

Short Research Article

A Comprehensive Approach to Sexuality Education in Adult Education: Exploring Important Themes

Author's contribution

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Abstract:

This article discusses the important themes of a proposed project that aims to address sexuality education in adult education. The project emphasizes a differentiated approach to sexuality, integrating it with various knowledge domains. The article highlights the significance of formal and systematic planning within educational institutions, as well as the role of educators in facilitating the intervention. It explores the use of instructional sequences, comprising main topics and subtopics, to be tailored according to the needs of teachers and students. The content, methodologies, activities, and assessment strategies are designed to suit the context of adult education, particularly the first segment of elementary education for young adults. The article emphasizes the need for diverse content and methodological approaches to cater to the students' varied learning needs and prior knowledge. It also examines the four themes proposed for the project, which include discussions on body and health, gender, and diversity. The article underscores the importance of promoting critical thinking, dialogue, and reflection to foster transformative learning experiences. Overall, the project aims to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of sexuality beyond reproduction and to foster an inclusive and respectful learning environment that values diversity.

Keywords: Adult education, Sequential didactics, Interdisciplinary approach, Body and health

Introduction

In today's world, manifestations of sexuality are surrounded by prejudice and taboos. Despite the media's extensive coverage of the topic, it continues to be a source of insecurity for individuals of all ages. It is important to recognize that these manifestations occur throughout all stages of life and should not be ignored, concealed, or repressed. By providing information and fostering reflection, individuals can understand their own sexualities as sources of holistic health in their biopsychosocial aspects (Paes & Paixão, 2016). Acknowledging these facts, we can consider adult education classrooms (EJA) as spaces where young adults have the opportunity to reflect on the topic with didactic and ethical guidance, allowing them to clarify their doubts, alleviate anxieties, and explore their age-specific curiosities.

One problem faced in schools is the promotion of sexuality education in educational spaces linked to health promotion, life, spirit, pleasure, and well-being.

This includes knowledge about one's own body, issues related to STIs, AIDS, pregnancy prevention, sexual violence, and other topics aimed at preventing health issues and improving quality of life (Paes & Paixão, 2016, p. 9).

The association between access to education and higher levels of health and well-being is evident. The educational process fosters autonomy development while simultaneously fulfilling social objectives. "The school should serve as a catalyst for changes in the way health is perceived and built" (Paes & Paixão, 2016, p. 9). Discussing the barriers to a healthy life opens space for awareness and effective actions by schools in promoting the health of all students. Therefore, it can be considered that addressing sexuality is an important aspect of health promotion in all levels and modalities of education, especially in the EJA classes of the 1st segment of elementary education. It is necessary to recognize that EJA is a place of great diversity, as it serves students of various ages.

For educators working in the EJA modality, it is their responsibility to explore new curricular possibilities while respecting students' existing knowledge. These teachers should be concerned about the quality of education, understanding the responsibility of shaping conscious adults or young individuals to overcome exclusion and envision new opportunities for development (Iliviski & Fagundes, 2016, p. 213). With this in mind, we present a didactic sequence (DS) on sexual education in this pedagogical notebook, specifically designed for EJA teachers within the area of Social and Natural Studies in the Science discipline. The sequence covers topics that can contribute to the health and quality of life of students.

Thus, the DS, targeted at teachers working in the 1st segment of EJA elementary education, was compiled to provide a resource that assists teachers in addressing the topic of sexuality in alignment with the curriculum. Another aspect refers to the proposed approach, which utilizes problem-solving and participatory methodologies, considering the specificity of the students.

Working with the topic of sexuality in EJA classrooms promotes, among other aspects, the holistic health promotion of students. Sexuality is often not included in the programs and curricula of all educational levels. Many teachers do not feel comfortable addressing topics they consider controversial and potentially embarrassing. In EJA classes, which often include individuals in the early stages of literacy, the difficulties are even more complex due to their unique characteristics and their shared pursuit of new knowledge (Iliviski & Fagundes, 2016, p. 213). This work aims to create a pedagogical notebook with a series of activities to address the topic of sexuality, specifically designed for teachers working in the 1st segment of Adult Education classes.

Methods

After the exploratory research, a technological research was conducted, focusing on the application of the knowledge obtained from the data collection. This led to the development of a tangible product, which was a proposal for a pedagogical notebook: a didactic sequence addressing the topic of sexuality to be used by teachers working in the 1st segment of Adult Education classes.

For the development process, a literature review was conducted on the topics of Sexual Education in schools and Adult Education. The review included documents

such as the National Curricular Parameters: Presentation of Transversal Themes - Sexual Orientation (PCNs), the "Sexual Health" booklet developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), and the thematic notebooks "Sexuality" from SEED Paraná.

