students do not rationally restrain their sexual impulses. Instead, as the students master the sexual knowledge, they are able to gain more sexual pleasure. The result of Comprehensive Sexual Education has in a sense encouraged sexual indulgence instead of reasonable restraint. In fact, some researchers have touched on these problems. Some researchers did empirical studies on the influence of sex education on university students. The results showed that the experimental group who received comprehensive sex education were more inclined to support "action without any restrictions". As to "extra-marital action", the experimental group was more inclined to hold that "it is OK if the two sides agree ". The experimental group visited pornographic websites more frequently; what's the worse, regarding issues such as "sex for money" and "sexual intercourse with money", whether it is "thought" or "done", the experimental group ranked significantly higher proportion than the control group (Wang, 2009). Since the survey results clearly contradicted what the researchers expected, the researchers felt "unexpected" by themselves. Of course, what made the researchers "unexpected" was not the data itself, but the comprehensive sex education's negative features--- "sexual abetting" reflected by the data. It is not simply "unexpected" but "shocked" for those who hold an optimistic expectation on comprehensive sex education.

2.3 The Causes of Comprehensive Sex Education's Negative Features

It should be said that the survey above is not an individual phenomenon. Recently there arises some doubting voice about the "sexual abetting" of comprehensive sex education in the academic world. Of course, whatever happens, the researchers for comprehensive sex education would not like to believe the

negative features caused by comprehensive sex education model. So after the "unexpected" feeling, the researchers are not reflective of comprehensive sex education on its own, but turn to examine the various non-educational factors which may lead to the data "deviation". However, this analysis may only relieve the anxiety of the researchers themselves; it cannot help reveal the causes of the problem. In fact, there are basically two causes which lead to the comprehensive sex education's negative futures. On the one hand, in China comprehensive sex education mode has been implemented in the wrong and utilitarian perspective. Comprehensive education mode involves sexual knowledge, sexual psychology, sexual morality etc. However, intending to solve the current youth issues that teenagers are lacking in sexual knowledge, it over-emphasizes sexual knowledge and psychological education while neglects the cultivation of sexual morality. Therefore, Chinese students who are equipped with knowledge and with a lack of moral constraints will inevitably slide into sexual indulgence. On the other hand, comprehensive sex education model focuses on sexual knowledge and psychological education, trying to cultivate ratiom and promote freedom while entirely reluctant to mention the positive moral basis of sexual act, and simply emphasizes the negative morality that advocates "no harm to others" and "being responsible for others". However, in the strong sexual impulse, it is difficult to restrain sexual behavior only relying on this negative sexual morality.

3. THE REVISION OF WESTERN MAINSTREAM SEX EDUCATION MODELS

3.1 The Moral Basis of Adolescents' Sexual Behavior

Sexual behavior should be instructed not only from the negative ethical dimension to be limited to the range "no harm to others" and "being responsible for others", but also from the positive ethical dimension to identify a kind of sexual behavior that is in accordance with social morality. Then what is the standard of the sexual behavior that meets the actors' virtue? It is the one that helps actors to gain a sense of survival fulfillment. As long as the sense of survival fulfillment is regarded as the basis of action, it is bound to refute the action for "sensual pleasure ". The sensual pleasure itself does not necessarily lead to the sense of survival fulfillment, but it is possible to breed a sense of emptiness. In addition, "having sex for feeling" is not the reasonable limitation of action, because "feeling" is just a state of mind, and the temporary psychological state does not constitute the moral foundation for action. That regarding the sense of survival fulfillment as the moral foundation for action means that actors must consider whether the specific action is in favor of manifesting the meaning of life, is contrary to their own personal settings, and is in keeping with the life style approved by their social cultures. Whatever is in favor of highlighting the meaning of life, in line with its own personality settings, and in keeping with the life style approved by their social cultures can help actors to obtain the sense of survival fulfillment, which is also co-virtue, and vice versa.

3.2 The Emerging of Moral Sex Education

"Moral Education Model" is a kind of sex education model which aims to cultivate the sexual morality. Moral sex education model is different from abstinence-only sex education model, which emphasizes the freedom of action among young people, the priority that actors can make the decision whether the action occurs and how it happens but any action should not do "no harm to others", and actors should be responsible for their action by themselves. In this regard, moral sex education model inclines towards comprehensive sex education, remaining attaching to sex knowledge, sex psychology and negative moral education. However, moral sex education model is different from the above mentioned two models. It emphasizes that the positive moral education should be firstly implemented among adolescents to ensure the actions' morality so as to enhance actors' dharma rather than the reverse before teaching sex knowledge and sex psychology. Therefore, in the implementation of the sex education model, not only should sexual knowledge, sexual psychology and negative sexual morality be involved, but it is more important to lay the moral foundation of action for the students. The basic sexual behavior's moral education should be ahead of sex knowledge and psychology education. So, what is the basic sexual behavior's moral education? First of all, it is the education of sex and life. Moral sex

education leads students to understand the creativity from sexual behavior to the life and establishes the sense of holy and reverence to life in order to restrain sexual behavior; understanding the meaning of the gender integration for their own life, students can be more careful in choosing sex partners as well as having sex. Second, it is the education of sex and personality development. Personality is formed in the personal interaction in which sexual behavior is the most intimate way that attaches a great significance to the perfect personality. By the moral sex education, students can avoid sexual behavior which runs counter to the perfect personality. Again, it is the education of sex and social culture. By the moral sex education, students can learn that life's meaning is determined by social culture. The sense of survival fulfillment can be gained over the sexual behavior which is in keeping with the social culture while finally personal morality cannot be obtained over the sex action which is beyond the social culture's limitation.

In short, the moral education model has selectively synthesized the western mainstream education models. On the one hand, while moral education model emphasizes using ethics to restrain adolescents' sexual behavior, it does not agree to their "abstinence" ideology. On the other hand, moral sex education model not only agrees to adolescents' reason and freedom, but also believes that adolescents' sexual freedom should be endowed with morality from sex education, not to prevent the promotion of adolescents' morality, and ultimately to avoid sexual indulgence .

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