

Report of the Ponton Group of Sex Educators

What Does Sex Education Really Look Like in Poland?



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JUNE 2009

1. The Campaign

In 2009 the Ponton Group of Sex Educators organized a campaign “What Does Sex Education Really Look Like in Poland?” We decided to launch the campaign after receiving an e-mail from a 17-year-old boy who described his bad experiences with receiving unreliable and stereotypical information in school. The letter ended in an appeal: “Please quote my examples everywhere and to anyone if you think it may help and change Polish reality.”

For many years Ponton volunteers have provided counselling for teenagers. Questions we receive show that the level of teens’ knowledge on puberty, physiology, sexuality and contraception is frighteningly low. This is the result of poor sex education in schools and the fact that sex is a taboo in many Polish homes. Since there were more people who – just like the 17-year-old boy – sent us stories of sex education in their schools we decided to give young people a chance to share their opinions in a more systematic and ordered way.

For three months, from February until May 2009 we collected e-mails from youth who described their experiences with sex education. We asked whether they had a subject Preparation for Family Life [official name of the subject covering sex education in Poland] in school and if they did who was the teacher (pedagogue, psychologist, teacher or external educator)? Was the information neutral and science-based? Did the classes take place during regular school hours or as extra lessons in the morning/afternoon? Did the pupils like the classes? People who responded to our request could remain anonymous, provide only the type of school and year or they could give us complete information about themselves if they wished.

We received a surprisingly large number of e-mails, considering the limited possibilities of promoting our campaign. Young people sent us over 600 messages with descriptions of Preparation for Family Life lessons and other subject during which sex education was provided. Reading the e-mails we had an impression that for many people it was an opportunity to express their needs, expectations and often their disappointment with the current situation. Many wrote things like “finally someone asked me about this”, “I’ve wanted to speak out about this for a long time” or “I hope my opinion will contribute to changing the situation”. This is a sign that young people have a great need to express their opinions about sex education in school but, unfortunately, there’s no one there to listen. Voices of teens are not treated seriously and in many schools the subject Preparation for Family Life is absent or the information provided is not in accordance with the curriculum. Teen disappointment and frustration are so deep that many people decided to write even though they had never had sex ed. They wrote what kind of classes they would like to participate in and how the matter should be organized in Polish schools. Many contributions included specific expectations and requests to the Ministry of Education.

We concluded the campaign by making a report on the basis of several hundred e-mails from youth. We decided to include the requests regarding sex education made by the senders. Beside the initially planned part in which we describe the current state of sex education in Polish schools our report provides information on what – according to teenagers – proper sex education should be like.

Since many people preferred to remain anonymous or provided only their e-mail addresses which are confidential most of the quotes in the report are by anonymous authors.

We received **637** e-mails with descriptions of Preparation for Family Life classes.

Out of these 252 authors have never had a lesson on the subject. Some people failed to provide complete information, which made it difficult in terms of preparing statistics. Some e-mails were incomplete, for example someone would write: “I only had two lesson units throughout my entire school” and didn’t provide the type of the school, others would say who the teacher was but didn’t describe the content taught in class. Due to this while studying a specific aspect we only considered the group of e-mails with respective information.

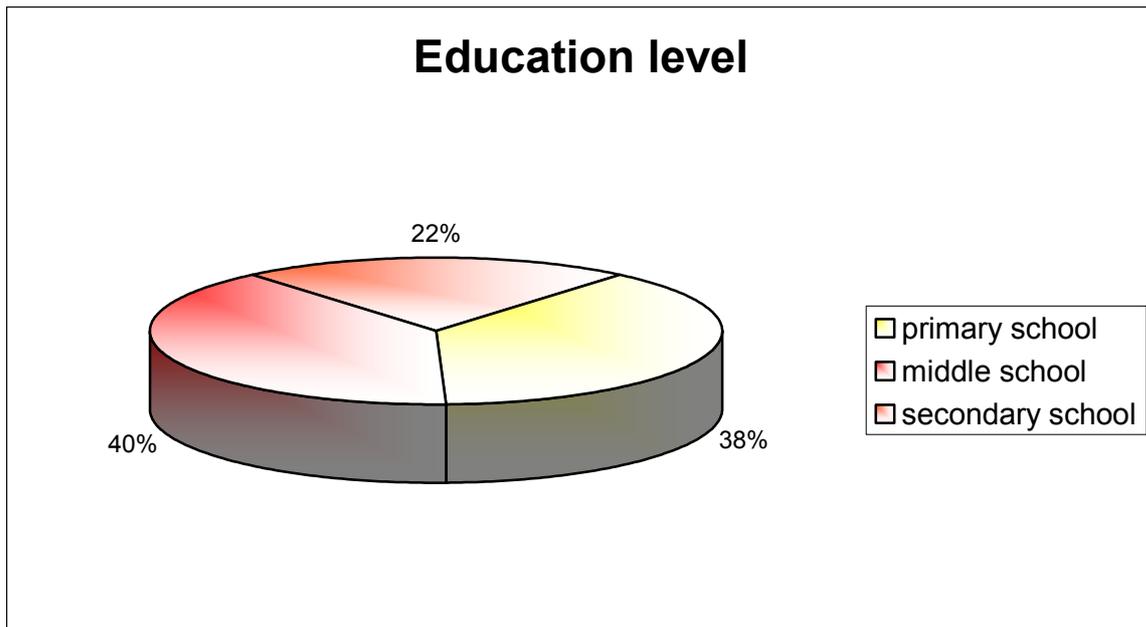
Only 376 people who wrote to us had had such lessons during the period of their education. The majority of classes are held in middle [age 13-15] and primary [age 7-12] schools.

