

Birutė Obelenienė

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8460-456X>

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

 <https://ror.org/04y7eh037>

Contradictions between understanding sexuality in Catholic education (CE) and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)

 <https://doi.org/10.15633/pch.15114>

Abstract

The article raises the problem that understanding sexuality in comprehensive sexual education strongly contradicts an understanding of sexuality in Catholic education. To establish these contradictions and main differences, the qualitative content analysis method was used to evaluate the concept of sexuality in the content of the guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education from a Christian anthropological perspective. An evaluation of the comprehensive sexuality education document in the light of Christian anthropology reveals that the concept of sexuality in comprehensive sexuality education is fundamentally inconsistent with the concept of sexuality in Catholic education.

Keywords

Catholic education, comprehensive sexuality education, postmodernism, Christian anthropology, love, self-giving, inseparable unity of body and soul, procreation, integrated sexuality, disintegrated sexuality

Introduction

Today, many countries around the world are debating the concept of sexuality and its education. As noted by the Congregation for Catholic Education, “We are now facing with what might accurately be called an educational crisis, especially in the field of affectivity and sexuality”¹.

The comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and Catholic education (CE) is not only a question of content or methods but also a question of two different worldviews. The mission of education today takes on a whole new context due to an ideology that is generically called ‘gender theory’, which “denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between males and females. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time”².

Currently, two different conceptions of sexuality prevail, based on different worldviews.

From one side, the concept of *integrated* sexuality is dominated when sexuality is accepted as a given by nature (in the anthropological sense). In this case, human beings are treated as rational and free bodily sexual persons as a woman or as a man, whose bodily and spiritual areas constitute the indivisible unity. On the other hand, there is a concept of *disintegrated* sexuality, in which human beings and sexuality are perceived as products of social reality. This conception is characterised by a certain separatism, with the indivisible whole being separated and divided into parts. In the concept of disintegrated sexuality, the body is treated as separate from the human being, gender is separated from the person, love is separated from procreation, the family is separated from marriage, sexual identity is chosen, and sexual orientation is the main category used to categorise persons, society is not made up of males and females, but rather

¹ Congregation for Catholic Education, “*Male and female He created them*”. *Towards a path of dialogue on the question of gender theory in education*, Vatican City, 2019, 1.

² Congregation for Catholic Education, “*Male and female He created them*”, 1.

of depersonalised genders, and gender is split into two categories—social and biological sexes.³ (Obelenienė and Narbekovas 2023).

The worldview determines educational goals

The problem of worldview is relevant to pedagogy not only in terms of the construction of educational goals but also in terms of the view of the human being itself. In the construction of educational goals, there is always the problem of worldview questions: “What is a human being?” “What is valuable?”, and “Why is it valuable?” They derive from an understanding of human nature and are addressed to human beings themselves.⁴ The outlook on life and humans, and hence the worldview, taken in its broadest sense, determines all educational work.⁵

According to Dennis McCallum, “There are too many philosophical and religious views to comprehend. Indeed, there are more than six thousand distinct religions in the world today. But the world’s religions and philosophies tend to break down into a few major categories.”⁶ Dennis McCallum identified four main categories (reality, man truth, and values) to describe the differences between the five main worldviews: Naturalism, Pantheism, Theism, Spiritism and Polytheism and Postmodernism. Based on this worldview model, it can be argued that the most incompatible conceptions of the human being in today’s educational content are those of postmodernism and Christian anthropology (Theism). According to the postmodernist worldview: “Humans are nodes in a cultural reality – they are a product of their social setting. The idea that people are autonomous and free is a myth.”⁷ By comparison, the Christian anthropology understanding of human beings is as follows: “Humankind is the unique creation of God. People were created ‘in the image of God,’ which means that we are personal, eternal, spiritual,

³ B. Obelenienė, A. Narbekovas, *Evaluation of the concept of sexuality in the “Life Skills General program” from the perspective of catholic church teaching*, “Soter” (2023) no. 87, pp. 37–54.

⁴ K. Pukelis, *Mokytojų rengimas ir filosofinės studijos*, Kaunas 1998, Versmė.

⁵ A. Maceina, *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas*. “Raštai”, Tomas I, Vilnius, 1991, Mintis, p. 126.

