

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Educational Pamphlet
No. 119

SEX EDUCATION
IN SCHOOLS AND
YOUTH ORGANISATIONS



LONDON : HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

1943

Contents

	PAGE
PREFATORY NOTE	1
INTRODUCTION	3
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	6
Some Considerations which have led to the giving of sex instruction	6
Methods of Instruction	8
Notes on Typical Schemes	10
SECONDARY SCHOOLS	12
Some Typical Arrangements	14
THE YOUTH SERVICE	16
Courses for Leaders	17
Courses for Members	17
TRAINING COLLEGES	21
CONCLUSION	22

PREFATORY NOTE

FOR some time past there has been a growing sense both of the need to see that children and young persons are suitably introduced to, and properly instructed in, matters of sex, and of the responsibility that schools and youth organisations have towards securing that such instruction and guidance are given. The circumstances of war-time, which are liable to break down restraints, have called increased attention to this subject, and the Board believe that teachers and youth leaders alike, who are conscious of a need to be met, would welcome such advice and information as may be available for dealing with the problem.

Up to the present, it cannot be said that such instruction has generally been undertaken in the schools or in youth organisations. In no sense is it the accepted practice to include in the work of the schools or the training of youth organisations either instruction in the facts of sex, or specific guidance on the moral aspects of personal conduct and sex relationships. At this stage ways and means are still matters for careful exploration, and it would be at once unwise and undesirable to attempt to lay down one or more definite methods of instruction or approach.

The Board have accordingly thought they could best assist those who are concerned for this matter, by bringing together such information as they have obtained as to what is being done in this field in various sections of the education service, in the hope that the experience of others in handling this subject, the difficulties of which are fully recognised, may prove both suggestive and helpful.

This pamphlet is based on enquiries recently made by H.M. Inspectors, who have been greatly assisted by the readiness with which teachers have placed their experience at their disposal. The Board have no doubt that this short survey, and the problems it indicates, will receive the serious and sympathetic consideration of Local Education Authorities, teachers and youth leaders.

As already stated, the Board are of opinion that at present it is not possible to lay down specific principles, or to recommend specific methods. Apart from that, it is important to remember that it must not on any account be thought that the giving of such instruction and guidance is a task to be lightly undertaken by anyone and everyone. There are, however, two practical possibilities to which the Board wish to invite the particular attention of Local Education Authorities.

(1) The provision of Short Courses on sex education for teachers and youth leaders to open up the subject and make available the experience of colleagues who have pioneered successfully in this field, and of others who have special knowledge and experience. The Board are proposing themselves

both to conduct a special course in the near future, which it is hoped may help to equip a number of men and women to assist in local courses, and to deal with this matter where appropriate in other courses that they organise.

(2) The organisation of parents' meetings, with a view to securing their co-operation in anything that is done through the schools, and to helping them in dealing themselves with their own children in this matter.

Where Local Education Authorities desire to enlist outside help for these purposes, application can be made to the Central Council for Health Education (Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1), whose specialised services (as well as literature) are available, within the limits of their personnel, for lectures, lecture courses, discussions and advice.

The above suggestions relate primarily to what may be regarded as the long-term aspect of sex education. In certain areas, however, Authorities are now much exercised by the immediate problem presented by the increased number of young persons who fall victims to the special temptations and circumstances of war-time. These young people have for the most part left school and are not members of youth organisations. They constitute a continuing challenge to the Youth Service, and the Board have no doubt that in areas where this problem particularly arises, Local Education Authorities and their Youth Committees will consider what further steps it may be possible for them to take to bring such young persons within the influence of the Youth Service.

November, 1943.

SEX EDUCATION

IN SCHOOLS AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. The stress of war and the social dislocation arising from it have given a new importance to the question of sex education, which in recent years has received a growing consideration from Local Education Authorities, teachers and youth leaders. The Board have accordingly thought it desirable to offer some account of the extent and character of the instruction and guidance in sex matters that is at present given through the schools and youth organisations, together with some general suggestions as to ways in which such instruction and guidance might be further developed.

2. The physiological knowledge necessary to an understanding of the process of human reproduction comes to everyone sooner or later: the way in which it is acquired is all-important. The first approaches to the subject are probably best made, not through any formal instruction, but by dealing sensibly with the questions of the individual child from early years. The proverbial gooseberry bush, the stork, or the doctor's bag may, it is hoped, now be regarded as finally discarded. A simple but sound maxim is: "Whatever the age of the child, and whatever the question he asks, answer him to the fullest extent that he is capable of understanding at that stage." This implies that questions about sex and reproduction should be treated like any other questions, avoiding the creation of any false sense of mystery, thereby preserving proportion and avoiding immediate emotional associations. It implies also that the first responsibility rests upon parents to deal with their children's questions from the beginning, as and when they arise, in a natural manner.

3. Children who have gained their knowledge gradually in this way, will require no set instruction in the physiology of sex as a *particular* topic at a later stage. References to it may be frequent, but they will be made when the matter arises naturally in the context of the subject under discussion.

4. It appears, however, that a substantial proportion of parents either have some reluctance to give this knowledge to their children, or feel the need of some guidance how best to deal with the matter. At the present time many are absent from home, and the parental advice that might be given is not available. As a result, there is an increasing sense among teachers that they have a degree of responsibility for seeing that their pupils shall have some suitable measure of sex education before leaving school, and they are impressed by the need for parental instruction in early childhood which will readily and naturally lead on to fuller enlightenment at a later age.

5. But early instruction in the physiology of sex is only the beginning of sex education in the fullest sense. It should be succeeded at the later end of adolescence by instruction and advice directed to the understanding and control of sexual impulse and emotion, leading on to the establishment of mutual understanding and respect between the sexes, and, as young manhood or womanhood is approached, to an adequate preparation for marriage.