Have you ever had some kind of sex education in your school?

	Number	In percent
no	252	39.6
only in primary school	92	14.4
only in middle school	104	16.3
only in secondary school	58	9.1
in primary and middle school	28	4.4
in primary and secondary school	8	1.3
in middle and secondary school	5	.8
in primary, middle and secondary school	14	2.2
yes but no data on the type of school	76	11.9
total	637	100.0

Sex education at different education levels

	Number	In percent
primary school	144	38,3
middle school	149	39,6
secondary school	83	22,1
total	376	100,0



2. Teachers of Preparation for Family Life

Young people who wrote to us about their experience with sex education usually pointed to the fact that their teachers were incompetent or **discussed their own views** instead of providing objective, neutral information. They often wrote that teachers were ashamed to speak about these issues, unable to say “sex” out loud without blushing, some tried to scare the students instead of teaching them or told weird stories unrelated to the subject matter.

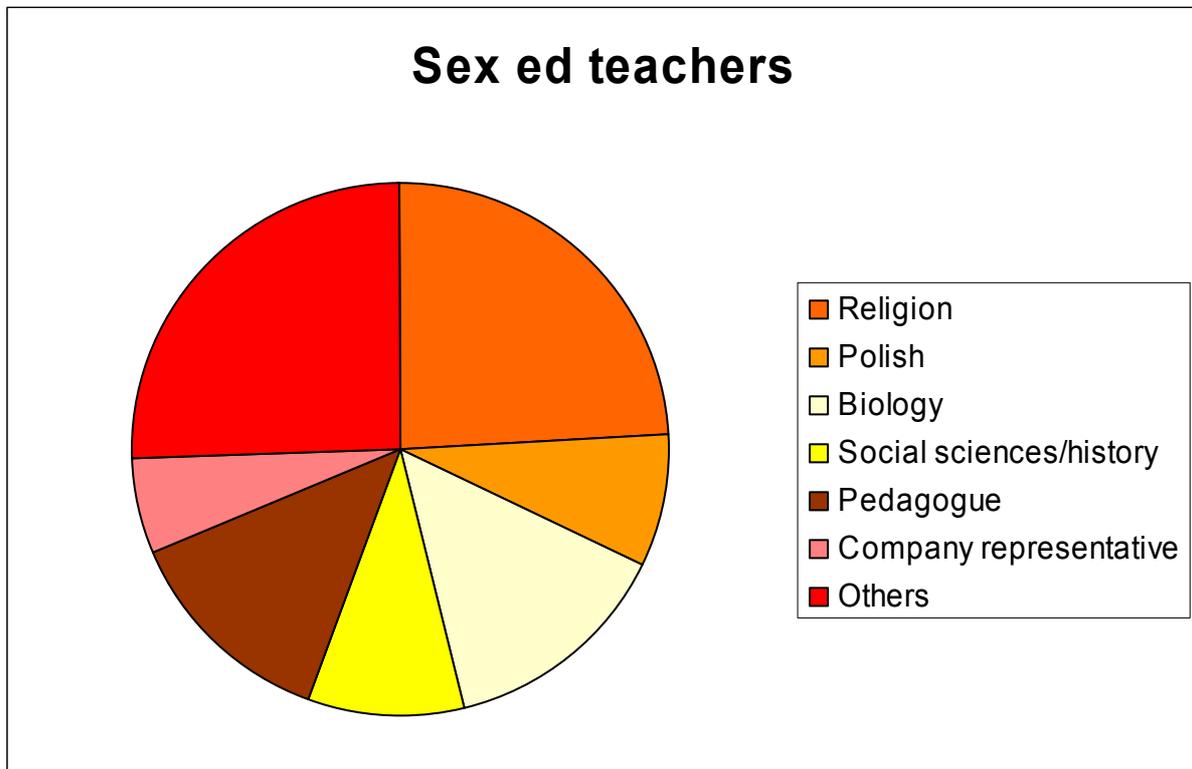
The majority of Preparation for Family Life teachers consists of priests and religion teachers, as well as Polish, social sciences and biology teachers. Sometimes PE, IT, music teachers or even librarians are assigned to give a sex ed classes. Sometime the only sex education provided by the school is a meeting with company representatives who promote sanitary pads. These women usually talk about puberty, periods and intimate hygiene. Classes are for girls only and at the end pupils receive product samples. We would hear from boys who were asked to wait in another room while girls had a class and nobody offered them an alternative meeting on boys’ puberty problems.

Teachers of Preparation for Family Life

Teacher	Number	In percent
Religion	33	24.1
Polish	11	8.0
Biology	19	13.9
Social sciences/history	13	9.5
Pedagogue	18	13.1
Company representative	8	5.8
Others*	35	25.6
Total	137	100.0

*Others: organization (1), doctor (2), physics teacher (1), PE teacher (3), IT teacher (1), early education teacher (1), math teacher (2), chemistry teacher (1), nurse (6), psychologist (4),

theologian (1), priest (5), sexologist (5), librarian (2).



We noticed that classes in Preparation for Family Life are often used by teacher to discuss general topics or current school matters for which they couldn't find time for example during life skills lessons. Below is a selection of examples.