⁶ D. McCallum, *Christianity: The faith that makes sense*, Tyndale House Publishers, 1992, pp. 36–37.

⁷ D. McCallum, *Christianity: The faith that makes sense*, Tyndale House Publishers, 1992, pp. 36–37.

and biological.” Other categories are also inconsistent with each other. For example, *values* category: Christian anthropology treats values differently: “Moral values are the objective expression of an absolute moral being.” Values according to postmodernism: “Values are part of our social paradigms as well. Tolerance, freedom of expression, inclusion, and refusal to claim to have the answers are the only universal values.”⁸ If the curriculum is based on a post-modernist understanding of humans that treats human beings as “products of a socially constructed reality”, that is fundamentally contradictory to the Christian anthropological concept of human beings as creations of God. The concept of *sexuality* does not exist as an independent concept. The concept of human nature determines the concept of sexuality. The concept of sexuality determines the content and objectives of sexuality education. Sexuality is an essential worldview category that determines the content and goals of sexuality education. Understanding worldview differences helps people understand how their worldviews impact their behaviour.

The background of the study: Components of different conceptions of sexuality and the categories that express their differences

Sexuality is a person’s way of being in a masculine or feminine way. In a general sense, sexuality is the totality of qualities – feminine and masculine – that encompass the whole reality of human existence, both bodily and spiritual. There is a tendency today to devalue sexuality, to identify it with sexual orientation, the expression of sexual desire, and sexual pleasure, and there is a danger that this tendency is permeating the content of education. As noted in the *Policy standards on human sexuality in Catholic education*: “Errors in understanding human sexuality can lead to errors in understanding human nature, the moral order, and even truth and reality itself.”⁹ Likely, the contradiction between understandings of sexuality in Catholic education and comprehensive sexuality

⁸ D. McCallum, *Christianity: The faith that makes sense*, Tyndale House Publishers, 1992, pp. 36–37.

⁹ Cardinal Newman Society, *Policy standards on human sexuality in Catholic education*, 2020, <https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/wp-content/uploads/Human-Sexuality-in-Catholic-Education-FINAL-LAYOUT-PUBLISHED-121720.pdf>.

education will only deepen because a decade ago, the “Sustainable Development Goals” were approved by the member states of the UN. One of the objectives set out in this document invites member countries to guarantee universal access to: “information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes”.¹⁰ For this purpose, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) issued the 2nd edition of the revised International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (Guidance) to help education and other authoritative institutions “in the design and development of comprehensive sexuality education programmes and methodological materials both within and outside the general education school.”¹¹ The definition of sexuality, according to the Guidance:

‘Sexuality’ may thus be understood as a core dimension of being human which includes: the understanding of, and relationship to, the human body; emotional attachment and love; sex; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; sexual intimacy; pleasure and reproduction. Sexuality is complex and includes biological, social, psychological, spiritual, religious, political, legal, historic, ethical and cultural dimensions that evolve over a lifespan.¹²

According to this definition, sexuality includes some components (“sex, gender, gender identity, sexual intimacy”) that need to be explained in more detail. *Gender identity* “refers to a person’s deeply felt individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth and includes the personal sense of the body and other expressions of gender (that is, “gender expression”) such as dress, speech, and mannerisms. The sex of a person is usually assigned at birth and becomes a social and legal fact from there on. Gender identity should be differentiated from sexual orientation”.¹³

The definition of *gender*:

¹⁰ UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*, 2015, para. 3.7. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>.

¹¹ UNESCO, *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, 2018, p. 12, <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf>.

¹² UNESCO, *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, 2018, p. 17.

¹³ Council of Europe, *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)*, (2014) p. 2, <https://edoc.coe.int/en/lgbt/7031-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-questions-and-answers.html>

Refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities, and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes.¹⁴

During analysing the definition of sexuality given in the Guidance, several categories can be identified, which are the most obvious. The sexuality according to the Guidance:

- is socially constructed;
- is not permanent but changing;
- the component of sexuality “gender identity” is not a given, but is optional;
- the concept of sexuality is dominated by the expressions of sexual desire;
- the concept of sexuality is not based on a binary sex system, i.e. it is not about male and female, but about social and biological gender;
- It can be assumed that love is attributed to emotions.

