

5th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEARNING CITIES
From emergency to resilience: building healthy and resilient cities through learning
(Yeonsu, South Korea)

Parallel Thematic Forum 2

Theme 3: PROMOTING LEARNING FOR HEALTH IN THE FIELD OF SEXUALITY

- Dear friends,
- I would like to greet The UNESCO Global Network Learning Cities, The City of Yeonsu and the Government of South Korea;
- And all authorities, cities and partnership that are participating of the Fifth International Conference on Learning Cities.
- It is a pleasure to share with you a message based on my own knowledge and experience on Sex Education and the actions of São Paulo on this field.
- I have several books published about this matter, and have been talking about Learning and Sexuality for the last decades in Brazil. During the *Paulo Freire* mandate as Education Secretary in the early 90s, I was the person in charge for the Sex Education in São Paulo schools.
- We established a program where teachers were trained and for each hour of class with students, the teachers had 2 hours of supervision and discussion. It was a relevant and very innovative experience that resulted in the decreasing of girls' pregnancy at the time.
- According to *The Brazilian Society of Pediatrics*, broad access to education and information associated with the availability of qualified health services are important and vital tools that cities and local governments must work with.
- I have no doubt that it is knowledge and open discussions, very important, the main elements of a comprehensive sex education for all people. Schools need to be open and start talking more to students in the classrooms about this topic. Discussions about sexuality in schools should not be a taboo.

- There is another important aspect about the Sexual Initiation: group and social acceptance. Teenagers are more likely to fall into social pressure and that's why it is so important to open up classroom discussions, allowing them to express feelings and having the chance to learn when and how to say: no, regardless of the pressure, or yes, with responsibility
- If students don't have an open door for their questions, they will find answers anywhere, by themselves, without the important help of the State's role in building this knowledge and possibility of change, of choosing. The State's action on the subject has been late, and there is often a lack of action by the state to deal with this important issue, which is not just a health issue but also a social issue.
- Sexuality Education must be part of the school syllabus as any other subject such as Math, Geography or Sciences. Perhaps, more important.
- Teachers must be able to exercise the role of facilitator of the discussion among students, (they) should be well-trained, even though it must let each student take their own position in relation to sexuality and to involve several other factors such as values of the family, education, religion. All the things that must be discussed. There has to be a free atmosphere for that to happen.
- Teachers should act as guides and they do not have to say what is right or wrong. Acting as a catalyst for discussion, a great listener, a person who shows respect for what the student thinks, his doubts, his worries, and who enables the student to think about critics and (act by) to going to himself.
- The moment the mentor teacher says: this is better than that, he leaves his role as an advisor.

- Here in São Paulo, the Municipality has a normative ruling to establish procedures to communicate to the Guardianship Council, the Childhood and Youth Court, cases of suspected or confirmed violence against babies, children, and adolescents enrolled in the Municipal Education System, which demonstrate the engagement of the city with the citizens.
- The city of São Paulo has a Support network for girls and women victims of domestic or sexual violence. This network works with our Public Health System, giving them medical and psychological support.
- We understand that no one must be left behind in São Paulo and we are committed to managing this as a public policy, in favor of overcoming the barriers of egalitarian sexual education, gender inequality and cultural stigma.
- Dear friends, in this way, the importance of the international collaboration between Cities Networks and International Organizations is one of the keys to moving forward and build a better city and society for all.
- Unfortunately, Brazil, as other countries, has been under a civilizational retrogression on (mores) custom that has created difficulties for many cities to increase (number of) students to have better access to sex education.
- But things change and we are going to improve and do better.
- Thank you.