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Beyond the facts

Addressing gender-based violence through comprehensive sexuality education in schools in Ethiopia

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

This thesis is the result of PhD research that sought to explore how comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) might contribute to addressing the phenomenon of gender-based violence in education in Ethiopia. This question is taken up out of a concern that gender-based violence in education is an urgent problem; through this study, our understanding about ways to address it could be improved. In particular, this investigation examines how CSE might do so. CSE can be broadly defined as education that equips children and young people with the knowledge, skills, and values that empower them to make informed choices about their health, well-being, sexual and social relationships, and that ensure protection of their rights (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2018a; UNESCO and United Nations [UN] Women, 2016)¹. In this study, CSE refers both to this education as an educational programme and to the policy of providing it. The study focuses on the case of Ethiopia, where gender-based violence in education is prevalent (Bekele, 2012; Know Violence in Childhood, 2017; Parkes, Johnson Ross, Heslop, Westerveld, and Unterhalter, 2017), and CSE is strongly promoted by the international community yet remains highly controversial.

The study focuses on the level of the school, with the aim to engage with the views of young men and young women and their teachers on gender-based violence and CSE. The thesis also seeks to connect these school-level findings to global policy developments. The title of the thesis, ‘going beyond the facts’, refers to two elements central in this research. The first is that the study employs a qualitative and interpretative approach. As such, it does not aim to give statistical ‘facts’ about the number of young people who have experienced gender-based violence in schools – that has been done by others (see e.g. Bekele, 2012; Gelaye, Arnold, Williams, Goshu, and Berhane, 2009; Know Violence in Childhood, 2017; Mulugeta, Kassaye, and Berhane, 1998; World Health Organization [WHO], 2005) – but instead aims to disentangle contextual interpretations and dynamics of the problem and how

¹ UNESCO’s International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education defines CSE as: ‘[CSE] aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realise their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and, understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.’ (UNESCO, 2018a, p.16); Global Guidance on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) defines CSE as: ‘[CSE] aims to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills and values about relationships, gender, sexuality and violence to make informed and healthy choices about their sexual and social relationships’ (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016, p.63)

it can be adequately addressed. Second, the title is also a hint at the common rationale with which global actors promote CSE, namely that it is ‘fact-based’. The study aims to uncover themes underlying CSE adoption and enactment that affect the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence in education, which might not be covered in the promotion of fact-based information. In this introductory chapter, I discuss the relevance of and rationale for this study, present its theoretical underpinnings, and provide the contextual and methodological background of the thesis.

1.1 RELEVANCE AND RATIONALE

Gender-based violence in education is a worldwide phenomenon, but has long been silenced, neglected, and, until recently, under-researched. Within international development studies, existing research on gender-based violence in education has focused on the sub-Saharan African region, where the prevalence of gender-based violence in education is thought to be highest. Studies in the region have revealed that, indeed, gender-based violence in education is pervasive, takes various forms such as bullying, corporal punishment, verbal, physical, and sexual violence, and is highly tolerated in schools (Bhana 2012, 2015; Dunne et al, 2016; Leach, Dunne, and Salvi, 2014; Parkes 2015; Mirembe and Davies, 2001). Such violence in education settings can be perpetrated by school management, teachers, and peers, and on the school premises or on the way to or back from school (Leach, 2003; Mirembe and Davies, 2001; Mulugeta, 2016; UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). Gender-based violence in education is a grave concern because it violates human rights (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016); causes physical and psychological problems (Gelaye et al., 2009; WHO, 2002); and entrenches existing inequalities (Parkes, 2015). Moreover, gender-based violence in education hinders young people – particularly those who have fallen victim to or fear violence – from accessing and completing their education (Bott, 2010; Vanner, 2017), and ultimately participating in society. Indeed, gender-based violence in education is not only a health and human rights problem, but an educational problem as well. That is, whereas education is often considered to be a space where young people learn in safety, the toleration and normalisation of gender-based violence in schools proves otherwise. Hence, the educational problem is that teachers, school management, and education sector policies are posed with the challenge of how to set up ways to address gender-based violence. Such challenges not only include the instilling of formal codes of ethics and referral systems, but, importantly, should also concern the development of curricular responses, attention to the ‘hidden curriculum’ (i.e., what is learned implicitly besides the formal curriculum, in interaction with peers and teachers), and the possibilities for teachers and students of reporting and addressing gender-based violence in ways that ensure confidentiality (see also Parkes, 2015; Bhana, 2012, 2015).