The concept of sexuality in Catholic education is fundamentally different. CE is founded on Christian anthropology¹⁵. The Pontifical Council for the Family defines sexuality as a fundamental component of personality:

one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love”. This capacity for love as self-giving is thus “incarnated” in the *nuptial meaning of the body*, which bears the imprint of the person’s masculinity and femininity”.¹⁶ The love as self-giving of two opposite-sexual persons is a central component of sexuality. Even more, “every form of love will always bear this masculine and feminine character”¹⁷

¹⁴ UNESCO, *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, 2018, p. 112 (referred as: Guidance).

¹⁵ Cardinal Newman Society, *Policy standards on human sexuality in catholic education*, 2020, p. 4.

¹⁶ Pontifical Council for the Family, *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, 1995, 10, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html.

¹⁷ Pontifical Council for the Family, *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, 1995, 11, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html.

The concept of sexuality expressed in the Guidance seeks to cover all aspects of human life as a complex that includes “biological, social, psychological, spiritual, religious, political, legal, historic, ethical and cultural dimensions.”¹⁸ It would seem to be similar to the concept of sexuality in Christian anthropology:

Sexuality characterizes man and woman not only on the physical level but also on the psychological and spiritual, making its mark on each of their expressions.¹⁹

However, the main difference in understanding sexuality in the light of Christian anthropology is that sexuality is not and cannot be an optional sexual identity, and cannot be treated outside the binary sex system, because sexuality reveals the totality of a man or woman’s characteristics as received at the moment of Creation. Words from the book of Genesis “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27), according to John Paul II:

constitutes the immutable basis of all Christian anthropology. This concise passage contains the fundamental anthropological truths: man is the highpoint of the whole order of creation in the visible world; the human race, which takes its origin from the calling into existence of man and woman, crowns the whole work of creation; both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree, both are created in God’s image.²⁰

However, the fact that the concept of sexuality in Guidance encompasses *ethical*, *cultural*, and even *religious* dimensions requires a more detailed analysis of that concept.

¹⁸ UNESCO, *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, 2018, p. 17.

¹⁹ Pontifical Council for the Family, *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, 1995, 13.

²⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, 1988, 6.

Methodology of the study

To identify the fundamental differences between the concept of sexuality in Christian anthropology (sexuality_CA) and the concept of sexuality in comprehensive sexuality education (sexuality_CSE), an evaluation of the comprehensive sexuality education document in the light of Christian anthropology was carried out using a qualitative *content* analysis method. The evaluable document is the *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, which guides comprehensive sexuality education. The evaluation process consisted of several steps:

1. Identification of evaluation parameters, which consist of dimensions and categories representing them, on the concept of human sexuality in Christian anthropology;
2. Extracting keywords based on the evaluation parameters and creating word pairs;
3. Multiple reading of the text of the Guidance, searching the keywords and extracting its contexts;
4. Categorisation of the context data received to define categories of sexuality_CSE;
5. Comparison of the categories of sexuality_CSE with categories sexuality_CA and discussion on the data analysis.

Determining the evaluation parameters

Christian anthropology is unambiguous in that sexuality is tied to the order of creation and therefore called to be faithful to this inner purpose. “Love and fecundity are meanings and values of sexuality which include and summon each other in turn and cannot, therefore, be considered as either alternatives or opposites.”²¹ Therefore, it can be argued that love as unconditional self-giving between man and woman and procreation, and their inseparability are seen as the fundamental values and the inner purpose of sexuality. These sexuality goals: (1) love as a goal of sexuality and (2) an inseparable expression of love

²¹ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational guidance in human love. Outlines for sex education*, 1983, 32, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19831101_sexual-education_en.html.

and procreation, have been chosen as dimensions for the evaluation of understanding sexuality_CSE.

The categories of the first dimension *love as a goal of sexuality*

Love is unconditional self-giving

The word “love,” however, is commonly used and often misused, said Pope Francis²². Love is most often identified with feelings. However, in Christian anthropology, the concept of love derives from God’s love, since He created man out of love and for love. “As the image of God, man is created for love. [...] Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.”²³ As John Paul II pointed out in *Familiaris Consortio* “for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person-body, emotions and soul-and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love.”²⁴

Love is the integration of the raw material of love and the values of the person.