6. For real sympathy and understanding between the sexes, children and young people of both sexes should have opportunities of growing up and mixing together, learning something of each other's interests and outlook. Opportunities of this kind are of particular importance for young people who have not the advantage of brothers and sisters; but they are needed in other cases, too, because it must be remembered that a boy's sister appears to him as a being very different from the sister of his friend.

7. To inform and advise young people on these matters calls for wisdom, understanding and tolerance, and parents, teachers and all who enjoy the confidence of young people, share a responsibility for seeing that they are not left in dangerous ignorance, nor alternatively left to acquire knowledge in ways which are likely to distort or degrade their outlook upon sex, and their sense of responsibility in regard to it.

8. This pamphlet, which is based on enquiries recently made by H.M. Inspectors, is intended primarily to deal with the possibilities and place of sex instruction in the normal training of the school or youth organisation. While this is a subject of importance at any time, it is invested with a special urgency at present when war-time conditions are liable to lead to a growing laxity not excluding the younger members of the community. Concern has been expressed from various quarters that young girls in considerable numbers are the victims of indiscriminate associations, with an increasing incidence among them of venereal disease. It is important that young people should be warned, and urgently warned of the dangers involved, though it is most undesirable that sex instruction should be concentrated on this pathological problem. Venereal disease is a subject which must receive frank and objective discussion as a problem of health, and the Board propose shortly to reissue their "Simple Health Hints," for the use of teachers and youth leaders, with a supplementary section dealing briefly with this subject. It will suffice here to draw attention to the disquiet that exists and to urge the collaboration of all who are in a position to do so to exercise their influence to give protection and guidance where it is needed at this time.

9. In the sections which follow an attempt has been made to summarise some of the considerations that have prompted teachers and others to engage in sex education in recent years, and to indicate the lines along which they feel that progress has been made. It is apparent that most of those who have given serious thought to this question recognise that sex education in the schools includes two main elements.

(i) The first of these is instruction in the physiology of sex ; and increasingly this is dealt with objectively at an early age before strong emotional associations develop, and wherever possible, as an integral part of a normal course in, for example, biology or general science.

(ii) The second, no less important, element is the giving of guidance and advice, either to groups or individuals toward a better understanding of the sexual impulse and emotion, and the moral and social problems arising from it. Here the approach is made when the child is more mature and is usually undertaken by the head teacher or some other member of the staff in whom the child's particular trust and confidence reposes. It would be out of place to attempt to analyse here the essentially personal approach whereby individual teachers assist young people to discover for themselves a right code of conduct in sex matters. Each teacher will draw upon his own wisdom and experience of life, or the religious and moral resources upon which he himself has relied. Doubtless he will try to show that the sex impulse like other creative impulses can make for personal and social happiness, or mar it, and that the quality of life of individuals, as of nations, must depend in part at least, upon relating powers and potentialities to the wellbeing of the wider community. All creative social effort demands self-control, and the exercise of conscience and discrimination in the realm of personal conduct and relationships. The important and difficult task of the educator is to make such self-control and discrimination seem rational and inspiring. Opportunities for this kind of guidance are, of course, limited in the elementary schools, because of the present early school leaving age, but there is no doubt that the senior pupils in the secondary schools and the members of youth organisations have received much wise and helpful advice on these lines and that they have, almost invariably, responded seriously and sensibly whenever the subject has been discussed.

10. Many teachers have approached the subject with diffidence in view of its nature and what they feel to be their own inadequate training or capacity to undertake it : others, for these and other reasons, have not ventured to embark on it at all. The subject is indeed one of considerable inherent difficulty, and this accounts for the diverse ways in which it has been approached, and renders even more praiseworthy the degree of success which many teachers and youth leaders have achieved. There remains much to be learnt in the light of further experience, and this is not the time, therefore, to offer more than a broad outline of suggested principles in regard to the theory or practice of sex education. It is, however, appropriate to offer encouragement to those who, with patience and often courage, have made a valuable contribution to the furtherance of education in this subject, and to submit for the consideration of others some impression of the experience so far gained. It will be understood that the accounts which follow of

what is already being done in the elementary and secondary schools, in the Youth Service and the training colleges, are presentations of fact without comment or criticism. It is for the reader to form his own judgments.

(NOTE. The quotations, which are freely used, are from the reports of H.M. Inspectors, or of views expressed to them by teachers.)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

11. The information at the disposal of the Board in regard to the extent to which sex education is included in the curriculum of elementary schools is by no means complete, but it would appear that in the areas of approximately half the Local Education Authorities in England, and to a lesser extent in Wales, there is carefully planned instruction in at least a few of the schools. In no area is it possible to say that sex instruction is included in every school, though in a few areas something like this standard is approached in the case of girls' schools. There are some areas where only isolated instances appear of schools giving deliberate and careful instruction, and there are others—perhaps one-third of the country—where practically nothing is done. The majority of the rural areas are to be found in this latter category. In the small village schools there are few specialist teachers and the wide age range of many of the classes presents a difficulty. To some extent also public opinion in the smaller communities has been opposed to experiments in this field. The village schoolmaster, on the other hand, in view of his long acquaintance with the children in his care, and his knowledge of their environment, is well suited to give individual advice, though it is not easy to assess the extent to which he does in fact do so. Among children who have been brought up on farms there is possibly not the same need for instruction in the physiology of sex. One conclusion which emerges clearly from this survey is that very much more attention is given to this subject in girls' schools than in boys'; approximately three girls' schools include sex instruction in their syllabus for every one boys' school.

Some Considerations which have led to the Giving of Sex Instruction in the Schools.

