



The Lived Experiences of Selected FET Adolescents on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

There has been alarming sexual health-related statistics that remain unchanged after comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) has been part of the curriculum in South African (SA) schools since the year 2000. The present study sought to examine adolescents' lived experience of comprehensive sexuality education in South Africa. In this qualitative descriptive study with a phenomenological lens of inquiry, 10 participants were purposively selected from all 5 school quintiles in the Western Cape. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and data was analysed with the help of ATLAS.ti. Based on participants' lived experience, the results indicate that approaches of CSE deliverers¹ as well as their delivery methods, disqualify sexuality education (SE) in SA schools from being regarded as comprehensive. Moreover, deliverers mostly teach from a top-down, one-sided approach where learners are excluded and social inequality is reinforced. In addition, the delivery methods focus mainly on prevention, encompassed with tactics that instil fear, disregard healthy sexuality and reinforce discriminative gender roles. The study recommends that a collaborative approach be considered towards the implementation of CSE that aligns not only with national and international benchmarks, but also with individual and contextual needs.

Keywords: Adolescents' Lived Experience, Adolescent Sexuality, Sexual Health, Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), Life Orientation (LO), Phenomenological Lens

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In contrast to traditional approaches to SE such as abstinence-only or 'abstinence+' (where contraception is included) (Ketting, Brockschmidt and Ivanova, 2020) SE that is comprehensive aims to develop learners' knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve positive sexuality and good sexual and reproductive health (UNESCO, 2018). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) strongly advocates for CSE to be implemented in schools globally due to the advantages it can

hold to prepare young people for a safe, productive, fulfilling life in a world. Especially because HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, gender-based violence and gender inequality still pose serious risks to the well-being of young people. The past decade has seen changes in attitudes in accordance with the technical guidance on sexuality education (ITGSE) released by UNESCO in 2009 where structured learning about sex and relationships focus on a discourse of healthy sexuality (UNESCO, 2018).

This guide, as well as a meta-analysis of characteristics of international SE

¹ Since adolescents' lived experience reflect upon the delivery of CSE from not only teachers, but other stakeholders as well (such as parents, nurses, peers) the term "deliverer", that is the person who delivers the content, or the source of information, was chosen.

programmes (DBE, 2019) were used as a basis against which to review the SA CSE curriculum. This process was initiated in 2011 by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with the aim to strengthen the programme. At that stage the programme has been part of the SA school curriculum within the subject of Life Orientation (LO) since 2000 and presented various challenges (Department of Basic Education, 2021). Despite these attempts, almost two decades later, the CSE programme in SA still struggles to significantly change alarming statistics related to the sexual health of SA youth (DBE, 2019).

Sub-Saharan Africa is known for high rates of HIV/AIDS in young people, child marriages, teenage pregnancies, abortion and violence against children (Sawahel, 2021). Adolescents (age 10–19) make up 23% of the sub-Sahara Africa population with more than 80% of HIV-infected adolescents living in the region. Out of the 899 303 babies born in SA in 2020, 34 587 were born to girls aged 17 and younger; 16 042 being aged 17, while 688 were as young as 9 and 10 years old (Bhengu, 2021; Statistics South Africa, 2021). Sexual health-related challenges could lead to a variety of socio-economic problems. Teenage pregnancy and motherhood, for example, create a greater risk in terms of maternal complications, resulting in low survival rates of babies and forcing many girls to leave school early and take on an adult role for which they are not emotionally or physically prepared (Statistics South Africa, 2021). UNESCO (2018) documents that if good quality CSE is not offered to alleviate these challenges, Sustainable Development Goals set for 2030 would not be achieved.

The most recent initiative from the DBE is the development of scripted lesson plans (SLPs), learner and teacher support materials paired with supporting activities that are designed to aid teachers and learners to address CSE topics in a systematic manner

and to improve uniformity and rigour in the delivery of the curriculum (DBE, 2019; Speizer, Mandal, Xiong, Hattori, Makina-Zimalirana, Kumalo, et.al 2018). Since 2021, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has initiated extensive efforts to offer workshops for teachers to successfully implement SLPs (Comprehensive Sexuality Education Teacher Training Workshop, 2021) and they plan to train 500 teachers per annum (Gericke, 2022). It is commendable that the DBE is continuously attempting to make substantive changes, but even though these attempts are impressive and well-grounded in research, the challenge remains as to whether and to what extent it is successfully implemented in practice.