Karol Wojtyła, in his work “Love and Responsibility,” revealed the deepest meaning of love. Love is not a given but always a task. What is given is only the raw material of love. “Experiences which have their roots in the sensuality or the natural sensibility of a woman or a man constitute only *the raw material of love*.”²⁵ Love is a human creation in which is given by nature (sensuality and natural sensibility) is integrated into the whole person’s existence. It is a mistake to identify the *raw material of love* with love itself. “This is a mistake, and at the bottom of it’s lies that utilitarian, ‘consumer’ outlook, which as we is contrary to the very nature of love.”²⁶ Therefore, sexuality education is first and foremost the education of the capacity to love, which is inseparable from the education of chastity, from the capacity to integrate sensuality (libido) into love, to shift the interest from sexual values to the value of the whole person.

²² Francis, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Lætitia*, 2016, 89.

²³ Pontifical Council for the Family, *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, 1995, 8.

²⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, 37.

²⁵ K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, San Francisco 1993, Ignatius press, p. 139.

²⁶ K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, San Francisco 1993, Ignatius press, p. 139.

Chastity is a prerequisite for the ability to love

Love as self-giving is impossible without self-possession. A person cannot give what he does not have. Therefore, the education of chastity is inseparable from the education of love. “Chastity is the spiritual power that frees love from selfishness and aggression.”²⁷ Among all virtues, chastity “proves invaluable for the genuine growth of love between persons.”²⁸

Chastity is understood as a virtue, which expresses the integration of a person’s sexual desire according to moral convictions about personal life. It supposes self-control, openness to life, as well as love, which is beyond the pressure of physical sexual desire.²⁹

Summarising what was said, the 3 categories that describe the first dimension – *love as a goal of sexuality* – have been highlighted: (1) love as unconditional self-giving; (2) *love is the integration of raw material of love and values of the person*; (3) *chastity is a prerequisite for the ability to love (sexual desire must be mastered by oneself)*.

The categories of the second dimension:

The inseparable expression of love and procreation

According to Christian anthropology, the human person is an inseparable unity of the soul and body. “The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the ‘form’ of the body: i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.”³⁰ In short, a human being is a corporeal sexual person. Cristian Anthropology always underlines the unbreakable existential and psychological link between the love-transferring or personal bonding dimension and the

²⁷ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, 1995, 16.

²⁸ Francis, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Lætitia*, 2016, 206.

²⁹ B. Obelenienė, *The anthropological dimensions of the preparation of youth for marriage and family*, in: *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools. Volume II: Learning and leading in a pluralist world*, 2019, Springer Nature, p. 413.

³⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1993, 365, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

procreative or life-transferring dimension of human sexuality.³¹ The dimension that binds people together comes from the need to express love in body language. Love comes from the spiritual dimension of man. Life-giving (procreative power) is only possible because of human corporeality. When these two dimensions of sexuality are separated in sexual intercourse and “divorced from this context of reciprocal gift – a reality which the Christian enjoys, sustained and enriched in a particular way by the grace of God it loses its significance, exposes the selfishness of the individual and is a moral disorder”.³² Woman and man are moral beings and can decide when and how many children to have. Expressing love in body language must not interfere with their free choice regarding children. Woman and man are intelligent and free human beings; they can be aware of human nature and fertility and manage their sexual needs following their plans, because “nature cannot be conquered by violating its law. Mastery over nature can only result from a thorough knowledge of the purposes and regularities which govern it. [...] If he does violence to nature he also violates the person by making it an object of enjoyment rather than an object of love”.³³ Each person expresses his or her sexuality through a person of the opposite sex. However, a person can never be a means; as a person, he is always the task. “A human being cannot be solely or mainly an object to be used, for this reason, that the role of a blind tool or the means to an end determined by a different subject is contrary to the nature of a person”.³⁴

To implement the inseparability of love and procreation in education, students must learn the correct facts about the beginning of human life and that it logically follows that pregnancy is a direct consequence of sexual relations and not of the misuse of contraception. It should also be argued that sexual relations are only justified in the context of marriage because teenagers are not mature for fatherhood or motherhood, that is, they are not capable of either committing or taking responsibility for another person nor are they mature in a physical sense. Discussing sexuality in the context of unwanted pregnancy or unplanned

³¹ W. E. May, *Sex, marriage and chastity*, Chicago 1981, Franciscan Herald Press, p. 11.

³² Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1983, 5.

³³ K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, San Francisco 1993, Ignatius press, pp. 129–130.

³⁴ K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, San Francisco 1993, Ignatius press, p. 28.

pregnancy is talking about using another person, which does not comply with the Catholic concept of human dignity and sexuality³⁵.

Summarising what was said, the 3 categories that describe the second dimension *The inseparable expression of love and procreation* have been highlighted: (1) information about sexual relations only in context with love, marriage and parenthood, (2) the knowledge required for fertility awareness; (3) information that human life begins at the moment of conception.

The results of the evaluation

The understanding of love in Guidance

The first dimension “love as unconditional self giving” was searched for the word *love*, which occurs 42 times in the Guidance. Analysing the context of the word *love*, the 7 categories characterising the concept of love in the Guidance were identified (Table 1):

Table 1. Categories characterising the concept of love in the Guidance

Category	Proving statement:	Page number in the Guidance
Love as a positive aspect;	“to present sexuality in a way that also includes its positive aspects, such as love and relationships based on mutual respect and equality”	18
Kind of love belongs to a person's status	“Relationships involve different kinds of love (e.g. love between friends, love between parents, love between romantic partners) and love can be expressed in many different ways”	40
Love as positive feelings:	“Friendship and love help people feel positive about themselves”	40

³⁵ B. Obelenienė, *Raktiniai žodžiai pagarbaus santykio tarp vyro ir moters atkūrimo link*, “Logos” 101 (2019), pp. 192–198, <https://doi.org/10.24101/logos.2019.86>.

Category	Proving statement:	Page number in the Guidance
Love in context with affection and sexual relationships:	"There are different ways to express affection and love as one matures; describe a range of ways to express affection within healthy sexual relationships; recognize that sexual behavior is not a requirement for expressing love;" "People can show love for other people through touching and intimacy; state that people show love and care for other people in different ways, including kissing, hugging, touching, and sometimes through sexual behaviours "	41
Love is outside of the binary system of sexes:	"Homophobia and transphobia are harmful to people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity; recognize that all people should be able to love whom they want free from violence, coercion or discrimination";	50
Love as care:	"demonstrate how to support a friend or loved one who experiences intended or unintended pregnancy, or who has a child, with regards to their health, education and well-being"; "describe how people need love, care and support, regardless of their health status";	75
Love as a right:	"recognize that people living with HIV have the right to equal love, respect, care and support (and timely treatment; Everyone, including people living with HIV, have the equal right with all others to express sexual feelings and love for others, through marriage and long-term commitments – should they choose to do so"	77

Understanding chastity is a prerequisite for the ability to love in Guidance

The keyword *chastity* was not found in the Guidance. Therefore, the meaning of the term "abstinence" as an option for chastity has been searched for and its context has been distinguished and categorised. The term abstinence is repeated 10 times in the text of Guidance. Analysing the context of the word *abstinence* the 3 categories characterising the concept of abstinence in the Guidance were identified (Table 2)

Table 2. Categories characterising the concept of abstinence in the Guidance

Category	Proving statement:	Page number in the Guidance
Abstinence as the safest method to prevent pregnancy and STSs	"While abstinence is an important method for preventing pregnancy, STIs and HIV";	18
	"understand that abstinence means choosing not to have sex, or deciding when to start having sex and with whom, and is the safest way to prevent pregnancy and STIs, including HIV";	71
	"and curricula had to encourage more than abstinence as a method of protection against pregnancy and STIs."	127
Abstinence is not a permanent condition	"CSE recognizes that abstinence is not a permanent condition in the lives of many young people and that there is diversity in the way young people manage their sexual expression at various ages."	18
Abstinence-only programme are ineffective	"Programmes that promote abstinence-only are ineffective in delaying sexual initiation, reducing the frequency of sex, or reducing the number of sexual partners."	29

Summarising the categories of love identified by the assessment in the guidelines, it can be seen that the concept of love in Guidance is fundamentally at odds with the concept of love in Christian anthropology. The Guidance does not express that love is an integration, that love remains within the boundaries of sensuality and sensuality. Love is not a self-giving relationship between a man and woman. Sexual abstinence is not presented as a condition for developing love but as the safest method to prevent pregnancy and STDs.