Quotes from e-mails regarding teachers:

(...) In our school Preparation for Family Life is taught by a priest. He showed us where ovulation occurs and said it happens in the ovary and not in the fallopian tube. This is what our sex education looks like. We are being taught by a priest who doesn't know anything about it.

We had our classes with a pedagogue who had very old-fashioned views on sex. She told us it's bad and leads to nothing but suffering (...) She avoided answering our questions about contraception and repeated that it's better to drink a glass of cold water instead. She was convinced that any form of sex education (even articles in a teen magazine "Bravo Girl") was evil and immoral and if we hadn't read so much about it we wouldn't be thinking about these silly things. She didn't use the word "sex" even once. We left the classroom outraged and disappointed (...)

I'm interested in this subject and I think it's a priority for my further development. However, the way teachers talk about this makes me feel I don't want to grow up and be an adult (...) It is because of these people we, teenagers, want to stay the way we are.

The teacher in charge of this subject is a complete mistake. Her top priority is to bore us to death with her stories. If somebody wants to ask a question she doesn't let him or her speak (...)

In middle school we had classes with a woman in a mini skirt and long fake nails who said she could teach the girls how to care of their nails.

People who teach us meet us everyday in school corridors. They avoid “taboo” words and difficult topics. They’d rather play a movie and go for a coffee.

Our teacher showed us once a film about relationships and procreation but he blushed all along and looked for something on the shelves. The class had an impression that he was trying to drown out the sounds of the movie.

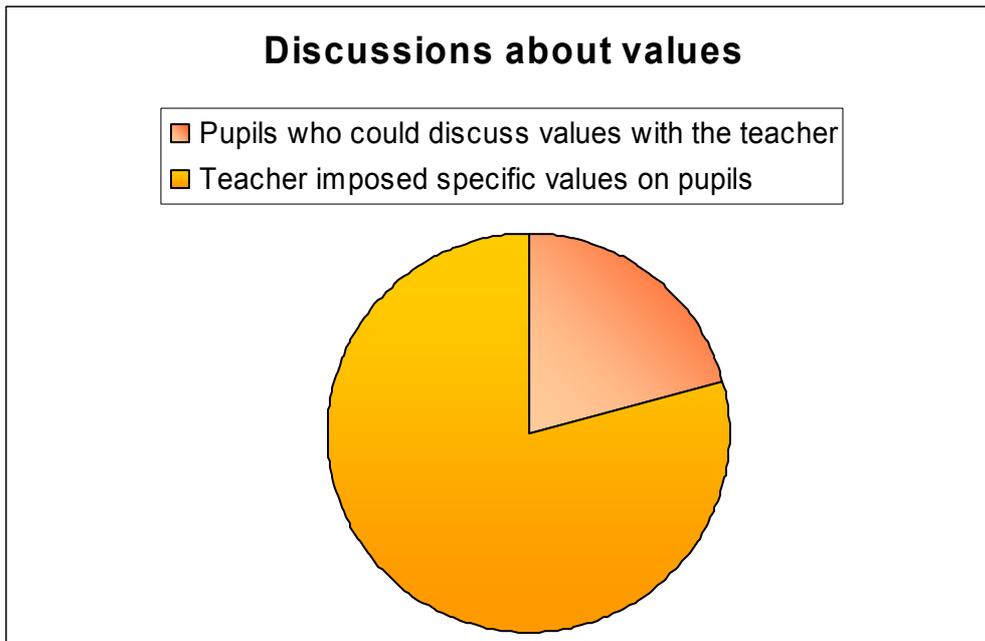
Many young people have stressed that those who taught them the subject were not capable of saying aloud any words connected with sexuality, ashamed to discuss private body parts and it seemed as if they were trying to change the subject and speak about “safer” issues. Teachers would rather talk about such things as first aid, alcohol addiction, smoking and other bad habits. We’ve also had reports of classes about: **interior decoration, home security, good manners at the table, skin and nail care etc.** Some people suggested that it’s difficult to trust and ask delicate questions about sexuality to a person who is a teacher in your school. Also, teens had doubts about the knowledge of teachers who deal with completely different subjects on a regular basis (for example “how to use Word and Excel” as one of the girls put it).

Adolescents pointed out that it is a big problem for them that they are often not allowed to enter into the discussion. They cannot ask questions or talk about things – instead they must only learn about the point of view of the teacher. Teachers tend to present their own set of values as an objective truth and end any attempts to discuss different opinions. They often make the lessons ideological and a pupil who tries to disagree with the teacher faces unpleasant consequences (for example he or she is asked to leave the class or gets a lower mark).

Below we have presented relevant statistics.

Possibility to discuss in class

	Number	In percent
Pupils who could discuss values with the teacher	20	20.8
Teacher imposed specific values on pupils	76	79.2
Total	96	100.0