While attention to gender equity in education has grown globally since the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, it was not until a decade later that gender-based violence in education became a policy concern. The concern was prompted by recognition from global (UN-)actors that deeply rooted gender inequalities remain pervasive within educational systems despite near parity in access to education (Leach et al., 2014; Parkes, Heslop, Johnson Ross, Westerveld, and Unterhalter, 2016). As a result, global efforts to address gender-based violence in education have increased, with a number of declarations and commitments (for an overview, see Parkes, Heslop, Johnson Ross, et al., 2016). These commitments, alongside the studies that have revealed the pervasiveness of gender-based violence in education, ignited a breadth of global initiatives that aim to address gender-based violence in education. One such global initiative is CSE, which has gained increasing popularity among the donor community over the past two decades (UNESCO, 2015a). CSE is promoted internationally by UNESCO and UNFPA, and supported by bilateral donors, particularly the Netherlands and Sweden, as these countries are considered to have expertise in developing comprehensive sexuality education curricula. International organisations and bilateral donors promote CSE not only to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) outcomes, including addressing gender-based violence, but also in light of population growth and migration. In global guidelines on CSE, CSE's role is linked to reducing vulnerability to gender-based violence and preventing gender-based violence (UNESCO, 2018a; UNESCO and UN Women, 2016), particularly through the promotion of respectful social and sexual relationships, and encouraging young people's abilities to understand and ensure the protections of their rights. Indeed, scholars have suggested that CSE could play a critical role in addressing gender-based violence (Nahar, van Reeuwijk, and Reis, 2013) and that research should identify how CSE might do so (Parkes et al., 2017).

Global CSE guidelines tend to advocate the universal applicability of the policy (e.g. International Sexuality and HIV Curriculum Working Group, 2009; see also section 1.2.3). A range of academic scholarship has argued that through global education policy transfers, educational systems across the globe are becoming more and more similar in structure and nature (Dale, 1999; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014; Verger, Novelli, and Altinyelken, 2018). Because this happens in a context where powerful nations are able to exercise influence over others, the assimilation has not gone without critique – educational systems and practices increasingly reflect Eurocentric knowledges while disregarding indigenous systems. Against this backdrop, and in light of the claim to universality of the global CSE policy, the thesis also discusses the question how universally applicable such 'universal' policies are. The case of CSE is particularly interesting because the policy touches on a rather unexplored educational terrain. That is, CSE introduces sexuality as a new educational imperative concerned with health, well-being, and equality outcomes, in addition to educational

outcomes. With a focus on sexual health and well-being, the policy also touches on sets of personal, institutional, and cultural values that might affect policy uptake and enactment.

Despite CSE's growing popularity among the donor community, there is little understanding of how such initiatives, often designed in Europe, might address issues such as gender-based violence in ways that consider gender relations and socio-economic dynamics particular to the school and community where CSE is enacted. Studies that have focused on gender-based violence have noted that the contribution of programmes such as CSE should be further investigated (Parkes et al., 2017). At the same time, the majority of research on CSE has focused on its contribution to improving SRHR outcomes (Kirby, 2008; Haberland, 2015), but has not focused on its relation to addressing gender-based violence. Over recent years, studies have indeed identified the need to scrutinise more closely how CSE can better engage with gender and power relations (see, for instance, Haberland, 2015) – a gap this research aims to respond to. Gender relations might differ across contexts, and the ways in which they are addressed thus ought to be relevant to that particular setting (Connell, 2002; Chilisa, 2005; Tamale, 2011).

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to explore and develop an analysis of how CSE might contribute to addressing gender-based violence in education in Ethiopia, while considering the multiple contextual dynamics that might affect CSE's enactment. An interdisciplinary perspective is taken, borrowing from gender studies, educational sciences, and international development studies. The study focuses predominantly on the level of schools, while connecting school-level dynamics to an analysis of national and international policies. As such, the thesis contributes to addressing pressing societal concerns of continued perpetration and toleration of gender-based violence in education, and an academic concern of scrutinising how a global policy might resonate and address gender-based violence in adequate ways at the level of the school. Gender-based violence is understood here as an expression of violence based on gender relations, which are embedded in institutional structures (see also section 1.2.1). Consequently, the argument made in this thesis is that in order to understand how globally-promoted initiatives such as CSE can contribute to addressing gender-based violence in education, it is essential to: a) include an analysis of gender relations as central to understanding gender-based violence as well as the ways in which CSE might address it; and b) embed the global policy of CSE within the economic and political context of education and international development. Hence, this thesis takes as its grounding the point that identifying the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence requires analysis of the multiple understandings of CSE and gender-based violence at the school, national, and inter-national levels, and analysis of gender relations across all these levels within a particular context (in this case, Ethiopia).

In light of the above, this thesis addresses the following question, sub-divided into five subsidiary questions:

How do young people, teachers, and stakeholders view CSE's contribution to addressing gender-based violence in education in Ethiopia?

- 1. How do students define, experience, and interpret sexual violence in education and how do they think it should be addressed? [Chapter 2]*
- 2. How is CSE adopted and reformulated as a national policy? [Chapter 3]*
- 3. How do CSE teachers enact CSE in schools in Ethiopia, and what factors inform their enactment? [Chapter 4]*
- 4. How do gender and power relations affect the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence in education, according to students and teachers? [Chapter 5]*
- 5. How does culture affect the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence in education, according to teachers and students? [Chapter 6]*

1.2 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE THESIS

1.2.1 DEFINING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN EDUCATION

In developing a definition of gender-based violence in education, it should first of all be pointed out that gender-based violence is distinct from violence against women. Whereas violence against women connotes violence directed only against women and girls and not against boys, men or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ+) people, gender-based violence in fact captures a wider range of forms of violence, including, for instance, expressions of heteronormativity or girl-on-girl violence (see also Leach and Humphreys, 2007). Using the concept 'gender-based violence' instead of 'violence against women' thus also moves away from the assumption that only girls and women are affected by violence, and that women and girls can only be victims of violence. In addition, assumptions that women are only victims might overlook important dimensions of gender-based violence such as women's abilities to address such violence, or that they might be perpetrators of violence themselves. Hence, employing the concept 'gender-based violence' also allows for capturing the ways in which women and men might reproduce violent gender regimes, or might act against them.