1.1 Theoretical framework

An approach that challenges the abovementioned separation between theory and practice, is praxis (Stuart, 2020). Paulo Freire's theory about praxis thus formed the theoretical and philosophical framework that guided this research (Freire, 2000; Given, 2008). Freire (2000:51) defines praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it”. The combination of reflection and action is at the heart of praxis (Stuart, 2020), and this study reflects on the lived experience of adolescent participants to bring change in practice regarding the way CSE is presented in an attempt to meet the needs of adolescents more effectively.

1.2 Literature review

Previous research with evidence on how CSE holds advantages for its recipients and is widely documented: In 2016 an evidence review was conducted by Montgomery and Knerr (2016) based on results from 22 rigorous systematic reviews and 77 randomised controlled trials in a broad range of countries and contexts (half of which were in low- or middle-income countries). This review affirms that curriculum-based SE programmes

contribute to: delayed initiation of sexual intercourse, decreased frequency of sexual intercourse, decreased number of sexual partners, reduced risk taking, increased use of condoms and increased use of contraception. These results concur with more recent studies that indicate that school attendance and exposure to CSE are associated with a reduction in risky sexual behaviours (Eisenberg et al., 2022; George et al., 2022).

A systematic review by (Koch & Wehmeyer, 2021) aimed to determine how the CSE programme contributes to the sexual health of adolescents in SA. This review that included 22 studies found that: teachers are in need of expert training, learners are neither actively involved in the learning process nor the development of the programme as they need and would like to be and recommends that the inclusion of their voices and needs are fundamental to the development and delivery of CSE.

Considering the valuable impact CSE can have and that it has been part of the curriculum for such an extensive time, the reasons why the programme does not reach its aims must be investigated. As the ones who experience first-hand what happens in the CSE classroom and must deal with sexual health related challenges, the lived experience of adolescents could help to identify what is needed to develop the programme. Therefore, the aim of the study was firstly, to explore adolescents' lived experience regarding CSE with the objective to, secondly, understand what is necessary to make the CSE programme more relevant, and thirdly, to apply the findings for the purpose of contributing to the programme's development.

1.3 Research question of the study

The following research question was posed: *How can the lived experience of adolescents be utilised to contribute to the development of the current CSE programme?*

2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

To reach the aim and answer the research question, a qualitative descriptive research design was deemed appropriate. Qualitative research provides holistic, in-depth accounts and attempts to reflect and describe the complicated, contextual, interactive and interpretive nature of our social world (Salkind, 2010). It is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and is used to get insight into the life-worlds of the participants (Fouché, 2021).

The nature of this study called for an advocacy/participatory worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), since this worldview holds that research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants. The participants in this instance will reap the rewards of the research when the CSE programme is improved with their help, to better meet their needs. Advocacy research therefore provides a voice for vulnerable participants who are often excluded from research that is about them, raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives.

2.1 Research design

A phenomenological strategy of inquiry was used, since this study aimed to understand how the world appears to adolescents at whom CSE is directed. Phenomenology draws heavily on the writings of the German mathematician Edmund Husserl (Husserl, 1970) and those who expanded on his views, such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (Spiegelberg, 1982). The results of a study with a phenomenological lens are a general description of the phenomenon as seen through the eyes of people who have experienced it first-hand (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Specifically, Moustakas's (1994)

transcendental or psychological phenomenology was employed since the focus was less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of the participants. The focus is on their subjective experience (Biggam, 2011), the 'lived experience' (Given, 2008) or the 'lifeworld' (Schwandt, 2007) of the adolescent as the receiver of CSE. It is from the subjective experience of adolescents who receive CSE that information was gathered in order to make recommendations for the development of the programme.

2.2 Study participants

It was decided to include 10 participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fouché, 2021; Mouton, 2001), that is two participants (one who identifies as being male and one who identifies as being female), from each of the five school quintiles² in the Western Cape to make the sample representative of various contexts. They were chosen from the Further Education and Training (FET) phase

(Grade 10–12) since they are able to reflect retrospectively upon CSE that they received throughout their school career. Purposive sampling was thus used, a type of non-probability sampling where a particular case is chosen because it illustrates some feature that is of interest for a particular study (Strydom & Delport, 2005).

