



## Sexuality Education in Thailand and Germany in Comparison: An Analysis of Guidelines and Textbooks for the 6th Grade

Thanchanok Ratchatapreuk<sup>1</sup>, Felix Pülm<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of German, Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, Thailand  
<sup>1</sup>E-mail: pear.ruch@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>E-mail: f.puelm@gmail.com.

### Abstract

Sexuality education is of enormous social importance. While a lack of knowledge or a misunderstanding of sexuality can lead to several problems such as the transmission of STDs, unwanted pregnancies and sexual violence, a comprehensive sexuality education enables people to make better and responsible sexual decisions, and contributes to build tolerant and respectful societies. This research examines sexuality education in Thailand and Germany for grade six. On the base of recent UNESCO guidelines, which serve as an international reference framework, exemplary curricula and textbooks from both countries were examined. The topics and content from the two countries were discussed referring to the eight key concepts of the UNESCO guidelines. In addition, tasks and activities from the textbooks were also examined in order to analyse the teaching methods. The results of the research show that the Thai curriculum and textbook partly deviate from the UNESCO guidelines, leave out aspects, teach topics in a different age group or add issues that are not mentioned by UNESCO. In addition, they include moral values and show a tendency to highlight the dangers of sex or even taboo sexual intercourse at all. On the other hand, the German curriculum and textbook are more closely in line with the UNESCO guidelines. Instead of emphasizing the dangers of sex or forbidding students to have sex at all, the curriculum and textbook attempt to enable students to make responsible sexual decisions and actions.

**Keywords:** sexuality education, Thailand, Germany, textbooks, curriculum

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of German, Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, E-mail: pear.ruch@gmail.com.

<sup>2</sup> Department of German, Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, E-mail: f.puelm@gmail.com.



## 1. Introduction

Sexuality is a basic need of humans and plays a crucial part of individual personality and identity development. Understanding sexuality not only includes receiving information about sex and reproduction as many people may assume, but also to realize sexuality in its physical, psychological, biological, and social dimensions (Sielert 2007). While a lack of knowledge or a misunderstanding of sexuality can lead to several problems such as the transmission of HIV and other sexual transmitted diseases (STDs), unwanted pregnancies and sexual violence, a comprehensive knowledge and good relationship to one's own sexuality can carry positive effects on individuals and entire societies. For this reason, sexuality education is of particular societal importance. A comprehensive understanding of sexuality enables people to enjoy happy, healthy and fulfilling relationships, and contributes to build tolerant societies, respecting various forms of sexuality and relationships (Winkelmann 2011: 36).

When it comes to implementing comprehensive sexuality education, schools play a crucial role. They possess excellent conditions for teaching sex education since school authorities can regulate many aspects of the learning environment to make it supportive and protective and can reach large numbers of young people from diverse backgrounds (UNESCO 2018: 19). Furthermore, research has shown that sexuality education in schools could achieve a large positive outcome, when delivered comprehensively and didactically. It empowers adolescents to protect themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally and helps learners to have more responsible sexual behaviours (Kivela, et al 2014, Haberland and Rogow 2015: 518-519, Andres et al. 2021: 3). Therefore, good quality and comprehensive sexuality education should become part of national education systems with sustainable support (UNESCO 2014: 12).

However, sexuality-related problems persist in many countries, both in developed and developing countries. This work compares two countries that differ not only in terms of culture and economic development, but also when it comes to sex education and the problems related to sexuality. Thailand on the one hand, faces high numbers of teenage moms, the transmission of STDs (Thampanichawat and Olanratmanee 2018: 84) and alarmingly high incidents of sexual violence (WHO Kobe Centre 2007). Germany on the other hand, has lower numbers of teenage moms due to its improved sexuality education, but unwanted pregnancy and infections with STDs still remain a problem, especially among young people with less education (Kretschmer 2020: 3). Therefore, it arouses curiosity how sexuality education is presented in both countries.