Second, as some authors have observed, gender-based violence has at times been conflated with a narrower understanding of gender-based violence as only sexual violence (Leach et al., 2014; Unterhalter and North, 2017). Sexual violence typically refers to unwanted sexual acts or attempts at sexual acts; gender-based violence includes other forms of violence as well. A definition of gender-based violence thus includes sexual violence, but extends beyond a focus on sexual violence alone. However, it should be noted that even

though gender-based violence also includes sexual violence, sexual violence is not necessarily included in studies on gender-based violence in schools (see also Dunne, Humphreys, and Leach, 2006). This is because sexual violence is often the most hidden and silenced form of violence in schools, and thus difficult to bring to light in research, alongside difficulties related to ethical considerations that might discourage researchers from studying sexual violence. Yet to gain insight into the nature and scope of gender-based violence in schools, and what can be done to address it, research must make efforts to understand experiences and interpretations of sexual violence in schools as well. In this study, therefore, I intentionally include a focus on sexual violence in schools, which helps to uncover institutional structures and gender hierarchies that tolerate sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence (see chapter 2).

Third, gender-based violence in education is situated within larger societal structures and inequalities, including historical, socio-economic and (international) political dynamics. For example, some feminist scholars have highlighted that gender relations in African settings have been largely disrupted by colonialism and imperialism and now resemble the ways in which gender relations are shaped in European societies (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, and Osirim, 2004). This is not to say, however, that before colonisation gender relations were necessarily equal (Assié-Lumumba, 2018). It is important to keep in mind, though, the influence of socio-historical dynamics such as colonisation and imperialism that have forcefully shaped gender regimes, which are now targeted to be ‘corrected’ again by European policies under the discourse of gender equality and international development, including through education-based policies such as CSE (see also section 1.2.3).

To develop a definition of gender-based violence in education, some studies have distinguished the (inter)personal dimensions of violence from institutional structures (Dunne et al., 2006; Parkes, 2015). (Inter)personal dimensions of gender-based violence are, for example, sexualised encounters between people, whereas institutional structures uphold certain norms or ideologies that might reproduce harmful gender notions. Examples of such institutional structures are abusive regulations in schools, corporal punishment, social norms that condone violence, and inadequate services for protecting, preventing, and responding to violence (Parkes, 2015). Such institutional structures might be shaped by interpersonal interactions, but also reflect wider societal hierarchies and inequalities (Parkes, 2015; Ampofo et al., 2004; Bennett, 2010). Studies have also reported that fear of violence in school is a daily struggle for young men and young women, and affects their sense of freedom (Bhana, 2012; Leach and Humphreys, 2007). Indeed, what is seen, feared, and silenced, creates institutional structures that produce or reproduce gender regimes. In this study, I understand gender relations as underpinning gender-based violence. As Connell (2002) theorised, gender relations make up a ‘gender regime’ within institutions, in this case educational institutions, which in turn shapes a larger ‘gender order’ in society, and vice versa

(see also chapter 2). A conceptualisation of gender relations is thus useful, as it allows for connecting (inter)personal dimensions of violence to institutional and societal structures. Gender relations is furthermore a useful approach insofar as it moves away from an understanding of gender as categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’, but gives a central place to the patterned relations between and among women and men that make up gender as a social structure (Connell, 2012a). Gender relations theory thus allows exploration of the social practices, including those in and around schools, that are shaped by and re-shape existing gender orders. As such, gender-based violence is thus not merely an unwanted ‘act’ directed from one person to the other, and gender-based violence in education is thus not a phenomenon that exists in isolation, but they are expressions of existing unequal gender orders used to assert power over others. Importantly, these relations and gender regimes are socially constructed and may therefore change over time or look different depending on the context. Against this backdrop, schools thus act as social sites where gender relations are constructed, violence is perpetrated, or might be addressed (for instance, through educational programmes such as CSE).

In line with the above reflections, I conceptualise gender-based violence in education as any expression of violence based on gender relations that may include sexual, physical, emotional, and symbolic violence, as well as fear of violence, within the context of or related to education settings. Expressions of violence are embedded in complex webs of power relations and institutional structures, which are affected by and might reproduce inequalities. Gender-based violence includes violence between females and males and among females or among males and may intersect with other markers of identity such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, or (dis)ability.

