

## **Abstract**

# **Parliamentary Debates on Sex Education in England**

– Social Background and Policy for the Compulsory Sex Education System Established in 1994–

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The purpose of this paper is to outline the role and the aims of the compulsory sex education system established in 1994 in England. The paper examines the process and the content of the parliamentary debates on sex education from 1976 to 1993. These debates reveal the way in which the system was established and show the forces responsible for the process. The formation of this system is a part of the ongoing major educational reforms which have been carried out since the early 1980s.

Since the 1960s, sex education has been, on the one hand, considered as a part of religious education and, on the other hand has been developed from a liberal perspective and with feminism and gay liberation movement outcomes. Furthermore, since the 1980s, a new trend on sex education has been significant; sex education as social policy to struggle with ‘permissive society’ and HIV/AIDS. The current sex education system is the product of the combination of social needs for school sex education and power politics among these three standpoints.

The findings are summarized as follows;

1. The current system was designed not only to spread school sex education but also to control progressive sex education practice and problems which were thought to be derived from ‘permissive society’.
2. The compulsory sex education based on national standards was promoted mainly by politically conservative groups, and was opposed mainly by the moral Right.
3. The concrete system was developed through the negotiation between Government and the moral Right.
4. The key issue for negotiation was the right of parents to withdraw their children from classrooms which was the symbolic policy and idea to confront ‘permissive society’.
5. The ‘interplay’ between Government and the moral Right set start the new system of sex education which aimed both to deal with the ‘consequences of permissive society’ and to moderate or undermine the progressive education practice.

The content of the paper is as follows;

- I Introduction
- II The Aim and Methods of the Paper
- III The Outline of the Compulsory Sex Education System

#### IV The Parliamentary Debates

##### 1 The History and the Trend of the Debates

- (1) The History of the Parliamentary Debates
- (2) The Trend of the Parliamentary Debates

##### 2 The Opening of the Debates :

Debates on 14th January 1976 in the House of Lords

- (1) Needs for Sex Education
- (2) Criticism against FPA
- (3) Rightist tendency in Debates
- (4) Negative aspect towards Government Participation

##### 3 Directing to the Establishment of Sex Education System :

Debates in 1986 in the Houses of Lords and Commons

- (1) Criticism against Progressive Practice in Sex Education
- (2) Needs for the Establishment of System
- (3) Proposal for the Positive Role of Government

##### 4 Spread of AIDS and Sex Education as Social Policy:

Debates in 1989 in the House of Commons

##### 5 AIDS Education and the Right of Parents to withdraw their children :

Debates in 1992 in the House of Lords

##### 6 The Compromise between Government and the Moral Right:

Debates in 1993 in the House of Lords and House of Commons

- (1) House of Lords
  - ① The Pros and Cons on the Right of Parents to withdraw their children
  - ② The Compromise Amendment raised by Government
- (2) House of Commons

#### V Conclusion : The Role and the Aim of the Compulsory Sex Education System