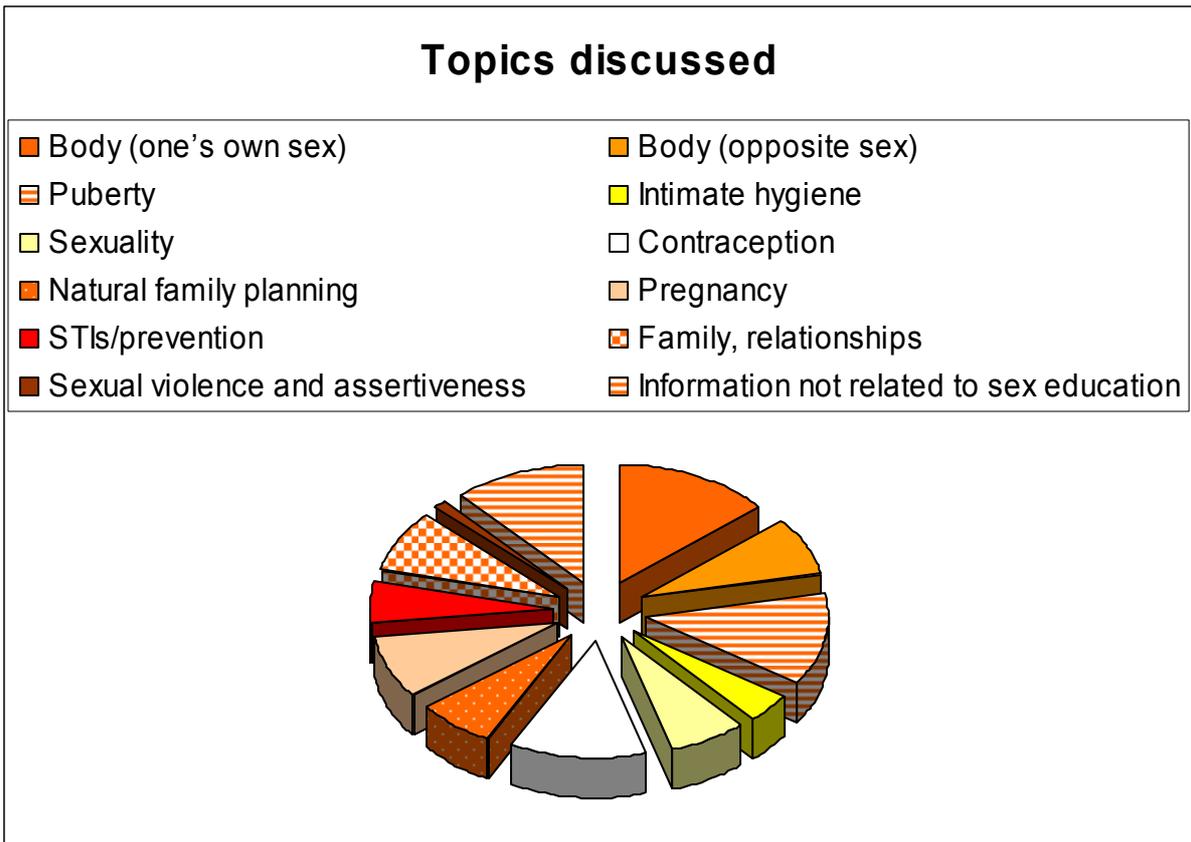


3. Content of Preparation for Family Life lessons

During Preparation for Family Life lessons teachers present different topics, which are more or less connected to the general curriculum. Issues taught include: how the body is built, information about puberty, hygiene, sexuality, contraception (especially natural family planning), pregnancy, STIs, relationships and family. Less often subjects like assertiveness or sexual violence are discussed.

Topics discussed during Preparation for Family Life lessons

Topic discussed during Preparation for Family Life lessons	Number reported	In percent
Body (one's own sex)	112	13.8
Body (opposite sex)	67	8.2
Puberty	102	12.5
Intimate hygiene	34	4.2
Sexuality	56	6.9
Contraception	97	11.9
Natural family planning	57	7.0
Pregnancy	69	8.5
STIs/prevention	47	5.8
Family, relationships	69	8.5
Sexual violence and assertiveness	10	1.2
Information not related to sex education	94	11.5



Shocking misinformation taught during Preparation for Family Life

Unfortunately sometimes people in charge of the Preparation for Family Life subject are almost fanatically religious in their attitudes towards sexuality, body, contraception and they try to impose their views on teens.

Some of the letters we received contain examples of truly curious stories told by teachers in connection with contraception, homosexuality, abortion, rape and STIs. Even though we live in the 21st century and Poland is a member of the European Union in some schools adolescents learn that gay men and lesbians should be isolated and treated, that rape is a punishment for promiscuity and contraception is the devil's idea. Moreover, there are teachers who teach stereotypes about gender roles and present misogynist views. We found some e-mails so shocking that it was hard to believe that these stories happened in school. Some teens appealed to us to do something about it. Unfortunately people who reported these problems usually decided to remain anonymous and wouldn't provide details of their school.

Ideology and Stereotypes presented during Preparation for Family Life lessons

• Contraception:

In secondary school they told us that only the rhythm method can help prevent pregnancy because condoms are a devil's idea.

Our Preparation for Family Life teacher was a 60-year-old pedagogue who only discussed sex in one lesson and told us some incredible stories for example that **to prevent pregnancy a**

girl should take a bath in water mixed with vinegar which would wash out and kill sperm.

In middle school there was a pedagogue who described natural family planning methods. She said we should take our temperature but she forgot to mention that you're not supposed to keep the thermometer under your armpit...

*In our secondary school we had classes with a psychologist who had no idea how to deal with pupils, she was very shy and didn't know how the names of body parts. Throughout the term we learned about 40 reasons why abstinence is so important in the life of teenagers. (...) When I argued that contraception, steady partner and faithfulness reduce the risk of STI infection she said I'm not well educated and gave me a lecture on the **negative aspects of using condoms (which have pores through which viruses can travel so it's useless to buy them anyway) and added that in our age it's a shame to buy such things, especially for girls.***

*In secondary school there was a woman who came from nowhere and told us about the rhythm method and said that condoms are not effective because **they may constrict the base of the penis cutting the blood flow, which may in turn cause permanent impotence (...)***

*Our teacher discussed mainly the side effects of using hormonal pills. She was convinced that **if you refuse to have sex without protection it means that you don't accept your fertility and don't love but just desire your partner.***

- Sex

In secondary school there was a priest who said sex was for animals and people should have intercourse only when they wanted to have children. He thought that even a married couple should not have sex during the infertile period because it was against church teachings. For him, sexual intercourse could only serve the creation of new life.