The aim of this work is to analyse sexuality education in Thailand and Germany with an emphasis on 6th grade curricula and textbooks. The focus is on the following questions:

1. Sex education in curriculum: What are the topics and goals of the curricula for sexuality education in state schools in Thailand and Germany?
2. Sex education in textbooks: How do the textbooks present the topic in Thailand and Germany? What are the similarities and differences? What do they focus on?
3. Tasks and activities: How do the textbooks convey the respective topics to the students? Which tasks and activities are applied?

When it comes to analysing how sexuality education is taught in schools, there are two important factors: teachers who play a central role as mediators, guards and gatekeepers of information (Haas, Hutter 2019, Hackbart, Thies 2020) and textbooks. Correct information and motivating teaching methods can create fruitful preconditions for the empowerment of adolescents in making healthy decisions and avoiding risky sexual behaviour (Obelenienė, Narbekovas 2017: 198-199). To date, several studies from different countries have been carried out on this topic. Alves and Carvalho (2007) analysed Portuguese primary school textbooks, and discovered that the representation of

sex education often was imprecise, incorrect and superficial. A study by De Irala, Gómara, and Ignacio (2008), on Spanish secondary textbooks, received similar results. Especially topics with regard to transmitting and treatment of STDs, contraceptive methods and pregnancy termination were not presented appropriate nor comprehensive. A recent study by Obelenienė and Narbekovas (2017) examined Lithuanian textbooks of biology for 12– 17 years old students, and detected that they did not comply with the national guidelines on sexual education and contained inaccurate information.

In the further course of this work, it will be revealed whether similar problems can be found in the curricula and textbooks from Thailand and Germany as well.

## 2. Research Methodology

The data of this research originate from two sources: national curricula and textbooks for 6th grade from Thailand and Germany. While the guidelines provide information about the official sexuality education requirements in both countries, the textbooks illustrate how these obligations are put into practice (Obelenienė, Narbekovas 2017: 198-199). Hereby, the curricula and textbooks are chosen as an example. These examples are analysed in order to receive general information about sexuality education for 6th grade students in both countries.

Furthermore, the national curricula and textbooks will be compared with recent international guidelines of UNESCO (2018). These guidelines serve as a reference framework for comparing the data from the two countries.

Under the condition of different education systems, Thailand has only one basic education core curriculum for state schools to apply for the whole country with the recent version of 2008 (UNICEF Thailand 2016). Meanwhile, due to its federal administration system, Germany has different basic education core curriculums in each state. For this reason, this work has selected only one German state to compare with Thailand. The chosen state is Bavaria, Germany's second most populous and largest state with a recently updated sexuality education curriculum (Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Culture, Science and Art 2017).

The focus on 6th grade has been selected in considerations of the students' age range between eleven to twelve years. This early stage of puberty is really important since it is the onset of fundamental physical and mental changes. Since adolescents become more interested in sexuality and their sexual orientation starts to crystallize during this age, it is important for young people to be informed and educated about sexuality at an early age so that they are prepared for the beginning of puberty, including its consequences and developments (Winkelmann 2011: 36).

The selected data for this work can be found in the following table:

Table 1: Analysed guidelines

Categories / Publisher	UNESCO	Thailand	Germany
Title	International technical guidance on sexuality education	Indicator and learning area of health and physical education according to the basic education core curriculum	Guidelines for the family and sexuality education in Bavarian schools

<b>Publisher</b>	UNESCO	Office of the Basic Education Commission	Bavarian Ministry of State for Education and culture, Science and Art
<b>Publishing year</b>	2018	2008	2017
<b>Number of pages</b>	139	22	19

The *International technical guidance on sexuality education* of UNESCO is based on human rights and recent academic evidences. It was created to promote structured learning about sex and relationships and to support authorities and stakeholders designing comprehensive sexuality curricula and learning material (UNESCO 2018: 3, 12). The guidance is based on an earlier version from 2009 and had been adapted to current social developments, like increasing awareness for gender-related topics, and the growing importance of the internet. In this way, the guidelines should be aligned with the actual life realities and requirements of the young learners. These guidelines are primarily non-binding technical instructions that could be adapted to the different cultural and social contexts of each country (UNESCO 2018, 12-14).