2.3 Data collection procedures

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the WCED gave approval and provided a list of schools from each quintile in the Western Cape. A school principal from each quintile was approached asking permission to do research at their respective school. After permission was granted, LO teachers at each school acted as gatekeepers who identified participants who might be willing to participate. Consent and assent forms were sent to potential participants and their parents/guardians. After consent and assent were given data was collected at schools by means of semi-structured individual interviews.

Table 1: Demographics of the study cohort

School	Race	Language	Gender	Grade
Quintile 1	Coloured	Afrikaans-speaking	Male	Grade 12
	Coloured	Afrikaans-speaking	Female	Grade 12
Quintile 2	Coloured	Afrikaans-speaking	Male	Grade 12
	Coloured	Afrikaans-speaking	Female	Grade 12
Quintile 3	Coloured	Afrikaans-speaking	Male	Grade 12
	Coloured	Afrikaans-speaking	Female	Grade 12
Quintile 4	Black	English-speaking	Male	Grade 10
	Black	English-speaking	Female	Grade 10
Quintile 5	White	Afrikaans-speaking	Male	Grade 12
	White	Afrikaans-speaking	Female	Grade 12

² In SA, all public schools are categorised into five groups, called quintiles, largely for purposes of the allocation of financial resources.

Schools in quintile 1, 2 and 3 have been declared no-fee schools, while schools in quintiles 4 and 5 are fee-paying schools (Grant, 2013; White & Van Dyk, 2019)

This data collection method is suggested for studies with aspects of a phenomenological approach, so that probing and follow-up questions can be used to explore the lifeworlds of participants in more depth. Table 1 above is a summary of the demographics of the study cohort.

2.4 Data analysis

The collected data was phenomenologically analysed as suggested by Moustakas (1994). Firstly, the data were self-transcribed and translated where necessary. Secondly, the researcher, together with an independent reviewer, read and re-read transcriptions and identified and compared significant statements. This was done to achieve interrater reliability that Marques and McCall (2005) suggest be used in studies with a phenomenological lens of inquiry. During this phase, also called “phenomenological reduction”, the researcher attempted to set aside all preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences from participants' point of view (Moustakas, 1994). An initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is noteworthy about them was generated. Thirdly, significant statements spoken by participants formed meaning units that advance the textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Meaning units were refined to form themes. Themes were named and defined by means of Schutte's dendrogram technique (Refer to Figure 2), a technique developed to take a researcher through a proper conceptualisation process to form an argument systematically (Schutte, 2006). Lastly, a cluster of fully worked-out themes were finalised followed by the write-up to capture and describe the essence of the participants' experience of CSE. Husserl's concept of bracketing or epoche was used throughout the process to steer clear of imposing any pre-set

explanations or ideas since the emphasis is on the lifeworld of the adolescent (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software that facilitates analysis of qualitative data for qualitative research, ATLAS.ti, was used throughout to build levels of analysis and see the relationship between the raw data and the broader themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.5 Ethical considerations

All ethical aspects of research, such as voluntary participation, informed consent and assent, the avoidance of harm, no deception, anonymity and confidentiality, no violation of privacy, and the debriefing of respondents after the completion of the project were regarded as essential (Babbie, 2010; Strydom, 2005; Yin, 2009). Interrater reliability (Marques & McCall, 2005) ensured by the cross-checking of significant statements by the two reviewers ultimately contributed to the elimination of researcher's bias and strengthening the findings of the study.

Figure 1 below represents an overarching summative visual representation of the research process that was followed.

3 PRESENTATION OF DATA

The results of this study derive from the essence of the lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018) of the participants with regard to CSE that is reflected in the two main clusters of themes as they emerged from the transcribed data: the deliverers and the delivery of CSE. Significant statements or quotes that provide an understanding of how the adolescents experience CSE, also called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994), are included verbatim. Figure 2 below is a visual summary of the meaning units and clustered themes.