Understanding the indivisibility of love and procreation in Guidance

To determine how the first category information about sexual relations only in context with marriage and parenthood, of the second dimension *inseparability of love and procreation* is reflected in the Guidance, keyword pairs were selected for search: *sexual relation*, *sexual intercourse* and *sexual pleasure*. These keyword pairs were searched in the marriage context.

The words *sexual relation* in the text of Guidance are repeated 34 times and the word *marriage* is repeated 27 times. But no one time they have been met together. During the analysis of the context of marriage, we found categories such as *marriage as long-term relations*, *forced marriage*, and *arranged marriage*. Note that the word man or woman were not found with the word *marriage*.

Thus, sexual relations are not only discussed in the Guidance in isolation from marriage as the relation of a man and a woman but it is also stressed that sexually active young people have the right to contraception, which is understood to include sexual relations, regardless of marital status: “Young people who are sexually active and could benefit from contraception should be able to access it without significant barriers, regardless of ability, marital status, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.”³⁶

The term “sexual intercourse” 19 times occurs in Guidance. All of them have a context related to the use of contraception and the prevention of pregnancy but not to love or procreation

Sexual pleasure occurs in Guidance 5 times, but not one time in context with marriage and procreation. *Sexual* pleasure is an integral part of the definition of sexual health, which was repeated in Guidance 36 times. According to the definition of the WHO: “Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences (*underlined by the author*), free of coercion, discrimination, and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled”³⁷. Moreover, there are more aspects included in sexual health “such as being able to control one’s fertility through access to contraception and abortion, and being free from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)”³⁸. To prevent coercion, discrimination and violence, Guidance proposed consent between sexual partners: “Consent is critical for healthy, pleasurable and consensual sexual behaviour with a partner.”³⁹ Based on this, it can be argued that the Guidance does not base sexual relations between partners on love, respect and responsibility, but on consent.

The second category: *the knowledge required to fertility awareness*. The monograph “From birth control to self-awareness and free decision making”

³⁶ UNESCO, *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, 2018, p. 75.

³⁷ WHO, *Defining sexual health*, 200, <https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research/key-areas-of-work/sexual-health/defining-sexual-health>.

³⁸ WHO, *Sexual health, human rights and the law*, 2015, p. 1, https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/175556/9789241564984_eng.pdf;jsessionid=ac430bcf31a98b32799ad5810f74fc86?sequence=1P.

³⁹ UNESCO, *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, 2018, p. 57.

follows a detailed analysis of the information provided in the Guidance on fertility awareness and concludes that the Guidance “does not require the provision of essential knowledge of a woman’s fertility neurophysiology that is relevant to a woman’s health and lifestyle choices.” Neither the names of sex and gonadotropic hormones nor their activity and influence on the functioning of a woman’s reproductive system, as well as the overall health of a woman, are understood as a state of physical and mental well-being. In the Guidance section, there is no requirement to report differences in female and male fertility or differences in sexual drive between a woman and a man. It means that the information that is essential for a woman’s sexual health literacy and for a young woman’s decision to start having sex is not provided at all.”⁴⁰

The information that human life begins at the moment of conception. There is no information in the guidelines that human life begins at the moment of conception. But more than once it is pointed out that “A pregnancy begins when an egg and sperm unite and implant in the uterus.”⁴¹

Discussion of the evaluation data

Based on the Guidance’s evaluation of the concept of sexuality, it must be stated that none of the dimensions of the concept of sexuality_CA corresponded to the category of sexuality_CSE. First, the concept of love in sexuality_CSE does not refer to women and men. This is fundamentally at odds with, sexuality_CA: “The relationship between a man and a woman is essentially a relationship of love: “Sexuality, oriented, elevated and integrated by love acquires truly human quality”.”⁴²

The second, sexuality_CSE love category is related to positive feelings i.e., love material, but not with love as integration and self-giving of persons. According to K. Wojtyła, those who identify love with feelings already have

⁴⁰ B. Obelenienė, *From birth control to self-awareness and free decision making. A model for the evaluation of comprehensive sexuality education from the perspective of women’s health and free informed choice*, Kraków 2022, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, pp. 165–167.