The most recent version of the Thai curriculum dates back to 2008. However, new regulations of the Ministry of Education on gender equality and prevention of unwanted pregnancy were also supplemented. The Bavarian curriculum is based on an earlier version from 2002 and was revised in terms of content. It had been criticised for including negative attitudes towards abortion, reservations about homosexuality and a strong focus on traditional family roles. The updated text contains, in contrast to the previous version, a comprehensive understanding of sexuality, emphasizes the importance of gender diversity, and gives large importance to prevention of sexual violence (Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Culture, Science and Art 2017: 9-21).

In addition to the curricula, textbooks are analysed in this work as well. The following table shows information on the selected books.

Table 2: Analysed textbooks

<b>Core information / Countries</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Germany</b>
<b>Title</b>	Health and Physical Education	Fachwerk Biologie
<b>Publisher</b>	Por Wor	Cornelsen
<b>Publishing year</b>	2021	2018
<b>Pages related to sexuality education</b>	26	22
<b>Subject</b>	Health and physical education	Biology
<b>Grade</b>	6	6



In Thailand, sex education is mainly taught in health and sports subjects, which is why a book from this field was selected. In Germany on the other hand, it depends on the type of school and the corresponding grades. The German curriculum does not specify in which subject sex education is taught. Sexuality education is featured in subjects such as biology, social studies, politics or economics. For this work we decided for a biology textbook since it deals with human sexuality in the most detailed and comprehensive manner.

In addition, both in Thailand and in Germany there are many different textbooks for teaching sex education. In Germany teachers can also individually choose the textbooks, since there is a freedom of choice when it comes to teaching material. Furthermore, teachers often use supplementary learning material as well. Nevertheless, the selected textbooks are among the most current and widely used books in both countries, and based on the current guidelines.

Since the Thai Ministry of Education in 2019 announced new regulations, many publishers have decided not to print revised versions of their books, but rather add additional content from the Ministry of Education's official website. The selected publisher Por Wor also emphasizes that the latest requirements of the Ministry of Education are taken into account in its textbook.

The method design of this work consists of two elements. First, the data from Thailand and Germany are examined in a descriptive qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000). Hereby, the guidelines and textbooks from these two countries are compared with one another and analysed on the basis of the current UNESCO guidelines and the eight key concepts contained therein. In this way, the similarities and differences presented in the guidelines and textbooks, as well as their focal points and blind spots can be identified. At the same time, the comparison with the international guidelines of UNESCO allows conclusions to be drawn about the completeness and quality of the books and curricula.

In a second step, this research focusses on the assignments and classroom activities that are featured in the textbooks. When teaching sexuality education, didactic methods are just as important as the content. Learners must be given the opportunity to participate actively through questions, discussions and reflections, based on their own experiences (Kretschmer 2020: 6-7). Comprehensive sexuality education goes beyond the mere imparting of knowledge and rather focuses on the formation and skills strengthening such as critical thinking, communication, negotiation, self-reflection, decision-making and problem solving. Learners should be encouraged to represent, reflect and communicate their own point of view regarding sexuality related topics (Winkelmann 2011: 36).

For this purpose, all tasks and teaching activities of the textbooks concerning sexuality education were collected and classified into the following three categories: imparting knowledge, consolidating attitudes and developing skills. This classification is based on the three learning objectives of the UNESCO guidelines: knowledge, attitudinal, and skill-based (2018: 35), and also backed by research findings. Accordingly, comprehensive sex education should be explicitly adapted to the realities of learners' life and encourage them to form their own sexual identity and empower them to make responsible and good decisions (Sielert 2011: 29).

### 3. Results: Sexuality Education in Thailand and Germany

In this chapter, the results from the analysis of Thai and German curricula and textbooks are presented. The UNESCO guidelines serve as an international standard and framework for comparison.

#### 3.1 Curricula on Sexuality Education

The UNESCO guidelines provide a set of key concepts, topics and learning objectives intended to help developing local curricula and learning material for sexuality education. The guidelines categorize the topics into eight key concepts. These concepts are further subdivided thematically. In each concept learning objectives are divided into four age groups intended for primary and secondary school level learners. Same as UNESCO, Germany and Thailand also separate learning objectives to suit with each school year level. Nevertheless, all three sources have slightly different details of grouping: UNESCO separates by age group, Thailand specifies on each grade, Germany gathers grade 5-6 together. Since this paper focuses on sex education in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the intended content for this age group is analysed in particular.