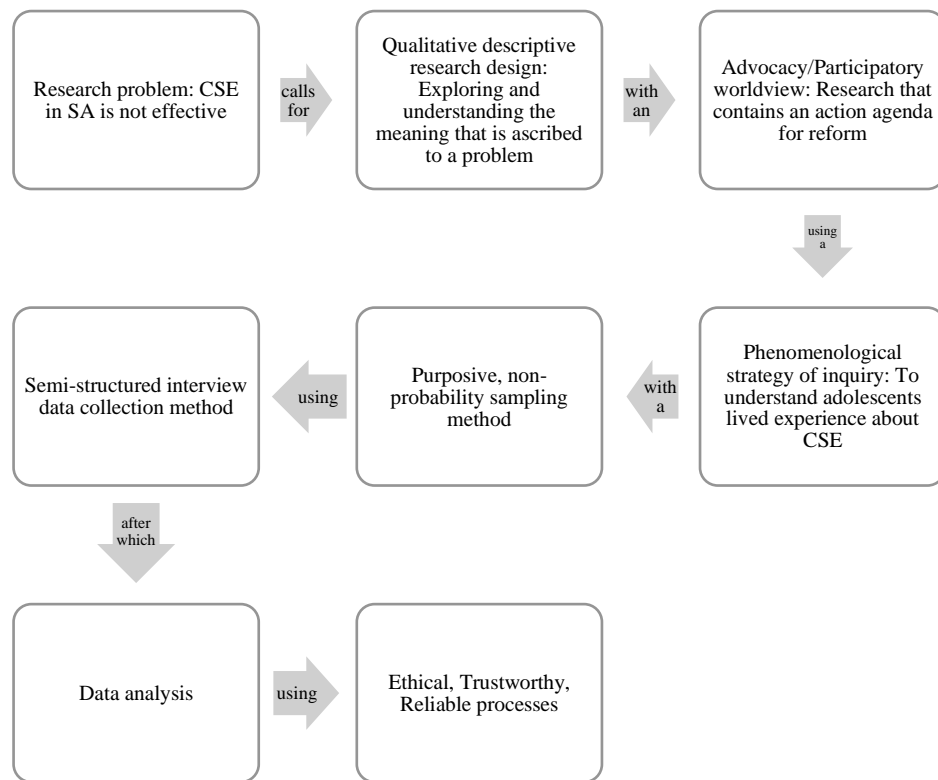


Figure 1: A flow diagram of the research process

3.1 Cluster 1: The deliverers of CSE

The lived experience of adolescent participants is reflected in the various deliverers who present SE to them, namely teachers, other adults in the educational setting, the adolescents themselves and their peers.

LO teacher

At the forefront of CSE delivery, is the LO teacher. Participants' lived experience included LO teachers' typical approaches to teaching and their perceived level of comfort when doing so. Even though some positives were mentioned, such as participants' appreciation for interactive learning and teachers' ability to understand and respond towards the complexities that accompany adolescent sexuality, the dominant themes were various approaches that teachers use.

An approach often identified by participants, was a more traditional one where the teacher dictates what happens in the classroom with the learners having very little to no say at all. Learning where the teacher governs what happens in the classroom with the exclusion of learners is mostly employed. Adolescent participants as passive onlookers reported the need to learn more skills to deal with their sexual health, as opposed to mere book knowledge.

P4G³: They just teach it as a subject, they don't actually get into, like, actually talk to the children. They are just teaching it like, okay, so you are going to write a test about this, so you need to learn this. It's not like a topic they can sit down with the children with, talk to the children with.

³ To protect the identity of participants, "P" is used instead of their names, and the sequential order of the interview and the gender the participant

identifies with. For example, "P4G" was the fourth participant who was interviewed and identified as a girl.

