

Assessing youth's education relative to health-related issues and concerns

[Life](#), [Adolescence](#)



Almost half of the world's population today is being occupied by the young people, or also known as the youth. As a matter of fact, almost three-billion people around the globe are within/under the age of twenty-five years old, 85% of whom are living in developing countries (United Nations Population Fund, 2005) - and such is expected to rise for another thirty years (Ashford, et al, 2006). In a World Youth Report (2003) of the United Nations, it was cited that around half of the world's inhabitants are less than twenty years old.

Furthermore, in its 2006 data sheet, the World Youth Report specified that it has been projected that people under twenty-five years old will reach a population of 3.13-billion in 2010 and will increase to 3.13-billion in 2030. Basing the aforementioned figures, it can be deemed that the world is being comprised by the younger generations. In hindsight, one can gain the idea that nearly half of the world's human resources are the youth (Van, 2000). It is in this juncture that one can realise the importance of taking good care of the young since they are the present and the future of the world.

Their becoming can shape the world's future; thus, they play a crucial role in the present society. It is even believed by many that youths are the prime movers towards global integration, and prosperous future for their respective organisations and nations (Fenech, 1998). One of the best ways of taking good care the young people is by looking into their needs. Notably, the high school age youth are more vulnerable to changes and the things that are happening around them.

In this transition stage, they are exposed to physical changes, and the abrupt developments in their emotions, intelligence and sociability (Cox, 1999). It is also in this phase wherein they are searching for their identity and seeking for intimacy from the opposite sex. They become more aggressive and curious for the things that they have not experienced or known. In this effect, young people need proper guidance in how to cope up with these changes. They need support system that will understand their pains, dreams, frustrations and ideas (Familydoctor. rg, 2000). They need someone who is open-minded enough to understand what the young people are undergoing within the context of this modern time. It is in this basis that proper education should be served most especially to the young people.

Accordingly, education equips the young for adulthood as it aids for their development of physical and cognitive skills (Lloyd, 2005). Thus, proper education is the basic need among the young people. According to Lloyd (2005), schooling also plays an essential role in the young people's health.

Health concerns among this young generation is mostly brought upon by unsafe sex and, sometimes, the promiscuous lifestyle caused by raging hormones and pressure from peer groups. In some youth assessments, it was found out that students who are in high school are most likely not to indulge in sex than those out-of-school-youth within that age bracket.

Meanwhile, in order to check whether the need of the youth for proper education is really being served to them, it is only proper to have assessments for such.

And since education plays an integral part for the health among the youth (as mentioned earlier), taking surveys and field researches on the health status of these young people can be one of the tools in assessing if, indeed, the need for proper education among the youth has been met. Youth, Sex Education and Health One of the most prevalent issues besetting the young nowadays is their exposure to the hazardous health problems brought upon mostly by the lack of good education for proper health care.

The common dangerous health problems facing the young people are caused by unprotected sex - leading mostly to acquisition of HIV and STDs, early childbirth, and forced abortion. Most cases of death rates claimed by unsafe abortions happened in developing countries (Population Reports, 1997).

Furthermore, it was accounted that each year more than 1-million girls (15-19 years old) have unsafe abortions (Murphy and Carr, 2007). Murphy and Carr also cited that only a meager percentage of 35% among 15-19 years old girls use contraception, making them more susceptible to STDs and HIV.

It is also not surprising that when it comes to young people getting affected with HIV/AIDS, women outnumber men (Rizvi, Inter Press Service Agency), since gender discrimination and lack of education among women is still much happening in some countries where norms and cultures prevail most of the time. With all of these health risks facing by the youth nowadays, one can construe the importance of health education in schools and in homes - specifically, sex education. According to Murphy and Carr (2007), more educated young women have fewer children and are most likely free from reproductive risks.

It was also known that one of the main reasons why many teenagers acquired STDS is because of the lack of knowledge and awareness for safe sex. In the United States, the most common STD among teenagers is HPV with Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea (dbtechno. com, 2008). Also, some studies showed that sex education, indeed, help for the decrease of unwanted pregnancies (World Youth Report 2003). Right for Education Seeing the importance of proper education to further uphold the good health each youth deserve, it is only but right to say that education is a right of every young person.

Each child, whether in a developed or developing country, deserves free access to education. In this manner, he/she will not just be equipped with the proper knowledge of academe but also the basic learning for value formation, decision-making and health care. Meanwhile, providing free access to basic education does not only contribute the well-being of the youth as he/she grows older, but also the community where he/she belongs. By providing proper education to their citizens as early as nursery, nations, in effect, are actually molding the future of their country.

Having a profound educational background, these citizens will be able likely to contribute for the development of their nations by being productive and pro-active members of the community, and not merely as liabilities (Ahmed, 2006). Furthermore, their wide knowledge and awareness to the problems of the world such as the growing number of HIV/AIDS victims enable them to realize the ill-effects brought by such disease to themselves, to their families, and to their community where they belong at. Free access to

education also enables the young to be better citizens, helping for the policy formation of their countries.