⁴¹ UNESCO, *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, 2018, p. 66.

⁴² Pontifical Council for the Family, *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, 1995, 11.

a consumerist attitude.⁴³ Thus, the consumerist attitude is strongly expressed in sexuality_CSE. This is confirmed by the absence of chastity education as a pre-requisite for love and the right access to contraception and abortion (in terms of sexual health). Special attention should be paid to consent between sexual partners mentioned in the Guidance as a means of avoiding violence. In the absence of information on the differences in the dynamics of female and male sexual desire, the consent to sexual intercourse is very unfavourable to women because it legitimises the pursuit of a form of masculine pleasure. “While sexual pleasure is presented as a gender-neutral right in sexual rights literature, the application of feminist research and theory to it reveals it as a deeply political right that opposes a range of women’s human rights. [...] While the authors of the five major sexual rights documents stipulate that violence, coercion, and exploitation are unacceptable (in the absence of consent), they do not address the fact that masculinity requires the sexual subordination and exploitation of women as a male right and as a form of the male pleasure.”⁴⁴ Moreover, comprehensive sexual education is not only very unfavourable to women’s health but also contradicts gender equality due to the unequal consequences of the experience of sexual intercourse: “sexual pleasure is for two (woman and man) but the consequences of abortion and the side-effects of hormonal contraceptives will only be suffered by the woman”.⁴⁵ This is fundamentally at odds with sexuality_CA, which has unequivocally established that “different sexuality does not necessarily mean one person’s superiority over another person.” According to Pope John Paul II, it is important to stress the equality of a woman’s dignity and a man’s responsibility. This equality is inimitably implemented by self-gifting to one another and to one’s children, which is common in marriage and family. By creating ‘male and female’ humankind, God

⁴³ K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, San Francisco 1993, Ignatius press.

⁴⁴ J. Oriel, *Sexual pleasure as a human right: Harmful or helpful to women in the context of HIV/AIDS?*, “Women’s Studies International Forum” 28 (2005) no. 5, p. 396, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2005.05.002>.

⁴⁵ B. Obelenienė, *From birth control to self-awareness and free decision making. A model for the evaluation of comprehensive sexuality education from the perspective of women’s health and free informed choice*, Kraków 2022, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, pp. 165–167.

gave man and woman equal human dignity by gifting them with inalienable rights and responsibilities”⁴⁶

The third, the focus on sexual pleasure and intercourse, and on avoiding the consequences of using contraception and abortion, raises the very serious concern that such programmes may render children incapable of loving. “It must never be forgotten that the disordered use of sex tends progressively to destroy *the person’s capacity to love* by making pleasure, instead of sincere self-giving, the end of sexuality and by reducing other persons to objects of one’s own gratification. In this way, the meaning of true love between a man and a woman (love always open to life) is weakened as well as the family itself. [...] The trivialization of sexuality is among the principal factors that have led to contempt for new life. Only true love is able to protect life”⁴⁷

The Guidance bases sexuality education on reducing the consequences of risky behaviour (risk reduction programme). However, risk reduction programmes are aimed at people at risk (such as women in prostitution), but not school-based programmes. The logic of health education and pedagogical prevention requires the integration of risk-avoidance-based content into the general curriculum of schools.

Conclusions

An evaluation of the comprehensive sexuality education document in the light of Christian anthropology reveals that the concept of sexuality_CSE does not correspond to any of the two purified dimensions of sexuality_CE: (1) *love as a goal of sexuality*; (2) *the indivisibility of love and procreation*. According to the results of the evaluation, it must be stated that the concept of sexuality_CSE is not based on a binary sex (male and female) system, sexuality is socially constructed and placed in the options category. CSE programme presents sexuality as a dangerous phenomenon for human health. In summary, the CSE concept of sexuality is fundamentally inconsistent with the concept of sexuality in Catholic education.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, Letter to families *Gratissimam Sane*, 1994, 22, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html

⁴⁷ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, 1995, sec. 105.