12. Head teachers of elementary schools have felt it right to include sex instruction in their syllabuses for many reasons, the most important being the conclusion that, for the most part, parents are reluctant to make any attempt to instruct their children, and in many cases feel ill-equipped to do so without guidance. The evidence of many head teachers who have arranged lectures for parents indicates that without such help they could not undertake the task effectively. Moreover, even when they are willing, parents are often embarrassed because they lack vocabulary, and because the approach is a personal subjective one, whereas in school instruction it is objective and applies to any child and not to a

particular child as at home. As one head teacher commented, "It is by no means always diffidence on the part of parents or a sense of shame—"I couldn't, miss, I should be too ashamed"; it is often through lack of the appropriate language." Teachers have been disturbed also at the prevalence of "half-knowledge" leading, as it often does, to morbid curiosity and to legends which lead to fear and worry, perhaps especially about menstruation. In one senior girls' school the head mistress was so disturbed by the shock with which menstruation comes upon the more sensitive girls that she now talks to all second and third year groups at the beginning of the school year,—“Our chief work seems to be to explode the legends passed on to the girls, such as no baths or exercises at the monthly period.” In short, there is a widespread realisation in the schools that too many children either lack knowledge or possess inaccurate or inadequate knowledge regarding the "facts of life," and though many teachers have approached the subject with diffidence, there is a growing conviction that it is work that the schools must undertake.

13. Some teachers hold the sincere conviction that this is a job for parents and that they should not intervene beyond possibly supplying parents with guidance, either in the form of literature or by arranging talks and conferences. They realise that the difficulty and embarrassment which many parents feel in dealing with sex matters is due to the fact that they leave it too late, namely to an age when children are beginning to mature and an emotional atmosphere is developing; and they are consequently anxious to persuade and assist parents to deal with questions as and when they arise in earlier childhood. Many head teachers feel that they have not got adequately trained biology teachers on their staffs to deal with even the physiological instruction. The large classes which exist in some schools are also an inevitable handicap in discussing this subject and it is sometimes felt that the temporary teachers often employed at the present time have had too little personal contact with the children to embark upon it confidently. In a few cases there has existed a fear of offending parents, though the general evidence appears to show that parents welcome any initiative shown by teachers, as indicated by the following expressions of experience: "Parents' meetings seem to be always in favour of the school undertaking the task and there are numbers of cases of parents expressing appreciation of what has been done for their children." "The course to which at first parents were asked to give their consent is now frequently mentioned to me by mothers—and especially those whose elder daughters used to attend the school—as a course to which they look forward for their younger girls later in their school life." Few, if any, teachers who have embarked upon this subject seriously, regret that they have done so and most of them have received ample evidence of appreciation. "Girls who have had proper instruction come back in later life and tell me how much it has helped them and what a difference it has made to their outlook on family life and child-

bearing." "A feeling of confidence has developed with the satisfaction of the girls' natural curiosity and the realisation that they can obtain *truthful* answers to their questions." Undoubtedly the only reason why a substantial number of head teachers hesitate to undertake the sex education of the children in their care is that they require a reassurance that "Authority" would endorse their action.

Methods of Instruction

14. The different methods of instruction and guidance at present employed in elementary schools may be summarised shortly as follows. They are not by any means mutually exclusive.

Physiological Instruction to Groups and Classes

(a) Carefully planned, objective sex teaching as an integral part of a biology or other science course.

(b) Some biological instruction, including reproduction in small mammals but without reference to human beings.

(c) The keeping of livestock—as a part of a planned course, or alternatively leaving children to observe for themselves and draw their own conclusions.

(d) Personal hygiene talks to girls, often limited to menstruation.

(e) Mothercraft courses for girls related to future possibilities of parenthood.

(f) The treatment of the subject by frank answers to questions by children during scripture, history, literature, etc., lessons.

(g) Special talks given by the staff or by visiting lecturers.

Advice and Guidance to Individuals or Groups on the Social and Moral Implications of Sex Conduct

Something is attempted even in elementary schools in the way of counsel and advice, either addressed to individuals or to groups or in answer to personal problems and difficulties. This special contribution is usually made by the head teacher. The present school leaving-age is generally recognised to be a severe limitation in dealing adequately with this quite distinct aspect of sex education in elementary schools.

15. Class teaching is usually given by the teacher normally in charge of the course in which sex instruction is included, for example biology, general science, or domestic subjects. Individual instruction and advice, for example to school leavers, is generally given by the head teacher or the senior assistant, and they also often give class teaching in the social and moral issues involved as a part of courses in citizenship and religious instruction etc. The valuable talks broadcast to schools by the B.B.C. are especially popular in small schools with no special staff and with mixed classes where their impersonal character is helpful. Lectures are occasionally given by visiting lecturers, the school medical officer or nurse, representatives of the Central Council for Health Education, or the Alliance of Honour, but in the elementary schools these lectures

are comparatively rare. When sex instruction is a normal part of the biology course it is not usual to consult parents as to whether or not they wish their children to receive the instruction. When special talks are given, for example, by visiting lecturers, an opportunity is usually given to parents to withdraw their children if they wish to do so. Instances of objection by parents are now increasingly rare, however, and their appreciation is so universally expressed that in some schools the head teachers have given up consulting them and regard the lectures, as a normal part of the school curriculum. "Invariably parents are relieved to know that the question has been discussed but get foolishly hot and bothered if their wishes are consulted beforehand."