*In middle school our crazy religion teacher decided to tell us about the facts of life. It was a true nightmare! She said that **the aim of every intercourse should be procreation and a wife ought to give herself to her husband in silence and humility and every woman who takes pleasure out of sex will burn in hell.** For her, man has his needs and if his wife refuses to please him, no wonder he begins to cheat. Also, a girl who lost her virginity before marriage was to her like an apple which had already been bitten and nobody would want to eat it.*

*Recently my ordinary middle school has begun to turn into a Catholic institution. Not that I have anything against Catholic school but I didn't choose to be in one. We have Preparation for Family Life with a religion teacher who is an old maid (...) Maybe if she had children she would be able to teach us anything, she would have some kind of experience. I wonder how someone who doesn't have such experience and whose views are limited by her or his faith is supposed to inform me about these delicate matters of sexuality? **Our religion teacher said that sex before marriage is illegal.** When my friend quoted an act saying that from the age of 16 you can decide for yourself, she got mad and asked her to leave the classroom. She tried to present to us her weird perspective on sex which is supposed to serve procreation only and if it's pleasant for you than you're a sinner. **In general – you should do it in the dark, under a blanket so that nobody sees and pray not to have another child.***

What they have been trying to teach us in secondary school was totally medieval. Our Preparation for Family Life teacher said that virginity was a holy thing and intercourse

was allowed only after marriage because this was the only way to be free from regret for losing one's virginity (...)

He told us every woman was like a flower which needs to be pollinated by an insect at the right moment.

In middle school the subject of sex came up. They presented it as a tool of Satan, source of evil, disease and a way to destroy your life.

• **Family, social roles**

*In secondary school they tried to convince us that **a single-parent family was something dysfunctional**. The teacher explained that this incomplete family cannot provide the same amount of love as two parents. He also added that it's better to have two parents who fight and beat each other and beat the child than a single loving mother or father...*

*At Preparation for Family Life our teacher who is usually in charge of IT tried to tell us that **children from families with absent father or mother grow up to be abnormal adults**. I replied that out of 13 people 11 were raised by single mothers. She concluded the lesson addressing the girls: **"don't you dare become lesbians – it would mean I failed"**.*

*Public school, Olsztyn. Teacher of music shows us movies about family life - common meals, **father and son play the guitar, mother and daughter are busy making dinner** etc.*

*Our teacher presented an artificial **division into singles (people who are egoistical and hedonistic), people living in relationships and the third group – people destined to live alone**.*

In classes, which were scheduled for Saturday mornings in second grade (no comment needed) of our technical secondary school, our teacher repeated that a husband's duty is to provide for a family and a woman must sacrifice her career and devote herself to taking care of the children and the house.

• **Puberty, physiology, sexual orientations**

*In my school Preparation for Family Life was for girls only and the teacher made it look as if she was doing us a favour that she was teaching us. We were stunned when she said **that a girl can have her period at the age of 16 at the earliest and if she had it sooner it means she's sick**. The classes were hopeless.*

*In my middle school a religion teacher taught this subject. We asked her to present male body parts. She presented only a general outline and commented that men look hideous (she meant male reproductive organs). (...) **Talking about gay men and lesbians she said outraged that such people should not exist** and that it's some kind of a disease and it's impossible that there are any feelings involved.*

In our secondary school the biology teacher called female parts bacon and male parts sausages. She said she thought we learned it all from our parents and moved on to other issues. When I tried to talk to my mom at home she said I would learn everything in school.

*Our religion teacher told the girls that they **shouldn't use tampons because they can grow into your vagina...***

• Abortion

Our Preparation for Family Life teacher started from describing phases of fetal development in subsequent months (...) in each lesson we had to watch graphic pictures of abortion and they showed us a film with pro-life doctors and activists who spoke about the negative effects of the procedure and the civilization of death in the West. The teacher said that the first rulers to allow abortion were Hitler and Stalin – biggest murderers in human history.

Preparation for Family Life in our middle school was taught by a 60-year-old woman...she didn't discuss sex, instead she told us how people made soap from human heads in Auschwitz so that we understood and respected life. She repeated all the time she hated animals.

I almost died of disgust because of this teacher. Of course they also showed us films about abortion and I avoided watching it because I'm very sensitive and these movies cause nervous attacks and I never watch drastic scenes in films. Here they made me watch it in class! (The situation repeated in region lessons). My explanations didn't help – when the teacher noticed I avoided watching the film she started a monologue that I shouldn't behave like that and that I'm running away from the truth. She said that that's what happens in life and I must watch it because if the embryo has to go through all this then I need to see it at least so that I never do the same thing again (...) the teacher was so radical that she didn't even attempt to hide her views that **only the embryo was important and a woman was not and even when abortion was legal (for example in the case of rape) a woman ought not to have an abortion.**

• Masturbation

Our teacher spoke about masturbation. She told us a story of a woman who masturbated with a light bulb. The bulb broke in her vagina, which caused a bleeding and forced her to go to the hospital.