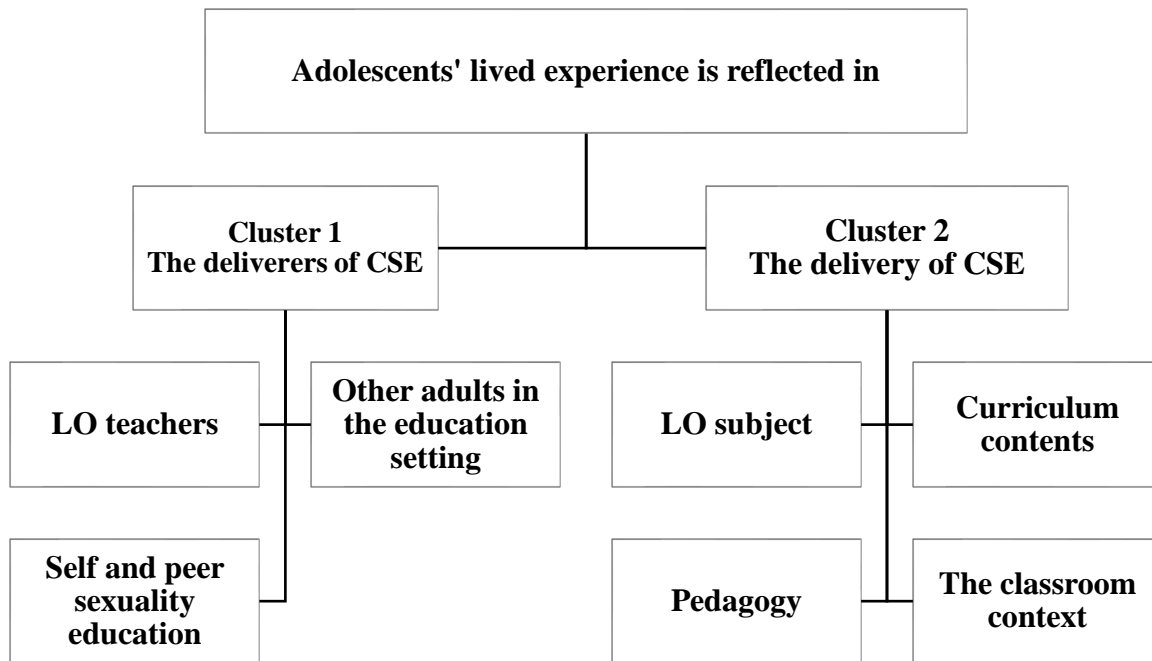


Figure 2. Clusters of meaning that emerged from transcribed data, developed by means of the dendrogram method (Schutte, 2006)

P6G: *Last year we had to copy the textbook, the whole textbook. Miss, it does not benefit the children to write everything down. They get nothing out of it, not even examples. Okay we are now reading about sex, sex is this, write consequences of how you see yourself in this position. It will not help you at the end of the day.*

Some teachers approach SE superficially in what participants describe as brief, shallow or once-off. Content is not discussed as deliberately or as in-depth as participants expressed a need for and some content is omitted in its entirety due to the teachers' discomfort with the topic.

P1B: *Maybe the problem is, we have 'the sex lesson' (he uses the air quote). About once or twice a year. I think sexuality is one of the areas where LO is completely behind. It's like a chapter or two in your textbook and they also move very quickly over it. It does not*

discuss the issue very deeply. Everything is addressed in a very superficial way. It's more like, okay yeah, uhm, this is sex, don't do it. Next topic.

P5B: *They do not talk to the children, they basically read what's going on in the book and then they will say okay we are now done with this, we move on.*

P9B: *Some people will not go deep enough, they will just stay at the surface, because how can I say, it's going to get personal if they go deeper.*

P1B: *I think it's something that is not done. It is thought, 'We need to educate them about sex,' uhm, here are the main bullets we feel comfortable discussing with the kids.*

Some teachers force their personal convictions onto learners and approach SE

in a one-sided manner. Discontent was voiced in instances where teachers disregarded or did not allow for diverse opinions around perceived contentious topics.

P2G: It also happened every now and then with the sexuality and sex stuff, always looking at the one perspective that also made me feel a little bit uncomfortable because I had, like, more of a broad perspective, and I'm like, am I wrong? I would just say also have more conversations about it and not always be one-sided about it.

Participants made a clear distinction in that it is not the curriculum content that is one-sided, but rather what and how the teacher decides to teach it.

P2G: I also read every now and again through the textbook before I write a test and then I will see that the textbook is much more open about it, so the textbook is not always one-sided.

Participants report on teaching from a moralistic point of view, where right, wrong and religion are commonly used as motivation or to convince learners to do what the teacher views as the proper way to deal with their sexuality where they are encouraged to abstain from sex. What is offered to participants is thus subjective and ruled by what the teacher deems appropriate.

P1B: There is this culture of talking around the problem because I think we are in a very religious community and here the sentiment is mostly you wait until you get married, with your member of the opposite sex, and that's the end of it. Uh, so I think to ... so if you end up offering a healthy in-depth sexuality

thing, it almost goes against the culture of this place.

Some teachers follow a prevention only approach where participants perceive the motivation behind SE as a cure for social ills related to HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies where the focus is on the harmful consequences of sex. Even though participants do in fact deem the teaching of prevention as important, they are asking for more depth.

P7B: She mostly focuses on communicable diseases and how to protect yourself from all that stuff and that you have to wait for the right time and the right person.

Other adults within the educational setting

Much of the SE that participants in this study received happened outside of the LO context and was delivered by adult deliverers from various outside institutions such as members of the community or organisations that visited the school for the purpose of educating learners sexually. Similar to teachers' approaches, the focus here too was mainly on the prevention of the harmful consequences of sex and was mostly delivered through a once-off visit to the school.