1.2.2 CSE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

With the growing interest seen from global (UN-)actors over the past two decades, gender-based violence in education has become part of an international development agenda, within which CSE is promoted as one programme that might contribute to addressing it. It is worth noting that while CSE is a policy designed for and enacted within education settings, its origins are in health agendas, specifically SRHR. That is, CSE was initially developed as a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, particularly in sub-Saharan African countries (UNESCO, 2015a). In recent years, however, CSE has expanded to link to social and gender issues as well, including gender-based violence (as evidenced in the updated UNESCO guidelines, 2018a). Most research on CSE has focused on its positive health outcomes (Haberland, 2015). How CSE might address gender-based violence remains unclear in policy guidelines and is under-researched (see also chapters 3 and 4). One study, focusing on how CSE can prevent violence against women and girls, has shown that CSE can 1) promote gender-equitable attitudes among young people; 2) improve young people’s gender relations

and reduce violence against women and girls; 3) transform attitudes in the wider community; and 4) improve reporting and response mechanisms when violence occurs (Holden, Bell, and Schauerhammer, 2015). Yet, the same study notes that, in practice, most CSE programmes are limited in how much they are able to change gender relations to be more equitable (Holden et al., 2015). It should also be noted that this study focused on violence against women and did not include a wider range of forms of gender-based violence such as violence against men and boys or homophobic violence. It remains ambiguous how and to what extent education initiatives might indeed contribute to feminist goals of challenging gender regimes through education, when educational institutions continue to be violent spaces themselves (Dunne et al., 2006; Mirembe and Davies, 2001). Nevertheless, the contributions CSE can make to gender-equitable relations and addressing gender-based violence is an increasingly important rationale with which CSE is promoted internationally (see, e.g., UNESCO and UN Women, 2016).

The fact that CSE ought to pay attention to gender relations (and preferably sexual diversity, see UNESCO, 2018a), is widely accepted among policy proponents (see also Miedema et al., under review). It should be noted, though, that CSE might easily assume an engagement with gender relations just because of CSE's relation to SRHR. However, even though global guidelines on CSE do pay increased attention to the ways in which CSE ought to engage with gender relations, engagement with gender relations is not always present, due to the controversiality and difficulty of discussing gender relations in school settings and in national contexts with diverging policy priorities. Interestingly, the importance of discussing gender relations within CSE is often directly linked to improving health outcomes such as reducing HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies (Haberland, 2015), reflecting the fact that CSE is largely embedded within a health agenda (see also Lamb, 2013). However, to gain a deeper understanding of how gender-based violence continues to be manifested, tolerated, and normalised in schools, and the ways CSE might address those dynamics, gender-based violence must be understood not only as a health problem, but also as a problem of gender relations (Connell, 2002; Lamb, 2013) and as an educational problem (see also Parkes, 2015). This means that education as a sector, as well as any educational programmes, must make efforts to encourage the necessary skills in teachers and young people to address gender-based violence. In this respect, education might make substantial contributions to feminist agendas, for instance, through raising awareness about social inequalities and ultimately enabling individuals to effect social transformation (Stromquist, 2006). Education that encourages the skills needed to address gender-based violence, which might be CSE, furthermore includes: nurturing critical thinking skills to question and re-negotiate existing gender hierarchies (Bajaj, 2009; Chege, 2007; Connell, 2002; Parkes et al., 2017), reflexive skills to establish (ethically) conscious relationships between themselves and others, and in connection with their cultural, social,

and economic context (Geary, 2007; Ollis, 2014; Lamb, 2013), as well as practical skills to know where to seek help when needed or report cases of violence to the relevant authorities (Holden et al., 2015). As such, education might indeed make important contributions to preventing and addressing gender-based violence, and ultimately to feminist agendas of renegotiating gender hierarchies.

1.2.3 EMBEDDING CSE IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In order to scrutinise how CSE might be an answer to the educational problem of gender-based violence, CSE should be embedded within the context of education and international development. To do so, it is important first to highlight that education and international development as a field has had a hybrid evolution with a multitude of actors and sectors shaping education policy nationally and globally (see, e.g., Unterhalter, 2015). Indeed, an increasing number of international actors are finding their ways to influencing education policy, for instance, the World Bank, as well as international organisations such as the WHO and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which have always had a health mandate. Following lines of thought in mainstream international development theories, education has typically been viewed as an impetus to economic growth and modernisation – arguably neglecting the contributions education might make to social change and emancipation. In many low-income or ‘developing’ settings, education has often been used to promote Western or European values – through colonialism, imperialism, and also through the discourse of international development (Tikly, 2004; Unterhalter, 2015). A growing body of scholarly work has raised similar critical issues about the nature and consequences of CSE as promoted and enacted by Western European development policy (Roodsaz, 2018). Similarly, as Lewis (2002) warned, viewing gender-based violence as merely a development agenda risks simplifying gender relations to points on agendas that are instrumental to economic growth. Indeed, educational initiatives such as CSE are situated within contested terrains. On the one hand, educational initiatives developed in Europe might risk reinforcing imperialist notions (Tikly, 2004), through, for instance, employing discursive rationales of culturalism, which can be counterproductive for emancipation (see chapter 6). At the same time, initiatives such as CSE aim to employ emancipatory approaches to questions related to gender relations and to address gender-based violence within the structural limits of the broader education setting.