Table 3: Comparison of curricula

UNESCO Key Concepts / Countries	Thailand	Germany
1. Relationships	/ Emphasizes group work and social cooperation	/ Emphasizes the classification of relationships; Highlights importance of positive self-images
2. Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality	x (Taught in a lower grade)	/ Emphasizes the connection between personal behaviour and society; Highlights importance of self-confident decision making
3. Understanding Gender	x (Taught in a higher grade)	/ Mentions sexual violence only; Gender roles are taught in higher grade
4. Violence and Staying Safe	x (Taught in a higher grade)	/ Describes social backgrounds of sexual violence and problem-solving strategies
5. Skills for Health and Well-being	/ Lays emphasis on risky behaviour and refusal skills	/ Highlights influence of media; Stresses possible dangers and problem-solving strategies



6. The Human Body and Development	/ Focuses on puberty, hygiene and reproductive system	/ Focusses on self-image, puberty, hygiene and reproductive system
7. Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour	x	/ Highlights the importance of responsible behaviour and decision making
8. Sexual and Reproductive Health	/ Focusses on risk behaviour (having sex, getting infected with HIV, becoming unintended pregnant)	/ Offers basic information about pregnancy, diseases, and avoiding strategies

The curricula from Thailand and Germany generally follow the UNESCO recommendations and requirements. However, the curricula also partially deviate from the guidelines, set their own priorities, skip topics or teach them in different age groups.

The Thai curriculum mainly contains of general guidelines and basic information. In terms of content, it serves mostly brief explanations and features only few details. The curriculum focuses on topics such as characteristics for good relationships, social cooperation, the reproductive system, as well as unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. The topic of social cooperation is not part of the UNESCO guidelines and was supplemented by the Thai curriculum.

However, there are some aspects and sub-points of the UNESCO guidelines that are not mentioned by the Thai curriculum or that are intended for another age group. For example, the topics of key concept 7 are not considered in the Thai curriculum at all. According to UNESCO guidelines, this involves the topic of attraction to others, fantasies and stimulation as well as responsible sexual behaviour. It is an important aspect that allows students to develop a positive attitude towards sex and supports them in making responsible actions and decisions. In addition, the key concept 3, which deals with the social construction of gender, gender norms, gender inequality and gender-based violence, is also not integrated in the Grade 6 guidelines, and is meant to be taught later. In the 7th grade, gender diversity is dealt with, while in the eighth grade, students learn the role of families, friends, culture, and the media in relation to gender issues. However, the emergence of gender norms and gender inequality in society are not explicitly discussed here too. In addition, the curriculum uses the term “deviant sexual behaviour” (Office of the Basic Education Commission 2008: 15) instead of “gender diversity”, which indicates a negative attitude towards this topic. Furthermore, contrary to the UNESCO guidelines, the topic sexual violence is not taught until the 9th grade and is described in connection with risky behaviour like the usage of the internet, drug and alcohol abuse.

In general, the Thai curriculum tends to have a conservative tone and also partially reveals a negative attitude towards sex. This is particularly evident with the topics of gender identity and gender roles as well as with definitions and terms (deviating sexual behaviour). In addition, the guidelines prefer to warn of the dangers of risky sexual behaviour rather than preparing students for a positive understanding of sex and encouraging them to act responsibly.

The German curriculum, on the other hand, is mostly in line with the requirements of UNESCO and precisely implements its learning objectives both theoretical and practical. The guidelines



strive to lay the foundations for comprehensive and student-oriented teaching. The focus is primarily on topics such as physical development, healthy relationships and ways to encourage students to have a positive self-image of their own body and sexuality and to make responsible sexual decisions. Another key point is sexual violence, its political and social background, including strategies to cope with the problems. The guideline is intended to offer students concrete assistance and encourage schools to cooperate closely with parents and other stakeholders in order to solve the problem in a sustainable manner. In addition, the German guidelines repeatedly emphasize that sex education should be as objective as possible without influencing or degrading the learners and that individual basic rights, feelings and needs should also be considered (Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Culture, Science and Art 2017: 2, 4).