P10G: Yes, they came to school. I think it was the mobile clinic's nurses. Then they talked about contraception that learners may use, and to prevent pregnancy. And contraception is not always going to help, but condoms are also going to help prevent the infections. Even if you are on contraception, you should still use condoms.

Self- and peer SE

Participants claim the way they think and learn about sexuality is often not developed in the classroom, but rather through personal reflections or

conversations that happened outside of the classroom. Learners tend to discuss the more explicit details of sex with friends outside of the classroom context.

P2G: *We always have a lot of conversations about it after the time.*

P10G: *I also learn a lot from my girlfriends who are already sexually active.*

Children sometimes get information from peers which is based on myths, half-truths or false beliefs.

P10G: *They (her girlfriends) say if you have your period, and you sleep with a guy, it also changes something in the guy. They say it makes him obsessive over you. It makes him obsessive, and he will fall in love with you deeply, and something like that they said.*

A recurring dominant theme, for example, is a belief amongst girls that the use of contraception can make you infertile, thus discouraging its use.

P8G: *When they say there are contraceptives, I hate it, because in Natural Sciences we learned, we did more in biology last year, and then I found out those drugs actually damages the uterus. So... and when people tell children they can... okay, well they do it the right way... use protection and so on. But still, it's still wrong, because the uterus is damaged and at a later stage if you can do it with your married husband and if you want children then you may not be able to because of those drugs.*

3.2 Cluster 2: The delivery of CSE

Regarding the delivery of SE, participants mentioned the LO subject, the content that is covered, pedagogy and the classroom context.

The LO subject

Participants recommended that CSE should be separated from the LO subject due to its tarnished status that impacts on the effectiveness of CSE delivery.

P2G: *I think maybe if one can every now and again have like a course such as what we had in Grade 6, a course that learners can attend during their grade period or grade assembly because then one also listens more than in LO.*

P3B: *I think, instead of making the sex ed part of LO, it should be made its own subject.*

LO is viewed as a subject of less importance and therefore tends to be undermined by learners. The delivery of content is described as repetitive, which could cause boredom and learners 'switching off'.

P2G: *Many learners do not pay attention in LO lessons, it's where people sleep or do homework.*

P1B: *This is the 5th year in a row we're doing AIDS. LO is to a certain extent diminished by students; it's not taken seriously.*

Curriculum content

Participants distinguished between what is included and what is excluded from the curriculum as it is presented to them. Contraception, HIV prevention, pregnancy prevention and the physical aspects of sexuality (biology) are mostly emphasised.

P4G: *They also told us that if you do choose to actually go ahead with having intercourse, the procedures to take, contraceptives, it's very important, and that clinics are always available for condoms and a lot of stuff. Injections, even here at school, actually.*

Even though they are in the textbook, what are perceived as forbidden and sensitive topics are typically fully or partially excluded from discussion. Participants mention that contentious matters are dealt with in class from a strong moralistic point of view.

P1B: *Okay like, here's a weird one, but masturbation is something I think, I think it's normal, it's something one does. It's okay, it's healthy. It's a way of satisfying your needs without hurting people. Uhm, but things like that will inevitably also be portrayed as bad and then what happens in the end is you sit with kids who do not know how to deal with these feelings, and uh, feel bad. And in the end you cultivate a society where those kids go on and the next generation... You know uh, you cultivate a society that is afraid of sex and if you are afraid to talk about sex then the problems are also never going to be addressed directly. You are never going to be able to develop people to a point where they can be comfortable about it and deal with it in a healthy way.*

P2G: *Like abortion for example. When a teacher, it was still last year when one of the teachers was talking about it, but they only talk about the one side of it, like the bad and you should not do it, and never looked at the other perspective.*

They reveal, furthermore, that although all human beings are sexual in nature, aspects such as the acceptability of sexual urges and that sexual intercourse is pleasurable, are excluded entirely.

P9B: *It's human, it's a normal part of who we are, so you also do not always want to say sex is bad, bad, and if you do it you are bad.*

Participants find that they lack skills when it comes to sexual decision-making and the ability to deal with sexual intimacy.