• Rape, prostitution

*(...) We were taught by an elderly woman who probably wanted to earn some extra money to add to her pension. In class she read to us a Catholic magazine "Gość Niedzielny" and said that **when a girl is raped she can only blame herself and she should be excommunicated.***

In middle school I learned only that every girl with a ring in her belly button would end up as a prostitute because she provokes men.

Several people pointed out to an important fact that issues of assertiveness, sexual violence and date rape drugs are not mentioned at all or not enough discussed. It is worrying that there is so little talk about these situations when so often it is in school where young people cross the line in contacts with their fellow pupils. We have heard about dramatic consequences – there was a shocking case of Ania, a 14-year-old girl from Gdańsk who committed suicide after boys from her class in middle school undressed her, molested her and recorded a video. We don't know how often pupils hurt one another "just for fun". The media discuss only the most drastic cases whereas sometimes the victims of harassment would not confide in anyone.

During our campaign we received a letter from a young man who was terrified when he looked back at his school years now that he could see things in perspective. He wrote:

*School? We'd had such "fun" in that place! Sometime around fourth grade of primary school some people had video players at home and a lot of independence. It wasn't a problem to get hold of a cassette with a porn film (now it's even easier with the availability of Internet). In our class there were these two weird guys who had watched these porn films and molested the girls big time, they also harassed guys who weren't strong enough. **At the time we thought it was fun looking at a guy ripping the girl's clothes off and pretending he's going to rape her** (that girl started crying only after she realised her parents would beat her up for coming home in a broken dress but some other girls were scared right from the start). In my primary school these things happened on a regular basis. I'm glad that I wasn't like my colleagues then. It was many years later when I understood how sick it all was. There was no one to stop this. The victims had nobody to turn to for help and they didn't understand that something wrong was going on. We who watched it gave a silent permission to the perpetrators. I had no idea that something terrible was going on. Neither us, kids – we weren't even teens yet – nor the teachers, nor the parents had any basic sex education. I'd rather not know how what impact these experiences might have had on some of us.*

Those who were violent towards their peers may not even realize how serious the effects of their actions may be. **That's why it's so important to talk about prevention of sexual violence and teach assertiveness.**

4. Organization of classes

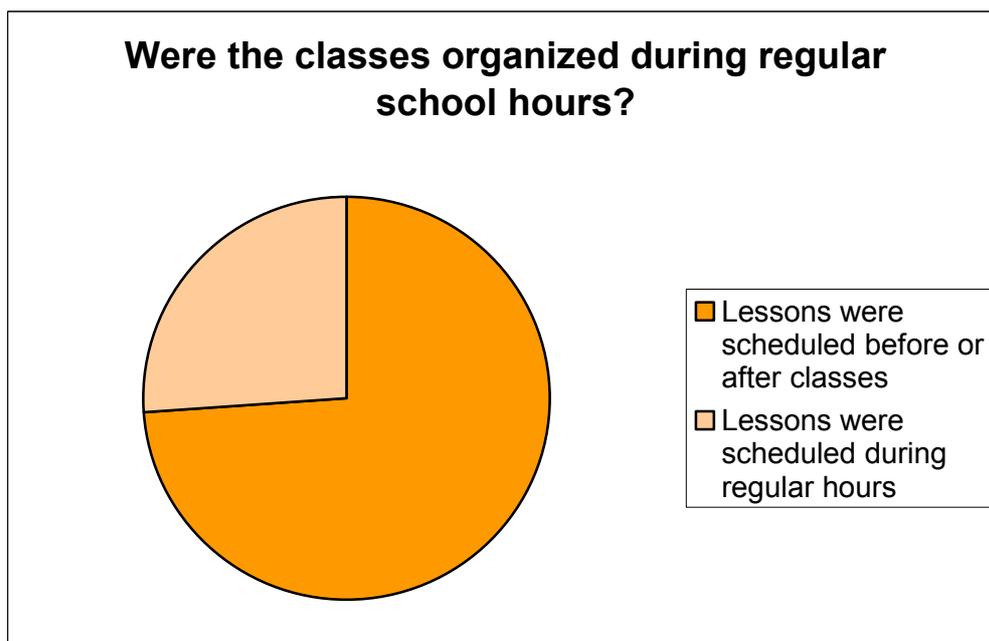
Many students pointed to the problem with the organization of Preparation for Family Life lessons. In many schools they don't fit into the daily schedule and are planned for very early morning or after "regular" lessons. Obviously teenagers are not enthusiastic about these lesson plans and don't want to come earlier or stay after class when they feel tired and cannot concentrate. In many letters adolescents explained that this attitude allows the principals not to organize the classes at all because nobody attends them. In this unfriendly system teenagers sometimes ask their parents not to give them permission to attend Preparation for Family Life in order to avoid staying long hours at school. Parents often agree – not due to ideology but because they respect their children's needs. It is not uncommon that the group ready to attend is in consequence too small and the classes are cancelled altogether.

In many e-mails people suggested that had the system functioned better more people would attend these courses. Most people who wrote to us stressed that the subject was needed and important and they would love to participate if the teachers were competent and open to discuss any subject and if the lessons were scheduled during regular school hours. Otherwise it's just a waste of time.

Below are the statistics and diagram presenting data from teenagers.

Were the courses organized during regular school hours?