Nevertheless, the German curriculum also deviates from the UNESCO guidelines partially. While the problem of gender-based violence is discussed in grade 6, the social construction of gender and gender equality is not taught until the 7th grade. Furthermore, when depicting key concept 7, the guidelines focus almost exclusively on media influence.

Overall, however, the German curriculum appears to be significantly more neutral and detailed than the Thai one. The guidelines are based very precisely on the UNESCO requirements and take its topics and objectives into account.

### 3.2 Selected Textbooks on Sexuality Education

Table 4: Comparison of textbooks

UNESCO Key Concepts / Countries	Thailand	Germany
1. Relationships	/ Describes general characteristics of good relationships; Highlights the importance of social cooperation; Features traditional Thai norms and values	/ Differentiates different types of love; Mentions roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers during children's puberty
2. Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality	x (Taught in a lower grade)	/ Emphasizes the importance of self-confidence and strong personalities
3. Understanding Gender	x Gender norms, diversity, and inequalities are taught in higher grades	x Gender norms, diversity, and inequalities are taught in higher grades
4. Violence and Staying Safe	/ Highlights the importance of consensual sexual intercourse; Presents sexual violence as a main factor for unintended pregnancies	/ Highlights the importance of consensual sexual intercourse; Offers accurate data about sexual violence



5. Skills for Health and Well-being	/ Emphasizes responsible decision-making and rejection of unwanted sexual attention; Mentions offers of help; Includes advice to abstain from sex	/ Emphasizes responsible decision-making and rejection of unwanted sexual attention; Mentions offers of help with contact details for emergency situations
6. The Human Body and Development	/ Presents general information about physical and emotional changes, reproduction, and hygiene; Includes advice to abstain from sex	/ Presents detailed information about physical and emotional changes, reproduction, and hygiene
7. Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour	/ Indicates good moral behaviour	/ Emphasizes the important personal and social functions of sexual intercourse
8. Sexual and Reproductive Health	/ Emphasizes sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and unwanted pregnancies including causes, effects, risks, prevention and treatments	/ Focuses on pregnancy, contraception and different methods of contraception

As can be seen from the table, the textbooks largely deal with the topics of sexuality education prescribed by UNESCO. Both books also show similarities in their structure. They introduce with the description of the physical development at the beginning of puberty and then ramify to other topics. However, they differ from one another in terms of the content and focus.

Overall, the Thai textbook is much more detailed and closely aligned with UNESCO guidelines than its own curriculum. In this way, it provides students with comprehensive sex education that includes the biological and social dimensions of sexuality and also encourages learners to be more confident and make responsible decisions. The Thai textbook focuses on topics such as good relationships, physical development and sexually transmitted diseases. Specific scientific information is included and a positive attitude towards infected people is mentioned, which is also recommended by UNESCO.

However, there are also aspects that are not presented or only described superficially. Neither key concept 2 nor the topics gender norms and gender inequalities are mentioned in the textbook. The topics of contraception or the safe use of social media are not presented in detail. In addition, there are also topics that are not part of the UNESCO guidelines and have been supplemented by the Thai book. The textbook describes the aspect of social cooperation in great detail and also mentions traditional Thai social norms (showing respect and obedience to parents and elders).

In addition, as has already been found in the Thai curriculum, a conservative tone and a negative attitude towards sex are partly evident in the textbook as well. This is reflected in the repeated advice that school age students should not have sex and in the emphasis on risk behaviour as a reason for pregnancy and STDs.

The analysed German textbook follows the UNESCO recommendations and the specifications of its national curriculum in many aspects. Like the curriculum, the textbook places great emphasis on the issues of physical development, the reproductive system, and encouraging learners to make responsible decisions about sexuality. Furthermore, the book normalizes human sexual behaviour, explains appropriate contraceptives, strengthens positive attitudes towards sexuality and repeatedly reminds students of the importance of consent in relationships and sexual contacts. In addition, detailed contact addresses are given, to which students can turn in case of having any questions or problems.