16. It is the general view that sex instruction should be given as a related part of a wider course, especially biology, so that sex and reproduction may be introduced in their proper place without undue emphasis. Many schools, however, are without biology teaching, and in others the biology staff are not anxious to give the instruction. In these cases special classes are often necessary. The class method is increasingly felt to have advantages over individual instruction which inevitably becomes personalised, though it seems desirable that the children in the class should be of about the same age in order to avoid general shyness; in the elder children lest their ignorance should betray an ignorance beyond the normal, in the younger because of the mere presence of their seniors. In mixed schools the sexes are usually, though not always, separated for sex instruction. It is, of course, important that in any instruction in the physiology of sex, boys and girls should be made aware of the characteristics not only of their own but of the opposite sex. It is felt by many that the teaching should be given by the school staff rather than by visiting lecturers on the ground that it is the teacher who knows the children and their problems, and has developed a capacity for clear and simple exposition; moreover, the mere presence of a visitor inevitably tends to invest the subject with an atmosphere of special character. Nevertheless, it is widely recognised that until the human aspect of biology is given greater attention at the teachers' training colleges, the co-operation of outside specialists will be necessary. One candid child indeed observed, "An outside lecturer will be best as she will know more, and answer questions better." This co-operation of visiting specialists is of especial value when their talks are related to an existing course, e.g., in biology or general science.

17. The age of the children when they are given sex instruction varies considerably. The most common age is 13, the last year at school and, incidentally, the stage at which mammals and man are most often treated in the biology course. It is increasingly realised, however, that there are great advantages in introducing the subject at an early age before strong emotional associations develop. In fact, the elements of sex instruction should begin as soon as the child begins to ask questions. To some extent the time

at which instruction is given is governed by staffing considerations which prevent a carefully thought-out scheme being developed, but this is not always the reason. Even in schools where this teaching is otherwise satisfactory the point of arranging the right time seems to be overlooked. The subject of human reproduction is often reached in the last year and not always before the children leave. Often enough the short step from the study of reproduction in small mammals to that of human beings is not taken at all, and it is doubtful whether many children see the human implications from their limited study of small mammals. Similarly the keeping of livestock, which provides an excellent opportunity, is in many schools not related to the study of man. Incidentally, where livestock is kept in mixed schools there appears occasionally an unfortunate tendency to limit the observation and care of the animals to the boys. There are many excellent courses in hygiene in girls' schools but often they fail to relate, for example, the subject of menstruation to motherhood—"It's easier to put up with when we know it means something" was a child's significant comment. Mothercraft courses provide the opportunity in some schools for a careful consideration of reproduction, but in many cases, while the care of the baby after birth is emphasised, its entry into the world is taken for granted.

18. It will be noticed that current practice varies greatly between different schools, but a general tendency is developing toward straightforward and objective teaching in regard to sex and reproduction as a part of some general course and, if possible, at an increasingly early age before the emotional complications of adolescence have begun. An attempt is often made at a later stage to help the children to establish for themselves a rational and social code of conduct and a guiding moral philosophy in the light of the knowledge gained earlier. It should be emphasised that many head teachers regard the present school leaving-age of 14 years as a severe limitation upon the scope and effectiveness of the school contribution to sex education. It is the view of many head teachers, for example, that while it is of the greatest importance to give instruction regarding venereal disease as opportunity occurs, it is clearly unwise for the pathological aspects of sex to loom large in elementary school courses, or indeed that the fear of disease should be put forward as a prime consideration in sex conduct.

Notes on Typical Schemes of Sex Instruction

19. The following notes by H.M. Inspectors illustrate some of the methods at present employed :

Mixed school : "Biology mistress includes thorough instruction in her biology scheme. Some livestock is kept. The children accept the instruction without any embarrassment. Head teacher emphasises the need for choosing a competent teacher who is respected by the children."

Senior girls' school : "Domestic science teacher gives

special talks to leaving girls based on mothercraft and biology. The maternal responsibilities are emphasised and the foundations of family life considered. Parents are very keen. The talks appear to have a very happy effect. Girls adopt a more sensible attitude to sex relations and take marriage more seriously, as well as having a happier approach to menstruation and child-birth."

Senior girls' school: "Lectures are given in two stages—at 11+ and 13+. Parents are very favourable and the attitude of the girls was good. If necessary the head teacher gives individual talks as well."

Senior girls' school: "A good biology course with the school medical officer co-operating in regard to sex instruction. The syllabus is a full one and the teaching good. Parents are much in sympathy and old scholars express appreciation."

Girls' department, mixed school: "The head mistress has arranged, through the L.E.A. for a local woman practitioner to give a lecture to leaving girls. Parents and head mistress think the scheme is successful."

Senior boys' school: "The superintendent of the local hospital co-operates with the school biology master by giving special lectures to school leavers. The biology scheme and the lectures are impressive."

Mixed school: "Boys and girls in their last year meet separately for lectures by a representative of the Central Council for Health Education. The scheme is a full one. Parents approve and very few ever withdraw their children. The boys in particular like the lectures and questions are asked freely. Parents say that the course makes it easier to deal with things at home. The girls follow up by visits to maternity and child welfare clinics."

20. The following summarised history of the giving of sex instruction at a senior girls' school is interesting as it illustrates several of the matters referred to in earlier paragraphs:

"Several years ago the head teacher decided that it was the school's business to see that girls were accurately informed on sex matters, but that the information should come from the parents. A meeting of parents was arranged and a talk was given by a woman doctor. Many questions were asked but the head teacher was sure that the parents had no intention of instructing the children themselves. She was horrified, too, by the pathetic stories told to her by the mothers afterwards as to their own ignorance when they married. This strengthened her belief that some teaching was necessary in the school. She discovered after consultation with her staff that the domestic science mistress was the teacher best suited to undertake the work. She was already taking a mothercraft course as a part of the domestic science course, and it was decided to link up sex instruction with this. Notes were

accordingly sent to parents saying that in the mothercraft course it would be necessary to discuss the origin of babies. Would mother prefer that this information be given at school or at home? With one exception all mothers thankfully said they would like the school to do it. The talks were a success—until the domestic science mistress left and no one else on the staff was willing to undertake it. The head teacher herself felt that with all the other duties that had fallen upon her since the war, she could not give as much care and thought to the teaching as it should have. So the teaching was dropped. Meanwhile the head teacher has been receiving letters and visits from mothers asking that the course should be started again. 'My girl will be leaving in a few weeks and you haven't yet taught her about babies as you did her sister.' In view of the insistent demand, the head teacher again discussed the teaching with her staff. The most suitable teacher appeared to be a middle-aged married woman. She had not done any teaching of this kind before, and was slightly diffident. But she was a firm believer in the necessity for sex instruction and agreed to try. The head teacher has helped her with literature and advice and the course is now well on its way."