	Number	In percent
Lessons were scheduled before or after classes	45	73.8
Lessons were scheduled during regular hours	16	26.2
Total	61	100.0



Another issue pointed out by young people concerned the fact that classes were divided into groups of boys and girls without asking the pupils if the solution was acceptable for them. Some teens liked the segregation. Especially girls stressed that they felt more comfortable when there were no boys to disturb the lesson and make jokes about menstruation etc. Voices against segregation were more common, however. Teens argued that they wanted to learn something about the opposite sex. A boy wrote for example:

There is just one small problem: girls and boys are segregated during these lessons. Boys talk about their private parts and girls about theirs but we all know what we have in our pants and we would rather listen about the opposite sex.

According to our information many pupils have only 2-3 lessons of Preparation for Family Life throughout their middle or secondary school. Some adolescents wrote that their course was interesting and they were disappointed that it ended rapidly. Many reports stated that there was a person who gave one lecture and “was never seen in our school again” or “disappeared in unknown circumstances” and the classes “ended without explanation”. Reading these examples one notices that a similar situation would have never happened with other subjects like Polish, maths or even PE.

5. Examples of good practices

E-mails from people who have had Preparation for Family Life included also positive opinions. We decided to quote some letters as examples of good practice, which may inspire school principals and teachers. It is evident that a lot depends on the teacher's openness and skills.

In my town Świnoujście we've had sex education from primary school. At that level we had classes with a pedagogue who didn't treat sex as a taboo. We spoke openly about the consequences of sexual initiation. We had posters showing reproductive organs and did many exercises to train assertiveness in potentially risky situations. In middle school we openly discussed contraception and STIs during biology lessons. We covered reproductive organs not in one 45-minute class but in at least 4-5 classes.

Currently I go to technical secondary school and most of my friends in class have already had sex. Preparation for Family Life is done by a pedagogue but we are free to talk about anything during these courses. We asked about menstrual cycle and risks connected to sexual activity. We have also talked about dangerous behaviour, homosexuality, HIV and other diseases. We can speak openly about the subjects which are often regarded as a taboo (...) In my opinion sex education is at good level in my school.

In secondary school teachers don't explain where babies come from but warn us not to have sex too early because it's cool to be young and we don't need extra obligations. I also wanted to say that my religion teacher is very open to these matters because she studied sexology and whenever we ask she's ready to talk about pregnancy, sex or homosexuality.

I'm 13 years old. I've had a couple of Preparation for Family Life classes and I liked them a lot. I learned many things about sex and protection and found out stuff I had no idea about. Our teacher allowed us to ask anonymous questions and she answered all of them. At the end of the year I'll have more of these lessons and I can't wait for it because they have been really interesting.

Finally the time has come to start first "sex" lessons. All at once a teacher comes in – she's just a couple years older than us and she taught me biology and sex in primary school! (...) She asks us to write our associations with sex on small pieces of paper. She adds that we need not censor ourselves and that we can write whatever we want. She makes two stacks – one for girls and one for boys. Then we officially read it all out loud. First a girl had to read the girl's associations. The usual stuff: love, teddy bears, dates, blah blah. I volunteered to read the boy's cards. What could you expect from teenage boys: jerking off, fucking, screwing... I'm reading these words and we're all having a laugh and I take the next card. I can't read what it says: hanging, dangling... and then the teacher comes up, takes the card and says very clearly: "Maciek, you really don't know? Banging!" I felt more embarrassed than she was but it showed she was open and not shy. It also showed us, kids that sex was not only something funny and pleasant but also a responsibility. She didn't say that the only purpose of sex was reproduction but agreed it was also for pleasure. We covered all issues during our course: contraception (mainly mechanical methods), STIs, reproductive organs, a bit of genetics, sexual orientations, even some sexual positions. What's interesting is that even our class swots sitting in first benches couldn't take their eyes off the teacher and though she was someone who gave good advice. In secondary school we also have 16 hours of sex education with the same teacher. To sum up, I'm glad Ms. R. is my teacher. She's very professional in what she does. She likes to talk about sex

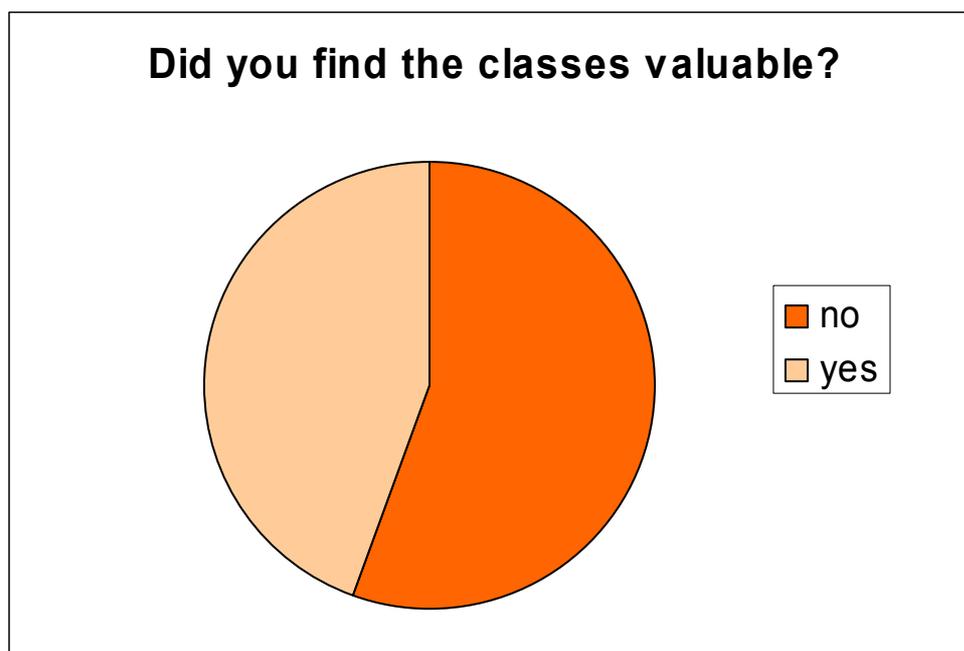
and her classes are interesting, with easy atmosphere but serious content. She stays away from God, church and all saints. And we like it. We liked the fact that she presented alternatives to the rhythm method discussed at religion. As far as I know pupils and most parents adore this teacher. (...) She's a great pedagogue and knows that the solution to the problems of hormone-filled teenagers is a conversation about... sex. We call her "the sex teacher" and she calls herself that way too. (The author apologizes for using vulgar expressions in the e-mail).