However, there are also aspects that are not mentioned. Gender roles and gender diversity are taught at a different age level, just like sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, the textbook is intended for the school subject biology and consequently focuses on biological dimensions. In contrast to the German curriculum, aspects of the social dimension of sexuality are presented less extensively, as these topics are dealt with in other textbooks.

### 3.3 Didactics in the Textbooks: Assignments and Class Activities

After the national guidelines and textbooks have been examined with regard to their content, this chapter is devoted to the tasks of the textbooks. For this reason, all tasks and teaching activities were identified and classified into the following three categories: Imparting knowledge, consolidating attitudes, developing skills.

Table 5: Overview of the tasks in the textbooks

Type of Tasks	Thailand	Germany
<b>1. Imparting Knowledge</b>	4 (20%)	19 (20 %)
<b>2. Consolidating Attitudes</b>	8 (40%)	12 (31,57%)
<b>3. Developing Skills</b>	8 (40%)	7 (18,42%)

Both textbooks meet the requirements of UNESCO and include tasks from all three categories. However, there are differences in the quantitative distribution and the implementation in terms of content.

Knowledge transfer tasks take up comparatively little space in Thai textbooks. Only four of the twenty tasks (20%) can be classified to this category. Besides an exercise to consolidate vocabulary and a knowledge quiz, group work is required in which the students should discuss the importance of the reproductive system. In contrast, this type of task has a high priority in the German textbook. 19 out of 38 tasks (50%) belong to this category. The German book wants to ensure that the students can understand the given information. One example can be seen in a task in which the learners have to describe sexual organs in detail.

The tasks to consolidate attitudes are distributed almost equally in the two books. However, proportionally there are more tasks in this category in the Thai (40%) than in the German textbook (31.57%). The Thai textbook contains several tasks in which the students are asked to describe their feelings and discuss ideal personal characteristics and attitudes. This includes aspects such as sexual behaviour, one's own body or the development of relationships with others. In some cases, however, these tasks also include normative moral values and social norms. For example, when students are asked to discuss sexually transmitted disease prevention, one of the possible answers that emerges from the context of the book is that it would be rather the best not to have sex at all.



The German textbook, on the other hand, often encourages students to explain why certain principles and ways of thinking are important to them and other people. For example, students have to demonstrate the relationship between human sexuality and personal responsibility or discuss why pregnancy at the age of 14 can be problematic. The divergent methods of conveying attitudes indicate a significant difference between the books of the two countries. The Thai textbook tends to give priority to the prohibition or tabooing of sex, while Germany focuses on prevention. In this way, the German book may more closely follow UNESCO guidelines as they state that sexuality education should be neutral, create a positive attitude, and enable students to develop a strong self-esteem in order to make responsible sexual decisions.

The last category, practical skills that should enable students to apply knowledge and attitudes in their own lives, has a high priority in the Thai textbook. 8 out of 20 (40%) tasks can be classified to this type. However, many of these assignments are individual tasks in which the learners have to deal with abstract situations, that are often based on traditional social norms. An exception are some group tasks that deal with concrete situations. For example, the book suggests a group activity in which students research news from the media about problems related to unprotected sexual intercourse. Later they discuss the problems and debate about possible solutions and finally present their ideas and solutions to the class.

On the other hand, there are significantly fewer tasks of this type in the German textbook. Only 7 out of 38 tasks (18.42%) can be assigned to this category. The book focuses on specific examples and individual problems, for which the students should develop their own solutions. In a fictive situation, a 12-year-old schoolgirl worries because her sexual organs (breasts) are not yet as developed as those of other girls. The book asks students to analyse a table with a timeline on the physical change during puberty. This information enables the students to recognize that the breasts develop fully at a later age and that the student does not have to worry. Elsewhere, the German textbook asks the students to exemplify why pads or tampons need to be changed several times a day during female period. In this way, learners practice to use their knowledge about sexuality in a meaningful way.

Besides the quantitative difference that the Thai textbook contains significantly more tasks of this category than the German, there is also a difference in content. Thai assignments often want the students to deal with abstract situations that are based on social norms. German tasks, on the other hand, are more specific, relate more frequently to real life situations and are based on rational and scientific knowledge.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The aim of this work was to analyse sexuality education in Thailand and Germany. On the basis of current UNESCO guidelines, which served as an international reference framework, exemplary curricula and textbooks from both countries were examined. The results of the research show that the curricula and textbooks generally follow and apply the UNESCO guidelines. Nevertheless, differences between the two countries also became clear.