P2G: *It's hard and yeah, like for example, I got a boyfriend like two months back and it's always sitting there, but it's like no, I can't, I have to wait. And they do not teach you that. Before I was in a relationship, I just said, 'Oh it's so easy, you just say no!' It's not so easy!*

Pedagogy

Participants reported on preferred ways in which they would like the content to be delivered to them. Participants prefer gender-focused CSE. The SE of boys is deemed to be neglected and attention should be given to both genders equally that does not reinforce discriminative gender roles. For example, participants state that the onus tends to lie specifically on girls, rather than on both genders, to abstain from sex and to deal with its consequences.

P4G: *I think it's because if they managed to get this message in the girls' heads. If the girls can decide, no, we're going to abstain, then the boys won't have anyone to actually have sex with. If they get one party on the right path, then, yeah.*

Participants ask for discussions about sexuality that are open, honest and in depth. They would like all aspects of sexuality to be thoroughly covered and they disapprove of SE that is superficial or concealed in nature.

P3B: Knowledge is power, if you don't know these things, how will you protect yourself? I want them to be broad, and more realistic and honest.

P5B: They can go into more detail. Give more details. Give more examples. They need to go deeper. If the teachers go into more detail, the learners will understand it. Then they will not make bad decisions.

They prefer content delivery to be more technical and practical, for real-life examples to be used and to learn from example.

P3B: They put something here, then they say this is how you put a condom. This is how you do this. So, I think maybe we should use, like real life examples.

P8G: I have seen here and there is a speech bubble of someone telling about a personal experience or so. I do not know if schools do it this year, but people have to just volunteer themselves to say I will talk about my experience with it and so on. Schools should get this. Just get people to come talk. This will help a lot.

Participants voiced what they view as harmful ways in which the curriculum is delivered. Some allege curriculum delivery encourages shame and low self-esteem.

P1B: I think portraying sexuality as a bad thing is damaging to children, it's bad for your self-esteem, and I think everyone has sexual urges when they're young,

and when I hit puberty, my reaction to that was shame.

The fact that the curriculum is delivered with emphasis on danger and disease, where sex is portrayed as something bad and where fear is intentionally instilled was the most prominent experience reported by participants in this study. Deliverers use various tactics to scare adolescents away from sex by making them aware of horrific consequences they might suffer if they become sexually active. Participants dislike scare tactics and do not view them as effective SE practices. On the contrary, they reported that it is damaging and that it traumatises them and that they can still remember it for years to come.

P1B: I think the deterrent aspect, of how sexuality is not portrayed as a healthy, natural part of you, because I also think with teenagers it's a big problem. We are all terribly uncomfortable with our bodies and who we are. Uhm, and. (Sigh.) The fact that it's almost like the danger and thing you have to be careful of and have to, uhm, almost try to stay away from. They say abstinence is the best way and that's true, but that's the way sexuality is portrayed, I think is damaging.

An instance was specifically mentioned by a Grade 12 participant where in Grade 6, a deliverer used two eggs: one smashed, representing girls who are sexually active and one whole egg, representing virgins.

P2G: I only remember this one part... she had an egg and like the one egg was perfect, like the girl who had never had sex, and the other egg was like rubbish and that was the girl who had sex like all the time before she got married. And like, yes, be a good egg, do not be a

bad egg. That's what I can remember about it.

The classroom context

Participants talked about their experience of what takes place in the SE classroom. They face judgement from fellow classmates when certain topics are discussed, or questions asked. Classmates also dictate what will and will not happen in the classroom context and the conversations held.

P2G: You feel careful to express your true opinion because you know there are such strong opinionated people in the class.

When CSE is dealt with in the classroom, many learners' responses are to laugh and joke around. Participants mentioned this, as well as the impact that conversations in the classroom have on sexually active learners as reasons why teachers prefer to omit certain content.

P10G: If there's a topic of sex coming up then they want to laugh about it and make jokes and so on. And that also pushes others down who are already sexually active. Many children are already sexually active at this stage and some of the learners know who they are, so then they talk about sexual health and then they point fingers at each other.

4 SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND OUTCOMES

The results of this study, based on the lived experience of participants regarding the deliverers and delivery of CSE, indicate that CSE in SA schools is not delivered comprehensively. This could be a contributing factor as to why SE that has been offered in SA since 2000 has not been

able to have a significant positive impact on the sexual health of young people.