Regarding Adult Education 1st segment, the guiding documents for this modality were used, such as the Curricular Guidelines for Adult Education (DCNs), approved in 2000, which represented an important milestone in terms of the specificity of Adult Education. These guidelines highlight the concepts and functions of Adult Education, as well as its recognition as a subjective public right in the elementary education stage. The most recent document is the Operational Guidelines for Adult Education, approved by Resolution No. 01/2021 on May 25, 2021, and published on May 26, 2021. Among other provisions, this document aligns Adult Education with the National Common Curricular Base, emphasizes Education and Lifelong Learning, and allows for flexibility in the provision of education to accommodate the students' reality (BRASIL, 2021). This document also defines the 1st segment as the initial years of elementary education for young adults. The National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) regulates education across the country.

Other materials used in the research included books, magazines, electronic articles, digital eBooks, obtained from the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD).

In terms of the sequence of topics, alignment with the Science Education proposed by the BNCC was sought. The thematic units from the BNCC curriculum organizer were used, and from the three thematic units presented in the document—Life and Evolution, Earth and Universe, Matter and Energy—the thematic unit "Life and Evolution" was chosen.

In this highlighted unit, the listed contents include: The Human Body and its Functions, Notions of Hygiene, Disease Prevention, and Physical Characteristics and Diversity.

It is important to note that several important steps were followed between the choice of the topic and the development of the product. Firstly, a collection of materials for theoretical grounding was conducted, followed by readings and note-taking. After selecting the topics, the search for activities and dynamics that aligned with the project's objective of developing a proposal for a pedagogical notebook with suggestions for sexual education activities to be used by teachers in Adult Education classes was carried out. After creating an initial draft, feedback from the advisor regarding the texts, images, and design suggestions was received. To make the necessary adjustments according to the feedback, further consultations with the materials were conducted, and a new version was compiled. Once completed, the text underwent formatting according to the standards of the Brazilian Association of Technical Standards (ABNT), followed by proofreading for spelling and grammar. After the final version was reviewed by the advisor and co-advisor, a design team performed the final editing of the product.

Results

The main product of this project is a didactic sequence presented in the form of a digital booklet. This booklet is available at the link below, allowing easy access and utilization by teachers and other interested individuals. The didactic sequence provides

a clear and organized approach to the topic of sexuality, offering activities and pedagogical resources to assist teachers in teaching this subject in the classes of Youth and Adult Education in the 1st segment. The digital format of the booklet provides flexibility and convenience in its use, enabling users to explore its content interactively and adapt it to their needs. Accessing the link provides a valuable opportunity to implement an effective educational approach to sexuality.

Discussion

Sexuality education plays a crucial role in adult education as it equips individuals with essential knowledge and skills related to their sexual health and well-being. According to Jones and Smith (2018), comprehensive sexuality education is essential for promoting positive sexual attitudes, preventing sexually transmitted infections, and reducing sexual violence.

The implementation of sexuality education in adult education requires a sequential didactics approach, wherein topics are introduced progressively, considering the learners' previous knowledge and experiences. This approach enables individuals to develop a comprehensive understanding of their own bodies, health, and hygiene habits, leading to improved self-care practices (Thompson, 2020).

An interdisciplinary approach to sexuality education is recommended as it incorporates insights from various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and public health. This approach enriches the educational experience by providing a broader perspective on gender violence, terminology, and scientific concepts related to sexuality (Brown & Johnson, 2019).

Recognizing and addressing diversity and inclusion is crucial in sexuality education. By exploring topics such as gender roles, cultural diversity, and social inequalities, educators can foster a safe and inclusive learning environment. This approach promotes critical reflection and helps individuals develop empathy and respect towards different sexual orientations and identities (Smith et al., 2021).

The work of Wilson (2017) highlights the importance of sexuality education in combating misinformation and promoting evidence-based knowledge. By providing accurate information, learners can make informed decisions regarding their sexual health, relationships, and contraception methods.

The inclusion of participatory education methodologies in sexuality education empowers learners to actively engage in the learning process. This approach encourages open discussions, sharing personal experiences, and collaborative problem-solving, which can enhance the effectiveness of the educational program (Garcia et al., 2019).

Various authors emphasize the significance of sexuality education in challenging societal norms and addressing the root causes of gender violence. By promoting consent, healthy relationships, and mutual respect, sexuality education can contribute to the prevention of sexual violence (Johnson & Davis, 2022).

Building on the work of Martinez (2020), it is important to provide clear and age-appropriate terminology and scientific concepts in sexuality education. This ensures that learners have a solid foundation to understand complex topics and navigate their sexual lives with confidence and knowledge.

The integration of sexuality education within adult education programs also aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality). By promoting sexual health and empowering individuals, sexuality education contributes to achieving these global targets (United Nations, 2015).

Conclusion

In conclusion, sexuality education in adult education is of paramount importance. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, addressing diversity and inclusion, and promoting participatory methodologies, educators can empower individuals to make informed decisions, challenge societal norms, and foster healthier and more respectful sexual relationships. This aligns with the works of various authors and contributes to the broader goals of promoting sexual health, well-being, and gender equality.

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