Maciek

Out of the people who reported having Preparation for Family Life 270 found the lessons useful. Some teens wrote that they learned valuable and useful things, others had reservations but admitted they would use part of the knowledge in their life. A large part said that the lessons were not valuable at all.

Did you find the classes valuable?

	Number	In percent
No	150	55.6
Yes	120	44.4
Total	270	100.0



Adolescents address the Ministry of Education

As we have stressed in the beginning our campaign gave young people a chance to describe their experiences with Preparation for Family Life but also to express their emotions and opinions about the subject. For many (also those who have never had a course like this) the project was the only opportunity to send their requests and appeals for change to the Polish Ministry of Education.

Below we have compiled the requests of young people addressed at the Ministry:

Teenagers want:

1. the introduction of reliable, neutral sex education starting September 2009

Coming back to the issue of learning about sex during religion courses... for me it's a bad idea for religion teachers and priests to talk about sex life because they only try to hide the reality by saying sex is a huge sin, especially before marriage. We have been asking ourselves: are we supposed to wait until we want to marry? In effect people would get engaged at the age of 15 or 16 because it is then that guys and girls lose their virginity. I just wanted to add that learning about sex in religion classes is a bad idea and I would like to ask at least for a 20-hour course about sex because three years [period of middle school] is not long and we won't be able to learn everything by reading magazines. Me and my friends would like to start these classes in September. We really need to talk about adult topics! I apologize for mistakes and for writing so much but it's really impossible not to demand these things...

I think Preparation for Family Life is not a very good name. Sex education would better describe the range of issues, which ought to be discussed with adolescents.

2. that the curriculum be presented by well-prepared and competent teachers during regular school hours

In my opinion classes preparing kids for adult life are needed. However I'd rather not have them if they are to be taught incorrectly, in an abusive or boring manner. If I was certain the class would be taught by a prepared person, who would give us real information without any church ideology, if the lessons were planned within regular school hours and not before or after I would support the idea totally. I'm afraid that there's little hope my expectations will be fulfilled, at least not in most schools. It's going to be difficult in a country where a priest is the highest authority in a school and the church is more important than the kids.

Courses should be conducted by a person from outside the school, preferably a sexologist. We could also invite a gynaecologist to talk about contraception.

3. sex education covering all important topics: puberty of girls and boys, STI prevention, modern contraceptives, prevention of sexual violence, assertiveness and sexual orientations.

(...) in these classes we should learn about useful things and not just hear preaching and threats that sex is bad. We should learn all about contraception so that we could avoid such situations as in my school where at the beginning of secondary school two girls got pregnant. We should be informed on how it all works, when is the best time to start sexual life, when it's better to wait and not only hear that we must "wait until marriage". They had better advice us on how to protect from dangerous infections, how to maintain intimate hygiene and other useful stuff.

They completely avoided the very issue of human sexuality and no one even mentioned different orientations, which I find scandalous in our times. We all know that LGBT persons are among us and have always been and since it's something completely normal I believe

we should talk about this. It's important to make young people more aware. Also, reliable information would help reduce homophobia and be a sign of tolerance and it would let us understand these matters better.

For me there's too much of a show in Preparation for Family Life. They say it's present but many schools don't put much attention to it. I don't even know if there's a curriculum that each school year ought to follow. I don't like one more thing – at some point the group is sex-segregated – on the one hand it's OK because we are ashamed of some things but on the other – if a single father gets to raise a daughter or a single mother gets to raise a son they wouldn't know anything about the problems or sexuality of their child. We may have segregated lessons but we should also learn about the opposite sex.

Ponton Group of Sex Educators supports the requests of teenagers.

Volunteers of the Ponton Group of Sex Educators once more ask the Ministry of Education for support. Our report, prepared on the basis of information from adolescents illustrates the differences between the implementation of the subject Preparation for Family Life in schools. Lessons are not closely monitored and many times instead of learning things important from the perspective of development and health pupils don't learn anything useful or even hear dangerous stereotypes and myths about sexuality and contraception. Young people still don't have enough access to information about health, sexuality, assertiveness, contraception and STI prevention. **It is necessary to introduce reliable, neutral and age-adjusted sex education in schools.**

Reliable and universal sex education must be based on scientific and medical standards of human rights approved by the UN and EU. Every Polish pupil has a right to reliable sex education and the **Polish state is obliged** to provide proper sex education according to the provisions of the Polish "Act on Family Planning" and multiple international obligations.

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