A comparative education perspective sheds important light on the socio-economic and political motivations for international education policy transfer and their implications. In view of this perspective, it is important to mention that international organisations promote CSE with a clear rationale that the policy is fact-based and universally applicable (International Sexuality and HIV Curriculum Working Group, 2009; UNESCO, 2018a), and

is rooted in notions of empowerment of young people. The fact-based nature of CSE is particularly emphasised in view of resistance against the policy by opponents who are concerned about the liberal and secular values CSE (implicitly) promotes. ‘Facts’ refers here to information about the reproductive health system that is based on scientific research. Scholars have argued, however, that the fact-based promotion of CSE implies the neutrality of the rationales for promoting the policy, which they consider is not appropriate, as CSE has clear underpinnings and ideas about what sexual health means for young people (see also Lamb, 2013; Roodsaz, 2018). In addition, global guidance documents argue that these guidelines can be used in many cultures, as the guidelines apply ‘universal principles to the varied cultural and social circumstances in which people live’ (International Sexuality and HIV Curriculum Working Group, 2009, p.7). Such claims concerning the universality and neutrality of CSE, alongside the framing of CSE as fact-based, secular, and ‘progressive’, consequently label those who have concerns about the policy as the conservative and traditional ‘Other’ who ought to fit global (secular) narratives better (Lamb, 2013; Miedema, 2018; Rasmussen, 2012; Roodsaz, 2018). Interestingly, literature has often pointed to ‘culture’ or ‘religion’ as factors hindering the adoption and implementation of CSE in certain countries, particularly in the Global South (De Haas, 2017; Huaynocha et al., 2014; Vanwesenbeeck, Westeneng, de Boer, Reinders, and van Zorge, 2016; Vanwesenbeeck, Flink, van Reeuwijk, and Westeneng, 2018; see also Miedema, 2018), because ‘traditional’ cultural and religious values are seen to be directly opposed to CSE. Whereas in the United States of America (USA), similar conflicts have been witnessed between ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ groups, these are more often linked to political affiliation – Democratic or Republican values – than to sociocultural or traditional values (see Lamb, 2013). It should also be noted that in the USA, political affiliation can be very interlinked with religion, particularly for evangelical Christians. Against this backdrop, this study considers CSE not merely as a neutral or ‘fact-based’ initiative to improve global health outcomes but situates the policy within the highly contested field of education and international development – a factor that might affect the adoption and enactment of the policy.

1.3 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Questions around gender-based violence in education and how CSE might address this are pertinent in Ethiopia. The country consistently ranks high on prevalence of gender-based violence in schools (physical and sexual), domestic violence, and intimate partner violence (Know Violence in Childhood report, 2017; WHO, 2005). The connection between CSE and gender-based violence in education is an important research gap (Parkes et al., 2017) – a gap this study responds to by exploring the particular contextual dynamics that influence how CSE might contribute to addressing gender-based violence in schools in Ethiopia. It should be noted here that much of the earlier research on gender-based violence in Ethiopia

has been quantitative (Bekele, 2012; Gelaye et al., 2009; Mulugeta et al., 1998), highlighting the wide prevalence of the problem. This study seeks to complement these data by employing a qualitative approach to untangle the multiple interpretations and contextual dynamics of gender-based violence in education.

To understand the contextual dynamics influencing CSE's contributions to addressing gender-based violence in education in Ethiopia, it is important to highlight some of the socio-historical, economic, and political background of the country (see also Table 1). Ethiopia was never colonised, though there was an Italian occupation in 1935-36. The country was in a state of civil war between 1974-1991, during which the communist group (Derg) that had taken power in 1974 was fought by anti-government rebels. After the Derg was defeated, the first prime minister of the country, Meles Zenawi, took office in 1995. When he died in 2012, he was replaced by Hailemariam Desalegn, who was replaced recently by Dr. Abiy Ahmed in 2018, after protests against the government. Ethiopia has been considered unstable over the past few years, and the government is often accused of authoritarianism (see, e.g., Amnesty International, 2016). Ethiopia is known to be a highly religious country; Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is the dominant religion, followed by Islam and Catholicism. The number of Pentecostal churches has been on the rise over the last couple of decades, especially in the big cities. Of all African countries, Ethiopia received the most overseas development assistance between 2014 and 2016, which are the latest available figures (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). The net overseas development assistance received by Ethiopia made up 8.2% of government net income in 2013. The largest donors are the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the African Development Bank, the Global Fund, and the European Union (EU) (Development Assistance Group [DAG] Ethiopia, 2015). Despite the high donor dependency, Ethiopia's successive national 'Growth and Transformation Plans' (GTPs) express the ambition for Ethiopia to become a middle-income country by 2025. The educational sector plans are consequently largely geared towards utilising education as a vehicle for economic growth. The country has a high population growth rate and migration is an increasingly attractive option for many young Ethiopians – factors that have contributed to the growing importance the international community attaches to SRHR and education agendas in Ethiopia so as to improve young people's well-being, education and employment opportunities within the country.

TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OF COUNTRY BACKGROUND DATA

Official name	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Capital	Addis Ababa
Regions	Afar; Amhara; Benishangul-Gumuz; Gambela; Harari; Oromia; Somali; Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples; Tigray
National language	Amharic
Total population	104,957,438 in 2017; of which 20.31% urban
Population under 14	42,564,262 (40.55% of total population)
Annual population growth rate	2.5% in 2017
Human Development Index ²	Low: 0.463 (173 of 189 countries)
Gender Inequality Index ³	Low: 0.502 (121 of 160 countries)
Total net enrolment rate in primary education	Females: 83.25%; males: 89.58%
Total net enrolment rate in lower secondary education	Females: 50.95%; males: 55.34%
Total net enrolment rate in upper secondary education	Females: 24.85%; males: 27.41%
HIV prevalence rate	0.9%
Knowledge about HIV transmission and prevention:	Females: 20%; males: 38%

Data sources: World Bank open data; UNESCO open data; UNDP open data; CSA [Ethiopia] and ICF, 2017.