The Thai curriculum mainly contains of superficial, general instructions and partly deviates from the UNESCO requirements. It leaves out aspects and repeatedly teaches topics in a different age group than recommended by UNESCO. The Thai textbook is more detailed and closely aligned with UNESCO guidelines than its own curriculum. Furthermore, when it comes to tasks and activities the Thai textbook includes all three types and lays emphasis on consolidating attitudes and skill developing. Nevertheless, both the Thai curriculum and the textbook include traditional



Thai moral values and also partially reveal a negative attitude towards sex. They emphasize the negative consequences of sex and concentrate on risky behaviour. Furthermore, they repeatedly suggest that it is better for students not to have sex at all. In this way, instead of preparing students for a positive understanding of sex and encouraging them to act responsibly, they warn of the dangers of sex.

On the other hand, the German curriculum and textbook are more consistent with the UNESCO guidelines. They normalize human sexual behaviour and strengthen positive attitudes towards sexuality. Instead of emphasizing the dangers of sex or forbidding students to have sex at all, the curriculum and textbook aim to enable students to make responsible sexual decisions and actions. In addition, the textbook includes detailed information that could serve students in real life situations, like appropriate contraceptives or detailed contact addresses for help and support. In terms of tasks and teaching activities, the German textbook shows a very strong focus on imparting knowledge, while a little less attention is paid to deepening practical skills.

When thinking about driving factors for the differences in sexuality education in both countries, cultural aspects may come into mind first. Today's Thai society is still shaped by a deeply rooted conservative mindset that promotes strict hierarchies and enables patriarchal structures and whose foundations are strongly shaped by Buddhism, as an ethical and moral basis. These values are widespread, especially among an older generation that is in a socially hegemonic position and thus has a great influence on discourses, political decisions, and education. In public space, sex is mostly taboo or reduced to its risks and dangers. Instead of normalizing and comprehensively explaining sexuality, it is presented in silence or in a negative way. As we have seen, Thai sex education is also largely shaped by these principles. Traditional gender roles, reservations about homosexuality and a tendency to make sexuality a taboo are part of Thai curricula and textbooks and lead Thailand lagging behind both UNESCO guidelines and the German curricula and textbooks.

Although German society nowadays can be described as more secular and progressive, normative conservative values and Christian principles still play a big role. Christian values are formative, especially in Bavaria, which is predominantly Catholic. As a result, sex education in Bavaria has historically been shaped by Christian values, as reflected in the 2002 curriculum, which encompassed with negative attitudes towards abortion, reservations about homosexuality, and a focus on traditional family roles. The revised curriculum from 2017 no longer includes these controversial aspects and is largely in line with the UNESCO guidelines, as the analysis of this work has shown. Several factors might be responsible for this improvement in sex education. These include, for example, the initiatives of feminist and LGBTIQ+ activists, the work of political and civil society groups, the increased influence of social media and a generation change in political and social decision-makers.

Driven by debates in social media and public protests, there has also been an intensified discussion on topics such as sexuality, violence, sexism, gender equality and gender diversity in Thailand in recent years. In the long run, these debates could create an impact on sex education and societal attitudes towards sexuality in general. Consequently, the differences in sex education between Thailand and Germany found in this work are not necessarily based on fundamental cultural differences between the two countries, but rather are the results of different speeds and starting conditions. In the long term, Thailand could possibly follow the path of Germany and thus align its sex education even more closely to the ideas and principles of UNESCO.

This research focused on just one textbook from Thailand and Germany. In order to consolidate and deepen the results of this work, it would be interesting to examine more textbooks from both countries. In addition, it could provide further insights to include other countries from ASEAN and



EU as well. In this way, comparable and international insights could be gained, which in turn could help to improve sexuality education in both regions in the future.