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

21. Most if not all of what has been said in regard to instruction in elementary schools applies equally to secondary schools. The additional factors are the later age at which scholars leave and the existence of boarders in some secondary schools. Most secondary schools claim to offer some sex instruction, but in many cases this is confined to individual advice where it seems to be needed. A rough estimate suggests that a third of the secondary schools in the country make a serious attempt to give instruction, either by means of a carefully planned biological approach, or by special lectures to classes or to individuals. The remaining two-thirds of the schools are about equally divided between those who give slight attention to the subject or avoid it altogether. It may be added that in Wales the proportion of schools where very little instruction is given is considerably higher than in England. As in the case of elementary schools, much more thought is given to the subject in girls' than in boys' schools. In boarding schools individual advice and instruction is easier to give than in day schools, but comparatively few schools appear to deal with all their boarders in this respect.

22. The secondary schools have been encouraged to include sex instruction in their curricula for much the same considerations as elementary schools, and appreciation is likewise expressed by parents and children when the problem is tackled seriously. Many of the older children have noted the reports of increased incidence of venereal disease in the country and this is included among the subjects discussed freely and frankly in senior classes. Many head

teachers feel that the essential physiological facts about sex and reproduction should be dealt with at an earlier age and before arriving at the secondary school. "Instruction is best given by parents, and far earlier than any age at which we meet our scholars." Others are deferring the inclusion of sex instruction in their syllabus until the school curriculum includes a good biology course.

23. All the methods referred to in paragraph 14 are employed in varying degrees in the secondary schools also, and the same distinction is drawn between giving the essential physiological knowledge, and at a later age, offering practical advice and guidance on the emotional and social implications. The biology courses offered are generally more comprehensive and offer a more adequate foundation for sex instruction. Specialist lecturers are more frequently employed in the secondary schools, either to supplement biology courses, or to give special lectures. Much reliance is placed on individual instruction, especially in the boarding schools. The smaller classes which obtain in secondary schools are of special advantage in discussing this particular subject: the ideal group in the view of one head master is "more than six and less than twenty." In mixed schools girls and boys are usually given separate instruction, though the view is sometimes expressed that the right teacher, "especially if she is a married woman," can handle the subject in mixed classes and, indeed, that it is a mistake to emphasise the subject by altering normal class arrangements in order to separate the sexes. It is generally accepted that mixed schools have an advantage in regard to sex education in view of the natural opportunities which they provide for boys and girls to meet together, and emphasis is also laid frequently by head teachers on the value of a good school atmosphere in which relations between staff and pupils are such that they feel free to discuss these matters as they arise in any lesson

24. Where the study of man is only very incidentally touched on in the biology course it is usually dealt with in the third year. Where specific and planned instruction in human development is included in the biology course there is increasingly a tendency to introduce the subject during the first year, that is to say, when children are eleven or twelve years old. This first "plain facts" attack is then followed up at a later age—15 or 16, often in classes in citizenship or religious instruction or by advice given to individuals—by a consideration of the issues of social and personal conduct involved. The later school-leaving age in secondary schools means that this other, distinct and no less important aspect, can be more effectively dealt with. It appears to be the general impression in secondary, as in elementary, schools that, where the biological approach to sex questions is only incidental and tentative, the result is limited. Moreover, not all pupils take biology, nor are all biology teachers suited or adequately trained for dealing successfully with sex instruction. In many courses also the age at which human reproduction is dealt with is conditioned by

its position in the examination syllabus rather than by the needs of the pupils. Nevertheless, it is the general impression that biology courses in which the human implications are given full weight from the beginning afford the best school approach to sex instruction.

25. Some teachers hold strongly to the view that their chief responsibility in regard to this problem is to insist that parents themselves should tackle it. "All parents of new boys are invited to an evening gathering, and invited to discuss matters with their sons at the first opportunity. The head master suggests a line of approach and suggests books and indeed loans them on occasion." "To the parents of each new boy a 'Letter to Parents' is sent before the boy enters the school, and a 'Second Letter to Parents' is sent when the boy leaves." When parental instruction follows, however, it is often found to be incomplete, and many teachers readily admit that it is often easier to give instruction to a class in school than to an individual child at home. "I found the approach," remarked one head master referring to his own son, "much more difficult than I have ever done with other men's sons." It may be remarked that several head teachers stress the importance of having one or two suitable books on this subject in the school library, for private reading by the boys and girls themselves.

26. It would further seem important not to overlook the fact that there are many boys and girls who—from whatever source—have acquired a pretty complete knowledge of the facts of sex, and have had instilled into them a certain moral code intended to govern their behaviour in matters of sex, but who have gone off the lines somehow and are distressed. In such cases individual treatment is essential, and the boy or girl requires the help of someone in whom he or she has complete confidence. If the parents cannot or will not do what is necessary—and many young people are reluctant to approach their parents on such troubles—it is most desirable that there should be someone on the staff of the school who can help.