Legislation in relation to addressing gender-based violence in education has improved over the years; laws prohibit corporal punishment and sexual violence by teachers, including sexual relations between teachers and students, and the government is instilling codes of conduct in schools. However, the implementation and monitoring of these legislative measures remains largely lacking (see also Parkes et al., 2017). In Ethiopia, CSE is highly dependent on donor funding and NGO programmes, as the policy has long been resisted by the national Ministry of Education (MoE)⁴ (see also chapter 3). The fact that initiatives such as CSE are highly dependent on donor funding has limited the ways in which the policy

² The Human Development Index (HDI) is a measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable, and have a decent standard of living. A HDI of less than 0.550 stands for low human development, 0.550–0.699 for medium, 0.700–0.799 for high, and 0.800 or greater for very high human development.

³ Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a measure of gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market. It ranges from 0, where women and men fare equally, to 1, where one gender fares as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions.

⁴ At the time of this writing, the MoE is, after the change in government, reconsidering CSE as a policy and planning to develop a national CSE curriculum to be embedded within the formal curriculum.

might address gender-based violence, and has been further complicated in Ethiopia in light of the rights-based nature of CSE. The rights-based nature of CSE means that the policy is based on an understanding that people have the right to health, education, information, equality, and non-discrimination. Consequently, CSE also involves raising awareness among young people, encouraging them to recognize their own rights, acknowledge and respect the rights of others, and advocate for those whose rights are violated. Yet, the Ethiopian government has, until very recently, considered ‘rights’ as a domestic matter and has tried to limit foreign influence on human rights affairs, including CSE. Since the 2009 Charities Proclamation, CSOs and NGOs that receive foreign funding have been restricted in working on advocacy and rights-agendas in Ethiopia, which includes agendas related to gender and ethnic inequalities, advancement of human and democratic rights, and promotion of the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services. This proclamation was still in effect during fieldwork and analysis for this thesis, but since the start of 2019 there has been discussion of updating the proclamation to allow CSOs and NGOs more space to carry out rights-based activities.

The CSE programme researched in this study is a programme developed by an NGO in Western Europe, which funds an Ethiopian NGO to implement it as an extra-curricular programme. In 16 lessons, each consisting of one to two hours, the programme provides young people with information and skills about taking care of their sexual health and helps them acquire skills to make decisions now and in the future. Students engage with four themes in the programme: self-esteem, social environment, sexual health, and future plans. Through interaction with peers in the classroom, students make themselves familiar with the topics. In the lessons, students also practice skills such as expressing opinions, negotiating in relationships, and ‘saying no’. One lesson is fully dedicated to addressing gender-based violence (covered under the theme ‘sexual health’), in which attention is paid to, for instance, developing empathetic skills, skills to prevent abuse and to protect themselves and others from violence, skills to report abuse, and attitudes that sex should be consensual and that show respect for the integrity of themselves and others. The programme design is based on student-centred teaching principles and includes participatory teaching methods. It is usually taught by schoolteachers who receive additional training to teach CSE, including on its pedagogy, but teachers are not remunerated for teaching CSE. CSE was initially taught only in English and implemented in secondary schools, but later expanded to upper-primary levels for which the programme was further modified and translated to Amharic. Alongside complete and fact-based information about sexual health, the notion of empowerment is an important component of the CSE programme. The CSE programme designers speak of a ‘gender-transformative approach’ underpinning the programme, which they have recently defined as an approach that ‘actively strives to examine, question, and change rigid gender norms and imbalances of power as a means of achieving SRHR objectives, as well as gender

equality objectives' (Rutgers, 2018, p.8). With this definition, a gender-transformative approach places at the centre the interaction between individual and institutional dynamics of gender relations, and it includes men/boys and LGBTQ+ identities in discussions of gender relations and gender equality (Rutgers, 2018).

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative and interpretative approach. It draws on four smaller-scale studies that together resulted in this PhD dissertation – each of these smaller-scale studies is discussed in its own chapter (and the last empirical chapter discusses two of the studies again). An overview of each study's focus and timing is provided in Table 2 below. As can be seen from the overview in Table 2, the four studies are interlinked and follow up on each other. The first study focused on young people's interpretations of sexual and gender-based violence in their school, and how they think it should be addressed. Following on the finding from the first study that young people suggested CSE might address gender-based violence, the second project explored the ways in which CSE might do so at the level of the school, considering the (possibly violent) gender regimes within school institutions. The third and fourth studies subsequently aimed to gain more comprehensive insight into the relations between CSE at the level of the school, the national policy, and the role of teachers in enacting CSE policy in the context of their school. In total, 183 people participated in this study: 89 students, 48 teachers, and 46 stakeholders (for more details, see Table 2, or the methods sections for each specific chapter).