## 5. References

- Alves, Gilda and Graça. S. Carvalho (2007), Reproduction and Sex Education in Portuguese Primary School textbooks: a poor contribution to scientific learning. *International meeting on critical analysis of school science textbooks*. <http://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt/handle/1822/6415>.
- Andres, Ellie Bostwick et al. (2021), Comprehensive sexuality education in Hong Kong: study protocol for process and outcome evaluation. *BMC Public Health* (2021) 21:197. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10253-6>.
- Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Bildung und Kultus, Wissenschaft und Kunst (2017), Richtlinien für die Familien- und Sexualerziehung in den bayerischen Schulen. [Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Culture, Science and Art. Guidelines for family and sex education in Bavarian schools]. München: Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Bildung und Kultus, Wissenschaft und Kunst.
- De Haas, Billie and Inge Hutter (2020), Teachers' professional identities in the context of school-based sexuality education in Uganda—a qualitative study. *Health Education Research* 35(6), 553-563. doi:10.1093/her/cyaa044.
- De Irala, Jokin, J, Gómara I, and López Del Burgo C. (2008), Analysis of content about sexuality and human reproduction in school textbooks in Spain. *Public Health* 122(10), 1093-1103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2008.01.005>.
- Hackbart, Marcel and Barbara Thies (2020), Die Bedeutung von Ausbildung, Erfahrung und Wissen in der Sexualerziehung für Lehrkräfte – eine Bestandsaufnahme. [The importance of education, experience and knowledge in sex education for teachers - An inventory]. *HLZ* 3(1), 225–235. <https://doi.org/10.4119/hlz-2523>.
- Hampl, Udo, Andreas Miehl, Matthias Niedermeier, et al (2018), Fachwerk Biologie 6. Realschule Bayern [Biology schoolbook Grade 6 Bavarian secondary school]. Berlin: Cornelsen.
- Hamberland, Nicole and Deborah Rogow (2015), Sexuality Education: Emerging Trends in Evidence and Practice. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 56, 15-21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.08.013>.
- Kivela, Jari, Kai Haldre, Kai Part, Evert Ketting and Rob Baltussen (2014), Impact and cost-effectiveness analysis of the national school-based sexuality education programme in Estonia. *Sex Education*, 14(1), 1-13. DOI: 10.1080/14681811.2013.813386.
- Kretschmer, Vivien (2020), Sexuaufklärung an Schulen im 21. Jahrhundert [Sex Education in Schools in the 21st Century], in: D. Reifegerste, & C. Sammer (Ed.), *Gesundheitskommunikation und Geschichte: interdisziplinäre Perspektiven* Stuttgart: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft e.V., 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.21241/ssoar.7180>.





- Ma-oon, Renumas and Khemruethai Wannarosapark (2021): Health and Physical Education Grade 6. Bangkok: Por Wor.
- Mayring, Philipp (2000), Qualitative Content Analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 1(2) Art. 20.
- Obelenienė, Birutė and Narbekovas Andrius (2017), Evaluation of content about human sexuality and procreation of school textbooks in Lithuania. *The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 197-205. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2017.01.02.20>.
- Office of the Basic Education Commission (2008), Indicator and Learning Area of Health and Physical Education according to the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008. Bangkok: Office of the Basic Education Commission.
- Sielert, Uwe (2007), Sexualerziehung und Sexualpädagogik in Deutschland [Sex education in Germany]. *Bundesgesundheitsblatt Gesundheitsforschung-Gesundheitsschutz*, 68-77.
- Thampanichawat, Wanlaya and Olanratmanee, Benjamat (2018), Sex Education for Adolescents in School: A Case Study in Bangkok. *Thai Journal of Nursing Council* 33(3), 82-98.
- UNESCO (2014), Comprehensive Sexuality Education. The Challenges and Opportunities of Scaling-up. France: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2018), International technical guidance on sexuality education. An evidence-informed approach. France: UNESCO.
- UNICEF Thailand (2016): Review of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Thailand. Bangkok: UNICEF Thailand Country Office.
- Winkelmann, Christine (2011), Standards for sexuality education in Europe. A new approach to sexuality education for the European Union. *Forum Sexuality Education and Family Planning* 2, 36-40.
- World Health Organisation Kobe Centre (2007), National Report on Violence and Health Thailand.