There is confusion in the terminology of sexuality education today. Two different processes: risk avoidance and risk reduction, are referred to by the same name: sexuality education. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify which sexuality education is being referred to in one or the other case. Based on the evaluation carried out in this work, two different concepts of sexuality can be described. The concept of integral, complete sexuality, which underpins risk avoidance programmes (in religion education), and the concept of disintegrated sexuality, which underpins risk reduction programmes, such as comprehensive sexuality education. Paradoxically, while the definition of sexuality at comprehensive sexuality education includes all possible aspects of a person's life, even religious beliefs, the content is dominated in it of partial sexuality.

References

- Cardinal Newman Society, *Policy standards on human sexuality in Catholic education*, December 2020, <https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/wp-content/uploads/Human-Sexuality-in-Catholic-Education-FINAL-LAYOUT-PUBLISHED-121720.pdf>
- Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Vatican City 1993, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM
- Congregation for Catholic Education, *Male and female He created them. Towards a path of dialogue on the question of gender theory in education*, Vatican City 2019, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20190202_maschio-e-femmina_en.pdf
- Council of Europe, *Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Questions and answers*, 2014, <https://edoc.coe.int/en/lgbt/7031-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-questions-and-answers.html>
- John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html
- May W. E., *Sex, marriage and chastity*, Chicago 1981, Franciscan Herald Press.
- McCallum D., *Christianity: The faith that makes sense*, 1992, Tyndale House Publishers.
- Maceina A., *Kultūros filosofijos įvadas*, “Raštai”, Tomas I, Vilnius 1991, Mintis.
- Mifsud R., Sammut G., *Worldviews and the role of social values that underlie them*, “PLoS One” 18 (2023) no. 7, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0288451>
- Obelenienė B., *The anthropological dimensions of the preparation of youth for marriage and family*, in: *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools. Volume II: Learning and leading in a pluralist world*, 2019, Springer Nature, pp. 405–416.

- Obelenienė B., *Raktiniai žodžiai pagarbaus santykio tarp vyro ir moters atkūrimo link*, “Logos” 101 (2019), pp. 192–198, <https://doi.org/10.24101/logos.2019.86>.
- Obelenienė B., *From birth control to self-awareness and free decision making. A model for the evaluation of comprehensive sexuality education from the perspective of women's health and free informed choice*, Kraków 2022, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow.
- Obelenienė B., Narbekovas A., *Human dignity as a universal moral dimension of the preparation of youth for marriage and family life*. In: J. Stala & J. Garmaz (eds.), *Strengthening families*, Kraków 2016, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow Press, pp. 97–108.
- Obelenienė B., Narbekovas A., *Evaluation of the concept of sexuality in the “Life Skills General program” from the perspective of catholic church teaching*, “Soter” 2023, No. 87 (115), pp. 37–54, <https://doi.org/10.7220/2335-8785>
- Oriel J., *Sexual pleasure as a human right: Harmful or helpful to women in the context of HIV/AIDS?*, “Women's Studies International Forum” 28 (2005), pp. 392–404, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2005.05.002>.
- John Paul II, Letter to families *Gratissimam Sane*, 1994, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii LET_02021994_families.html.
- John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html
- Francis, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Lætitia*, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf.
- Pontifical Council for the Family, *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, 1995, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html
- Pukelis K., *Mokytojų rengimas ir filosofinės studijos*, Kaunas 1998, Versmė.
- Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational guidance in human love. Outlines for sex education*, 1983, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19831101_sexual-education_en.html.
- UNESCO, *International technical guidance on sexuality education*, 2018, <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf>
- UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*, 2015, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>.
- WHO, *Defining sexual health*, 2006, <https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research/key-areas-of-work/sexual-health/defining-sexual-health>
- WHO, *Sexual health, human rights and the law*, 2015, https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/175556/9789241564984_eng.pdf;jsessionid=ac430bcf31a98b32799ad5810f74fc86?sequence=1P
- Wojtyła K., *Love and Responsibility*, San Francisco 1993, Ignatius press.