In all of the studies, the methods used were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and ethnographic note taking. The fourth study also included classroom observations. The analysis draws on fieldwork conducted at one school in Addis Ababa and eight schools in the Oromia region in towns close to Addis Ababa. Because CSE is an extra-curricular programme in Ethiopia, and had only recently been implemented in a limited number of schools when fieldwork started, the study included those schools that had implemented CSE and were willing to participate in the study. Schools were approached by the national NGO first, by whom the researcher was then introduced to the school director, to whom the researcher introduced the study aims and its (independent) nature. All schools were mixed-gender schools and had a diverse student population in terms of ethnic and religious backgrounds, though most students came from lower socio-economic status families. School contexts differed between the urban capital city and the semi-urban and rural towns. It is thus important to note that findings based on the analysis of information from one school cannot necessarily be generalised to apply to other schools. The thesis does also make a comparative effort and identifies important differences and similarities between school settings (see chapters 4 and 6). A detailed description of the methods used,

participant involvement and characteristics, and analysis, is given in the following empirical chapters tailored to the specific research question discussed.

TABLE 2 OVERVIEW OF FIELDWORK AND DATA BY STUDY

Study & Chapter(s)	Fieldwork location; timing	Research questions answered (sub-question #)	Participants⁵
Study 1; Chapters 2 and 6	One school in Addis Abba; April-May 2013	How do students define, experience, and interpret sexual and gender-based violence in education and how do they think it should be addressed? (1) How does culture affect the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence in education, according to teachers and students? (5)	47 participants (23 males; 24 females 25 students, 18 teachers; 4 stakeholders)
Study 2; Chapters 5 and 6	Five schools and one out-of-school youth centre in surrounding Addis Ababa (Oromia) region; April-May 2014	How do gender and power relations affect the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence in education, according to students and teachers? (4) How does culture affect the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence in education, according to teachers and students? (5)	66 participants (32 males; 34 females 43 students; 19 teachers; 4 stakeholders)
Study 3; Chapter 3	Stakeholder offices in Addis Ababa; November 2016	How is CSE adopted and reformulated as a national policy? (2)	16 participants (10 males; 6 females all stakeholders)
Study 4; Chapter 4	Four schools in one town in region surrounding Addis Ababa (Oromia); May-July 2017	How do CSE teachers enact CSE in schools in Ethiopia, and what factors inform their enactment? (3)	56 participants (37 males; 19 females 21 students; 12 teachers; 23 stakeholders)
TOTAL⁶	9 education centres		183 participants (102 males; 81 females 89 students; 48 teachers; 46 stakeholders)

⁵ In all sub-categories of participants, a gender balance was sought. For clarity of presentation, only overall gender-balance is reported in this Table. Similarly, categories of participants are here summarised as students, teachers and stakeholders. More detailed overviews are presented in subsequent chapters.

⁶ One teacher and one stakeholder participated in two studies. They are only calculated once in total. Similarly, one school participated in two studies and is also calculated once in total.

The ontological point of departure for this thesis is the concern that to fully understand how CSE might address gender-based violence in education, research must go beyond a programme evaluation approach to address this question from an interdisciplinary perspective in which ample attention is given to gender relations and the socio-economic and political context of education and international development. Furthermore, the study employs a critical feminist approach (see Connell, 2002; Lather, 1992; Thompson, 2003), meaning that the focus of interest of this study was not merely differences between gender categories; gender is understood as embedded in power relations. In this light, the study thus aimed to untangle structures and inequalities in schools and societies, which in turn affect how and why CSE is enacted the way it is (and possibly vice versa). A feminist approach also includes the rationale of identifying pathways for improving the ways education can address gender-based violence, one of which might be CSE. This rationale is reflected in the research questions and concluding recommendations that devote attention to how gender-based violence might be addressed through CSE or otherwise. As such, this thesis also deals with the concern to put on the agenda the important social and emancipating roles education might play, particularly when it comes to urgent matters such as addressing gender-based violence.

Methodologically, the study places the school, and particularly young people and their teachers, at its centre. That is, the thesis takes as its point of departure the stance that in order to understand how gender-based violence in education might be addressed by initiatives such as CSE, the school context should be of central concern (Allen, 2005; Heslop, Parkes, Januario, and Sabaa, 2017). Therefore, the majority of the data were gathered at school settings, with young people, teachers, and community representatives. Fieldwork was carried out in close collaboration with an Ethiopian NGO that works on CSE, and the SRHR and education sectors more broadly.

Clearly, such a methodological approach cannot be carried out without important ethical considerations related to interaction with (young) participants, as well as how to adequately represent their views (see, e.g., Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010; see also ethical procedure in Appendix II). While arguably it is impossible to resolve the questions around how to accurately represent participants' views here, this study makes an effort to contest oversimplified (and sometimes sensationalised) representation of women in the Global South (see also Fonow and Cook, 2005). It does so by paying attention to the complexities of addressing gender relations in resource-scarce settings and in contexts of high inequalities. In representing participants' views, binary assumptions of women and men as victim/perpetrator are also avoided; instead, analysis and descriptions are focused on understanding the complexities around gender-based violence and the contributions of CSE initiatives. Likewise, the study also contests dichotomous and normative understandings, for instance, of 'modern' and 'traditional', by critically examining their relationship with CSE and

gender-based violence. Furthermore, representations of participants' views and interpretations were cross-checked during interviews, FGDs, and in some cases validation workshops, to be as accurate as possible. Practically, interaction with participants meant, for instance, that extra care had to be taken during interviews and FGDs with young people about sensitive topics – including selection of interview location, ensuring privacy, being sensitive to possible verbal and non-verbal signs of discomfort or stress, as well as ensuring possibilities of after-care if necessary (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, and Robson, 2001; Heslop et al., 2017; Leach, 2006).