27. In a boarding school responsibility in this matter rests on the head master or head mistress or the house master: in day schools things are more difficult, though the house system with the right man or woman in charge will be of real assistance. It is commonly assumed that the main problem in sex education is to instruct the ignorant or innocent; but the problem of helping those who are not ignorant but have become maladjusted is no less important.

Some Typical Arrangements in Secondary Schools

28. *A girls' high school where the head mistress believes in an early approach:* "The lessons fit into the general programme in biology, connecting up with methods of fertilisation and of pre-natal and post-natal care in types already studied. The part played by the human father before and after birth in the care of mother and child is used to explain marriage. The possibility of infection is also mentioned."

A boys' grammar school: "Sex instruction is linked up with teaching of biology and the animal world to whole classes throughout the course. It is later treated by the head master himself in the age ranges 14½-16½, and then in the VI Form as part of the preparation for life, and it arises naturally in Christian and moral instruction like other sections of such instruction. It is always connected with physical education and games based on the boys' knowledge of physiology. A reasonable and broadminded view is taken of boy and girl friendships with the knowledge of both sets of parents." "I interview every father and mother together if both are alive when the boy is 14-15, and I tell the father directly that it is his bounden duty to give the boy sound advice and be candid about it. In the case of boarders I take the responsibility entirely. I give the final message to the boys when they leave with special reference to the dangers they will meet, venereal disease, etc."

A girls' grammar school where instruction is given by a Central Council for Health Education lecturer: "A series of three lectures is given to the whole age group in groups of 50 at a time. A considerable time is allowed at the end of each lecture for girls to ask individual questions privately, an opportunity of which the girls avail themselves very freely. The instruction is carefully linked up with the work in biology. Parents are informed that they are at liberty to withdraw their daughters from the lectures if they wish. In practice we find that 99 per cent of the parents are willing and a great many anxious for this instruction to be given. The instruction is given in two stages. First to all girls in the summer term of their first year (average age 11-12). The subject is taken from a biological point of view and it is hoped by this method to give the children the facts before they become emotionally involved. Later in the last term in the Vth Form year—for many girls the last year at school—in the form of a single lecture followed by individual questions asked privately. The social aspect of marriage and the family unit is the subject here: and we find the question of venereal disease is generally touched on. It seems to be generally felt by the staff and parents that the general tone and attitude towards these matters has definitely improved since the lectures were given. Giggling about allusions in literature and biology is practically unknown and girls are willing to ask advice in personal difficulties, sometimes even after they leave school. I find that mass instruction helps girls to approach the subject in a more natural and impersonal way than individual instruction. As to the person giving the instruction, I am considering arranging for the younger group to receive the instruction from the biology mistress and the older group from myself, but I am not yet sure of our competence to do this as well as it is at present being done, and there are certain advantages in having a stranger."

A large boys' school having day boys and boarders : "The boys in the preparatory department up to the age of 11 years have a general course of nature study. When they enter the main school about 12 years of age, they then have a course of general biology, including a range of animals from the simplest unicellular creatures through worm, frog, bird, rabbit up to man. In this last they study muscles and limbs, heart and blood, lungs and breathing, the alimentary system and the reproductive system. At the end of the course the head master has a talk to the form as a whole and then gives out a simple questionnaire asking what part of the course has interested them most, and whether they would like to learn more about any parts of it. The boys do not think the course should be given to those who are a year younger, and have suggested a number of ways for its improvement which the head master has adopted. There have been no objections from parents, but many have written and spoken appreciatively. With regard to the older boys, the head master gives a talk to the whole of them as a group. He is a believer in class instruction."

THE YOUTH SERVICE

29. It is evident that leaders of youth organisations generally are much exercised in their minds at the present time as to the extent to which there is a positive contribution for them to make in the sphere of sex education. It is inevitable that there should be some difference of opinion amongst them regarding the method of introducing it, or indeed whether it is necessary to attempt it at all. The characteristics of the organisations differ considerably; they cater for young people of various ages, and they serve every kind of community, some of which have been affected by the stresses of war to a greater extent than others and present a more apparent need for considering this matter.

30. There are those in the rural areas who feel that the basic physiological facts are well enough known to country folk, and that their work should be limited to providing opportunities in clubs and societies for young people of both sexes to meet together and so "create a natural relationship between the sexes at their most impressionable age." Some feel that the age at which many boys and girls join youth organisations is too late for sex instruction to be given effectively by them and that their responsibility is to urge parents to undertake the task if that should still appear to be necessary. Others, again, feel that the nature of their organisation does not provide the appropriate opportunity. Where the youth organisation is associated with a church the instruction is often regarded as the responsibility of the minister or priest in charge.

31. For the most part, however, the views of youth leaders coincide with those of a growing number of teachers in that they recognise that far too many young people are ill-informed on sex matters and ill-advised regarding some of their social

implications, especially in times like these; and accordingly they either accept the giving of sex instruction as a normal and important part of their work, or else feel it incumbent upon them, albeit reluctantly, to deal with it to the best of their power, because they feel that instruction is necessary and that no one else is giving it. Youth leaders, like teachers, recognise a two-fold need: first to give the necessary physiological knowledge, and repair inadequate or distorted knowledge already acquired; and second to offer such advice and guidance to young people in regard to conduct and relationships as may be helpful to them in their own lives. The members of these organisations are, for the most part, working boys and girls faced with daily problems of adjustment, and this second contribution—the giving of wise counsel—assumes a correspondingly greater importance in youth clubs than in schools.