Being educated will give them the confidence to voice out their opinions and ideas that can help shape the world to be a better one, not to mention upholding the true essence of democratic expression. By this positive result brought upon by proper education, it is, thus, necessary to assess this basic need among the youth by giving attention to the current statistics of youth development (one of which is healthy life). Maltese National Youth Policy The National Youth Policy of Malta is being considered by many as an ideal approach in reaching out to the young generations.

Good results and positive feedbacks were gained from this said policy as Maltese youth are becoming more educated and active (especially in politics) in advancing the needs of their fellow youth, onshore and offshore (Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform). The National Youth Policy of Malta is comprised of provisions, programs and policies that set for the development of the young people within a holistic approach. It oversees the economic, social, cultural, and educational development of the youth as it encourages them to be active citizens in Malta.

Importantly, the Maltese National Youth Policy also comprises set of policies that involves for the betterment of the healthy living among Maltese youth wherein it emphasizes the essence of a proper health education. It also recognizes the hazards brought upon by promiscuity and unsafe sex, and the importance of education and promotion of safety standards (National Youth

Policy 2005). The Maltese Youth Policy is also being well-taken by the Maltese youth and, even, foreigners who see the effectiveness of such. According to Malta's Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Sport, Culture and the Arts, Mr. Reuben Fenech, the Maltese Government gives importance in increasing awareness amongst youths on the essence of healthy living. He also cited the government's strategy in mobilizing its young people to participate in government affairs, as well as its commitment for free education to all young Maltese citizens (Fenech, 1998). Notably, young people age 5-16 years old are entitled for free education in all state schools of Malta as it is every right of a child to have good education (Education in Malta, European Union).

Furthermore, the Maltese government also touches on sex education amongst its youths to promote the prevention of sex-related health risks. A youth organization in Malta even ventured for a youth exchange program with Estonia wherein issues on sex, health and gender issues were tackled (Suda, 2006). This practical approach of the Maltese Government towards sex education also opened other people's perspective on the importance of standardized sex education programme in secondary schools (Medical Association of Malta, 2006).

This came on the reality that HIV is a global issue which youths should be made aware of. Furthermore, cases of teenage pregnancies in the country triggered others, especially teenage girls, to embrace the importance of sex education (Bernice and Kim, 2004). The Maltese National Youth Policy has been one of the world's most recognized youth policies especially in the

Euro-Mediterranean Region wherein it serves as basis for programme implementation for the youths outside and within the periphery of the said Region (Swedish Diplomatic Missions Abroad, 2005).

It is in this reason the many find it as the better way in dealing with youth needs. The policy has been tried and tested, and viewed effective by many as the natural approach in youth developmental concerns, specifically the relative relationship between proper education and healthy living. It shows that education, above all, is the most important tool in building the being of a young person so that as he/she grows older, his/her decisions will be bounded within the realm of logic and values.

Furthermore, free access to education enables the young to be distant from health risks, especially those acquired through unsafe sex. Just like in Malta, youths are being opened to issues of sex and the maturity that goes with it through sex education and making the youths' inputs relevant in the government's policymaking. Conclusions The Maltese National Youth Policy is one proof that constant research, surveys, and monitoring is effective in assessing that the needs of the young people are generally being met.

It also shows that through proper education, youths will be knowledgeable in their dealings with their community and how to have a healthy lifestyle. With all those abovementioned details, one can still conclude that the basic need of every young people in this world is education. And living within the context of the modern time, sex education should be included in every school's curriculum. This is to prevent teenage pregnancies and abortion,

and the acquisition of HIV/AIDS/STDs (World Youth Report, 2003) as many young people are living with great risks for sex-acquired health problems (Ashford, et al, 2006).

As a matter of many opinions, sex education should start as early as the child turns 2-year old, and that parents should be the first “educators” for such (Varner, 2008 and REC, 2006). The effectiveness of sex education can also be construed by surveys that reflected low incidents of unwanted pregnancies among schools that taught sex education (BBC News, 2007). It cannot be prevented, though, that there are still some individuals who are conservative and are not receptive on the idea of sex education and distribution of contraception among the youths (May, 2008).

The need for a proper education can also have multiply effects to the well-being of the youth. It primarily affects how one should take care himself/herself, and to keep one's body and mind always healthy. Thus, assessing the need for youth education is also, in a way, can trickle down in the assessment of youth health - as shown in most studies that unhealthy living and acquired diseases are mostly caused by lack of knowledge and education.

Seeing this intertwining relationship of education and health needs among youth, one can surmise that investing in both aspects in the lives of the young people is a must (Nair, 2002). Educational system should be designed within the context of the modern time as the needs of these young people are changeable as years passed. There should be an

open communication between the young people and their respective governments so that both will know what to expect from each other, making policymaking and programme formulations for the youth a lot easier.

The government should be present all the time to assist and facilitate the needs of the young people as they face challenges that are far greater than they were still children (Bush, 2007). To assess if the basic needs for good education and proper health care among the youths are being met, there should be consistent surveys and accurate first-hand accounts in the grassroots. In this manner, it would be also easier to immediately identify further problems and concerns besetting the young people as time flies.