Inevitably, with an interpretative research design, one's own positionality influences the reading of the views of participants. That is, my own experiences, personally and professionally, with topics related to gender, sexuality, and education, inform my frame of reference when interpreting other people's experiences and views – possibly leading to overemphasis on some findings, or lack of attention to others. What is more, my positionality relates to my frame of reference concerning not only gender relations and gender-based violence, but also CSE. Rasmussen (2012) pointed out that, for instance, advocates of CSE have often been disingenuous about their own political stance that promotes CSE – meaning that even if CSE is promoted with a rationale that the policy is fact-based, this rationale does not necessarily mean that CSE is a politically neutral policy. To apply this to my own positionality and reflexivity as a researcher, I have found it important, during data analysis, to remain mindful of the multiple interpretations of the nature and goals of CSE (see also Miedema et al., under review), and to avoid assuming participants' stances on topics related to CSE or gender-based violence. I furthermore found it important to explain my role as researcher (and that I do not decide about funding of CSE, nor am a designer of the programme), that I am not 'checking' on anyone's views or implementation success, but that I intended to explore the possibilities and limitations of how CSE might address gender-based violence in the context of the schools where I did research.

My positionality will also have influenced how participants responded to and interpreted my sets of questions, and how they would want to be represented in this study. That is, my status as a relatively young woman, unmarried (at the time), and Western-European, might have led participants to emphasise some of their views over others. For instance, participants might have overemphasised the importance of 'culture' in explaining their interpretations of causes of gender-based violence, as a response to my Western-European frame of reference or assumed association with NGOs or donors. In a similar vein, teachers as well as students sometimes seemed very keen to demonstrate their knowledge of SRHR to me, and male participants in particular wanted to share the ways in which they were attempting to contribute to gender equality. This again might be a reflexive reaction to my perceived positionality – that by virtue of being female and Western-

European, I attach value to gender equality (which indeed I do). At the same time, such responses, possibly coloured by my positionality, might as well reflect how the CSE programme is received and understood: as a Western-European programme that has some difficulty being contextualized. Thus, to ensure the reliability of the data and analysis, the study made use of a variety of data collection methods, triangulated between the different methods used and by comparing responses of various sets of participants, and intensively collaborated with Ethiopian research assistants and Ethiopian experts on the topic to validate findings. Furthermore, where possible a selection of the analysis was performed separately by members of the supervisory team to ensure internal reliability. During interviews and FGDs, participants' views were cross-checked through probing and summarising. Analysis was also geared towards uncovering underlying themes within participants' expressed views (see also Graneheim, Lindgren, and Lundman, 2017).

1.5 THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is built up by following the subsidiary research questions presented in section 1.1; each empirical chapter (i.e. chapters two to six) answers one of the subsidiary research questions. Chapter two presents and compares how young men and young women define and interpret sexual and gender-based violence in one school setting in Addis Ababa. Chapter two also discusses, among other matters, how young men and young women recommend CSE as a promising initiative to address gender-based violence at the school level. Following from that recommendation, the remainder of the thesis focuses on the ways in which CSE might contribute to addressing gender-based violence in education.

To start with a deeper exploration of how CSE might address gender-based violence, chapters three and four focus on the reformulation and re-contextualization of the policy at the national and school level in Ethiopia. These chapters thus particularly engage with the rationale of the thesis that to understand the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence in education, the policy must be embedded within the socio-economic dynamics of international education policy transfer. Chapter three discusses how CSE is taken up at the national policy level as a possible initiative to address gender-based violence in education, and puts forward possible reasons for its adoption, reformulation, and resistance. From chapter four onwards, the thesis re-centres around the interactions at the level of the school. Chapter four presents an analysis of how CSE teachers act as mediators between the global and national policy on providing CSE, vis-à-vis their own and community interpretations of the policy, and priorities at school. The chapter highlights the multiple school-level, personal, and socio-economic factors that inform how teachers re-contextualize CSE policy in their school, and, at times, how the policy re-shapes the roles of the CSE teachers within and beyond their schools.

The remaining empirical chapters of the thesis present students' and teachers' accounts of the narratives that are presented within CSE classrooms. Here, particular attention is paid to gender relations within the classroom and school settings. Chapter five discusses how gender and power relations within schools affect the ways in which CSE might influence how CSE is taught and how it can contribute to addressing gender-based violence in education. The sixth chapter entails an exploration of how 'culture', a recurring theme throughout all empirical chapters, is conceptualised and discussed within the CSE classroom. The chapter proposes alternative conceptions of the connection between culture and CSE, and between culture and gender-based violence. Finally, these and other ending reflections are presented in the concluding chapter, which includes reflections on the empirical findings and the theoretical and methodological approaches used, as well as recommendations for future research, policy, and practice.