Deliverers must in many instances be acknowledged for their positive contributions regarding young people's sexuality. Rooth (2005), being one of the first researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of LO, emphasised the importance of experiential and interactive learning years ago and it seems like some teachers endeavour to implement this. However, in other aspects, deliverers adhere to practices that diminish its comprehensiveness. Participants often referred to adults' discomfort with teaching CSE as a barrier to learning. This indicates that recommendations to attend to teachers' discomfort made by various researchers (Beyers, 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Francis, 2016; Mturi & Bechuke, 2019) are yet to be addressed. Together with discomfort, the various teaching approaches outlined by the results contribute further to SE delivery that is not comprehensive. Various studies on CSE in SA point to the consequences that these one-sided approaches have on the teaching of SE (Beyers, 2011; DePalma & Francis, 2014; George et al., 2018; Helleve et al., 2009; Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015; Mturi & Bechuke, 2019; Runhare et al., 2016) as well as a more recent international study on the same topic (Ketting et al., 2020). On the contrary, a wide range of advantages of SE that is in fact comprehensive in nature is well documented as summarised by UNESCO's ITGSE (UNESCO, 2018). In fact, out of 22 interventions included in a systematic review by Kirby, Obasi and Laris (2006) the only one that increased any measure of reported sexual intercourse was a non-curriculum-based peer-led intervention.

Apart from deliverers that diminish the comprehensiveness of SE, delivery is also to blame. If delivery is dealt with successfully, half-truths and myths would be replaced by truthful and factual knowledge as well as valuable skills

development that will leave less room for sexual predators to exploit adolescents' ignorance and vulnerability. The status of the LO subject as the vehicle of delivery is starting to shift from tarnished to more positive, in that tertiary education establishments are focused on producing well-trained teachers and sharing information with future teachers on how to reverse the detrimental aftermath of previous malpractices (Gous et al., 2015). A recommendation inspired by participants of this study, is for the DBE to consider employing SE experts per district, whose sole responsibility it would be to go to all schools to present SE as a module on its own. That would ensure that educators who are well trained and passionate will deliver the content in a comprehensive manner. An online SE programme could also be considered, where all learners could access an interactive sexuality education platform that is informed and developed based on the current curriculum, with adolescents' needs, recommendations and unique contexts incorporated.

It is acknowledged that the contents of the CSE curriculum are based on sound international academic research (DBE, 2019; UNESCO, 2018) and if teachers were to follow the SLPs without subjectively deciding what to include and what to exclude, learners would receive SE that is world renowned for its success. To ensure that pedagogy and what happens in the classroom context adheres to CSE standards, the ITGSE as well as SLPs are clear and leave no room for confusion. SLPs assist teachers in various ways. It helps teachers to create a safe, conducive classroom environment. SLPs explain what to do when teachers are challenged by the content of CSE. Furthermore, it supports teachers to create safe learning spaces that are inclusive and rights based. Teachers are also guided to deal with the impact parents could have on the learning experience. It helps teachers to better manage classroom discussions, how to use group activities and

facilitate discussion. Even aspects such as dealing with laughter, how to monitor peer discussions and engagements are clearly outlined. It is thus the inference and main recommendation of this study that the focus should be on the successful countrywide implementation of the SLPs.

A limitation is that LO teachers as gatekeepers generally identified the most exemplary students to participate in this study, which could have caused the results to be skewed. The strength of this study lies in the inclusion of the lived experience of adolescents that is often missing from research that is about them (Koch et al., 2019).

5 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that DBE is making extensive and commendable efforts to attend to the delivery of CSE in South African schools. It is recognised that most teachers and other deliverers are doing their best to educate children in a way which they consider to the advantage of the child and that children are eager to learn. However, the reason why CSE in SA schools is not effective, is because it is not delivered comprehensively. It masquerades as comprehensive due to its name and prescribed curriculum content, but the lived experience of participants tells us it is still taught in a non-comprehensive manner. Content is mostly delivered once-off, superficially, from a subjective, teacher-centred, top-down approach. There is often a strong focus on prevention and abstinence. Tactics that instil fear and disregard healthy sexuality is mostly used. Teachers also tend to reinforce discriminative gender roles. Findings from this study indicate ways in which this could be addressed. Learners have the right to receive SE that is, in fact, comprehensive to ensure that they are assisted to make well-informed decisions that could benefit their sexual health and their lives in general. A recommendation for future research is to

utilise the recommendations of adolescents from this study by co-creating a praxis for CSE teachers to support them in the delivery of the programme that is more responsive to the needs of adolescents.

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