Courses for Leaders

32. Leaders are increasingly conscious that if their counsel is to be effective they themselves require more accurate and comprehensive knowledge than they often possess. To meet this need both local education authorities and the youth organisations are increasingly arranging short training courses in sex education for leaders, or are devoting attention to the subject at their general youth service courses. Lectures on sex education at such courses are given by a variety of speakers: it may be the medical officer of health, or a local practitioner, or a representative of the Central Council for Health Education. The lectures are sometimes designed to give the essential facts regarding the biology of sex, or, alternatively, to advise on method and presentation. They have been the means of adding considerably to the guidance which youth leaders are able to give to the individual members of their units and have indeed enabled many to give group instruction within their clubs.

Courses for Members

33. Whereas it is generally agreed that it is valuable and important that youth leaders should be given opportunities of attending courses of lectures wherever possible, there is more division of opinion regarding the advisability of giving group or class instruction to the members of organisations themselves. Increasingly in recent months, however, organisations in many areas, often with the help and co-operation of their local education authority, have taken the initiative in giving sex instruction to their members on a group basis. Where this has been done, there appears to be abundant evidence, both from the young people who have attended, and from their parents, that the experiments have been helpful. One local education authority, referring to a successful course given to club members, has observed; "It has become obvious that in the social conditions prevailing owing to the war, when boys and girls are meeting and working together under all conditions, the

problem of proper relationship between the sexes has been causing much concern amongst young people themselves and they have welcomed this opportunity for frank and healthy guidance."

34. The subject of sex education is usually introduced to members of youth organisations as a part of a more comprehensive course dealing, for example, with general health, or hygiene, or citizenship, and there are many who feel strongly that this is the right way to go about it, on the ground that the subject is thereby not isolated but is kept in perspective, "so that such matters as the venereal diseases may be spoken of in as detached and straightforward a way as other diseases." Such courses are often given by the youth leader in person, and indeed, much is said in favour of sex matters being dealt with by the club leader rather than by a visitor to the club, again in order to avoid undue emphasis being given to the subject. In practice, however, visiting lecturers are often introduced to supplement these courses, and more often than not their contributions are successful. Experience suggests that there are advantages in giving a short series of talks rather than single lectures, so that the confidence of the members is gained and they enter into discussion more freely. Whether or not club leaders themselves lead group discussion depends very much upon their own convictions in the matter and upon local circumstances. It is in any case valuable and important that they should have the necessary knowledge and experience to deal with the individual questions which members often bring to them subsequently to the meetings.

35. Not all lectures to youth organisations on sex education are incorporated in a wider course. Many have been given, and given successfully, as self-contained lectures or series of lectures. The methods adopted vary considerably but it would seem that success often depends less on the methods employed than on the assurance and sincerity with which the matter is approached. Men and women in all walks of life are co-operating with youth leaders by giving talks to young people. Doctors have an obvious advantage in that they speak with authority and knowledge, but not all doctors have the gift of simple exposition and as a profession they are hard pressed at the present time. The following testimony from a girls' organisation is perhaps worth noting. "A really good woman doctor, preferably married, youngish, with a modern approach, and modern clothes, is the most successful. The girls trust the doctor as a doctor and welcome her counsel as a married woman, and she looks the sort of woman they would like to be."

36. Leaflets are employed by some organisations for distribution to their members giving them information on sex matters and advice on conduct; but they are not generally popular. It is felt that they mostly lack an effective presentation to the present generation of young people and that their exhortations are expressed in a language that the present day child has some difficulty in understanding. One organisation suggests that "a far more detailed and realistic approach must be made to the subject, and with this end in view it is proposed to publish leaflets for the purpose of providing instruction of a more

definite nature than hitherto." Films have been employed with considerable success, though it seems to be generally agreed that their use is most valuable in conjunction with a talk by an experienced speaker. The exhibition of films alone does not provide the atmosphere necessary for frank discussion.

37. The following notes refer to three different types of courses for young people held recently, which are regarded as having been successful.

A course organised by the local education authority in a large borough

"At the invitation and with the collaboration of the medical officer of health a series of talks on 'Personal Hygiene and Social Relations' was given to members of the authority's youth centres. Talks covered physiology and the social aspects of sex relationships. Approach to the talks was discussed by M.O.H. and youth leaders together beforehand. Invitations to meetings were made individually and not by general announcement. Questions were submitted beforehand. Three sessions were given at each centre, one each for groups of boys and girls, and a final mixed session. At the group meetings a general course of sex education has been given and questions were asked and answered. The mixed session has taken the form of a brains trust when questions of general interest both physiologically and socially have been answered. There were present on an average about 50 boys and 60 girls : all were over 15 years of age. Normal club activities have proceeded for those boys and girls who did not wish to attend. The atmosphere at each meeting has been excellent and there has been an obvious interest shown by all with a genuine desire for knowledge on both physiological and social subjects. Discussion following the talks has been frank and free from embarrassment. Many parents have expressed their appreciation of the talks and the individual difficulties and problems of members have been brought to light subsequently."

A course of four lectures given to the members of a number of girls' clubs in an urban area

"Four women doctors co-operated to give the first two lectures and trained social workers with specialised knowledge gave the third and fourth lectures. The girls attending were 16 years of age or over. Lecture I gave a simplified outline of physiology both male and female. Lecture II dealt with the changes at puberty in both male and female : the functions of menstruation, and specific information regarding sexual intercourse and its relation to marriage. Lecture III discussed friendships between people of the same and of the opposite sex, and the psychological differences between the sexes and their importance. Promiscuous relationships were discussed from the point of view of physical dangers and of mental

tension. Lecture IV was devoted to a consideration of marriage : its difficulties and the necessity for adequate preparation for it. Questions of the management of a home and of children were discussed. Problems of adjustment and the exercise of patience and understanding. The subject matter of Lecture IV has been found to interest girls especially and to give a saner idea of marriage as a permanent partnership. Marriage is a beginning rather than an end. An effort is made in Lectures III and IV to relate the question of romantic relationships to the relationships of work and family life."

A course of three lectures given to the members of a youth club in a small country town

"The course was arranged by the club leader, and some 120 young people were present, the number of boys and girls being about equal. Most of those present were 16 or 17 years of age. The parents had been consulted in regard to the attendance of all children under 16. Three talks were given by a representative of the British Social Hygiene Council [whose work in this field is now carried on by the Central Council for Health Education], illustrated by films. Each talk was given to a most attentive mixed audience, and was followed by public discussion and afterwards by separate interviews with the boys and girls. Simple animal biology was taken on the first night, human biology on the next, and the concluding lecture was concerned with the process of growing up and the dangers arising from promiscuous intercourse etc. This last lecture included a clear and sufficient account of the venereal diseases, and was well reasoned and easy for the young people to follow. They liked the lecturer's conversational manner and showed their confidence by the number and nature of the written questions sent up after each lecture and by the demand for private consultation. Only one question was asked after the first lecture, but complete confidence was established by the second evening when the lecturer answered a whole series of pertinent questions. After the third lecture it was obvious that the audience knew that it would get what it really wanted from the lecturer's replies—and the questions covered a wide field. The questions were almost invariably written down and passed up to the lecturer. Private interviews were given to the boys and girls separately for another half hour or so after the sessions ended.

38. A short conference held after the course by the organiser came to the following tentative conclusions regarding future courses:—

(a) Separate courses are desirable for the 14's to 16's, and the 16's and over.

(b) There are advantages in a mixed audience for most of the instruction.

(c) There are details of human biology which are best

taken with boys and girls *separately*—though each group should be informed of *the* special difficulties and characteristics of the other.

(d) It is probably desirable to provide separate questionnaires, in public session, for boys and girls.

was generally agreed that the course had been a success and was appreciated by the young people themselves."

TRAINING COLLEGES

39. In the absence of adequate sex instruction in early childhood by their parents, and subsequently in the schools, many students enter teachers' training colleges and departments ill-informed on all aspects of sex. Some attempt is made during training college courses to help the students to develop a balanced attitude towards sex and the problems with which it presents them, as well as to give them accurate knowledge about the physiology of sex. In addition some training colleges try to give their students guidance in regard to the sex instruction which they may later be called on to give as teachers. But the general position in the colleges on the whole matter of sex is, understandably enough, marked by vagueness, hesitation and uncertainty.

40. Opinions differ as to the part of the training course most appropriate to the treatment of sex. For example some would include it under hygiene, and others under psychology or principles of education. But the really important point is not *where* the problem is treated but by whom. In each case the most suitable persons available should be entrusted with this difficult and delicate task. It should always be remembered that, while accurate and adequate knowledge of sexual physiology, as the mechanism of reproduction, is essential, the most important aspects of sex from the point of view of young people are the emotional and psychological aspects. Students are in need, not only of full information in this field, but also of guidance and helpful discussion on problems of personal conduct and the relation of these to other individuals and to society.

41. The difficulties involved are aggravated by the wide variations in the extent and the accuracy of the knowledge which students already possess, and by the anxiety of the more ignorant among them to conceal their ignorance from their fellows and from members of the college staff. Moreover, some students may have been led, largely through the circumstances of their upbringing, to adopt the mistaken attitude that sex is an entirely private and personal matter which ought not to be dealt with openly during the college course. No doubt many difficulties will disappear in time if suitable methods of sex instruction can be established from childhood upwards. But meantime it may well be contended that one means to this should be the taking of immediate measures to improve the position, so far as that is possible, in regard to those, already in the colleges

or about to enter them, who will form the next generation of teachers. Perhaps the most effective first step would be to mobilise a suitable persons chosen from among teachers, lecturers, do social workers and others, who might receive a special course training in sex instruction and afterwards visit colleges and schools for discussions with students and practising teachers.

42. Finally, it should perhaps be said that sex instruction in training colleges should be mainly directed to the personal attitude of students themselves. The students are, indeed, too ill equipped to tackle fully at this stage the problem of how to instruct children in sex matters. They should, of course, be set thinking about this, but not with a view to immediate practice. Indeed this side of their training might well be left to *ad hoc* courses at a later stage in their careers as practising teachers. The Board is at present concerned to encourage courses of this kind.

CONCLUSION

43. The preceding sections have given some description of the substantial contribution that is already being made in the schools and youth organisations towards a greater understanding on the part of children and young people about sex matters. The attempts which have been made to deal with the problem are all the more praiseworthy when it is remembered that very considerable initiative and conviction have often been required in order to find a place for the subject in the curriculum. Although there exists a widespread recognition that parents have a prior responsibility to give this knowledge to their children, it is evident that a substantial proportion do not in fact do so, and many schools have felt it their duty, therefore, to undertake the very important task of making good the inadequate and distorted knowledge possessed by many children.

44. Appreciation from parents regarding this work has been expressed almost universally, and it may be that, among its most valuable results, is the possibility that their children, when they in turn become parents, will find it easier to give this knowledge to their own children. The methods of approach at present employed in schools and youth organisations vary considerably, but, as has been indicated earlier, it is not the purpose of the Board in this pamphlet to attempt to assess the value of one approach compared with another. That is a matter for future consideration in the light of increasing experience. The Board are, however, concerned to offer an assurance of their warm support and encouragement to all those in schools, youth organisations and training colleges, and to local education authorities, who are giving serious attention to this subject, and to affirm their belief that their initiative, based on broad educational considerations, but strengthened also by the desire to protect young people in these unsettled times, has a wide measure of approval and support.