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**Beyond the facts**

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

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## CHAPTER 5. (S)EXCLUSION IN THE CSE CLASSROOM: YOUNG PEOPLE ON GENDER AND POWER RELATIONS

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Sexuality education for young people is gaining increasing attention in the field of education and international development. In recent years, strong debate has taken place about what and how to teach young people about sexual and personal development, and what goals it should achieve (Braeken and Cardinal, 2008; Jones, 2011; Lesko, 2010; Miedema et al., 2011). However, the views of young people themselves are not always included in these discussions (Allen 2007; 2011; Jones 2011), and critical discussion of gender and power relations in sexuality education is not self-evident (Rogow and Haberland, 2005). In line with the need for better representation of young people's views in the sexuality education debate, and the relevance of these needs to programme development, this study engages with young people's views about a CSE programme in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. The programme aimed to contribute to sexual health of young people by providing them the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions. The objective of this paper is to reveal how asking young people about their needs with respect to sexuality, and their experiences of a sexuality programme in school, can shed light on gendered practices and practices of exclusion. Findings argue for closer engagement with the role of gender, power and culture in interpreting and providing sexuality education.

### 5.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 5.2.1 SEXUALITY EDUCATION: DEBATES AND DISCOURSES

In the context of increasing debate about sexuality education, what it should teach and to whom, several approaches can be distinguished (Jones, 2011; Lesko, 2010; Miedema et al., 2011). Most prominent is the debate between abstinence-only sexuality education, that is often viewed in opposition to more comprehensive forms of provision (see for example Lesko, 2010). Abstinence-only sexuality education could be classified as the most

conservative type of sexuality education (Jones, 2011), often promoting fear-instilled abstinence of sexual intercourse until marriage. It is often justified by traditional, religious or moral values, although the (sexual/reproductive) health benefits of complete abstinence may also be used as a rationale for discouraging pre-marital sexual intercourse. CSE, in contrast, is often linked with the promotion of positive ideas towards sexuality, attention to diversity, and a clearly defined gender sensitive approach that includes discussions of power (Braeken and Cardinal, 2008; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). As such, CSE is gaining increasing popularity among a variety of actors in the field of international development and is argued to be the most effective way to address SRHR in school (Braeken and Cardinal, 2008). However, as recent attacks on CSE by more conservative actors show, this consensus is by no means universal (see for example Family Watch International, 2016).

Aiming to better understand debate about the provision of sexuality education to young unmarried people, which is not uncontentious in any given society, Miedema (2013) distinguishes three approaches that identify the motivations of the providers of sexuality education – morality- health- and rights-based approaches to sexuality education – conceptualising education as a means to instil certain moral values, provide scientific information, or encourage the right to self-determination respectively (see also Miedema et al., 2011). Additionally, the centrality of developing respectful relationships and associated emotional development and life skills has gained increasing attention in the growing literature on sexuality and relationships education (Rogow and Haberland, 2005) and respectful relationships education (Ollis, 2014). These programmes may contribute to tackling gender-based violence, and transforming gender unequal norms through schooling (Ollis, 2014). Finally, critical discussions of gender and power, and the need to integrate this into education programmes that teach about sexuality is receiving growing support. In fact, to successfully promote gender equality in schools, a feminist approach to research and interventions needs to be taken which is more closely linked to social studies, in which questioning gender and power relations are more central (Rogow and Haberland, 2005).

The programme of study in Ethiopia is an extra-curricular programme implemented in selected schools with support of a national and an international NGO. It defines itself as a rights-based CSE programme; it pays explicit attention to love, friendship and relationships, and gender-based violence in Ethiopia. It seeks to operate with aspects of health-, rights- and morality-based approaches to sexuality education (see also Braeken and Cardinal, 2008; Miedema et al., 2011). It is a computer-based programme, in which students interactively study the material, and teachers act as a facilitator of education.

### 5.2.2 LIVED REALITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

To complement debates and discourses about what sexuality education should teach and how, it is essential to embrace the view of young people themselves (Allen, 2011). It is worth

asking to what extent students experience school sexuality education programmes as supportive of developing values and attitudes about their personal and sexual development. In fact, not doing so, and only focusing on for instance health outcomes and behaviour change, fails to recognize young people as sexual beings, and arguably as meaningful citizens with social, economic or political agency (Allen, 2005; Braeken and Cardinal, 2008; Ingham, 2005; Jones, 2010; Rijdsdijk et al., 2013). Jones (2010) argues that inherent to various orientations towards sexuality education is the attempt to ‘save’ (assumedly innocent and asexual) children from sexuality problems through education. However, she claims, sexuality education should respond more adequately to the ‘actual child’, which is why there is a need to listen to young people’s voices in this respect. Moreover, including the voices of young people who receive the education can lead to unexpected and refreshing insights, which evaluative measures defined exclusively by adults tend to overlook (Allen, 2005; Bayer, Cabrera, Gilman, Hindin, and Tsui, 2010).

The lived realities of young people may often be contrary to what is taught in sexuality education. Studies have revealed that young people often evaluate their sexuality education as too ‘scientific’, neglecting emotional and relational aspects of sexuality, and detailed real-life sexual knowledge (Allen, 2005). Sexuality education often fails to address young people’s lived experiences, is largely prescriptive, and sometimes even contradictory (Muhanguzi and Ninsiima, 2011). Furthermore, sexuality education is often strongly feminised, focusing on young women’s sexuality problems at the expense of young men’s interests, needs and experiences.

### 5.2.3 GENDER, POWER AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

A relational approach to gender understands gender as a social structure and explores the practices that are shaped by it (Connell, 2002; 2011). It considers multiple dimensions, levels, and types of relationships as core to gender relations: power, economics, emotional relations, and symbolic relations. Schools, in such a framework, are sites where these types of relations are constantly re-negotiated, transformed, or reinforced, for instance in the sexuality education classroom.

CSE is often seen as an opportunity to address and transform gender inequalities. It has been shown to question existing gender relations and encourage more respectful relationships between young women and young men in Ethiopia (Le Mat, 2016). However, at the same time in this and other contexts, the sexuality education classroom can be site of conflicting messages around gender relations, resulting in confusion, fear or cynicism, and reinforcing gender unequal regimes in school and societies (Le Mat, 2016; Muhanguzi and Ninsiima, 2011). Critical thinking skills, encouraged by discussions of gender and power (Bajaj, 2009; Rogow and Haberland, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016), have been revealed to be vital for more gender equal practices and relations in schools. This needs to be

accompanied by adequate (implementation of) curricula, teaching practices, respectful peer relationships (Allen, 2005; Haste, 2013; Muhanguzi and Ninsiima, 2011), and wider school policies and environments.

Studies focused on implementation and practice of sexuality education have revealed that sexuality education is often more female-focused (Muhanguzi and Ninsiima, 2011), and tends to problematise young men's sexuality (Haste, 2013). More specifically, curricula tend to send protective messages to young women, and do not recognize the different cultural scripts young men use (Allen, 2005; Haste, 2013; Muhanguzi and Ninsiima, 2011). This is reflected in, for example, the information sources young men and young women use, (Haste, 2013; Measor, 2004), and in gendered curricula and interactions in school where female students tend to be seen as in need of protective messages, whereas young men are expected to be sexually active (Measor, 2004; Muhanguzi and Ninsiima, 2011; Rijdsdijk et al., 2013). By not recognizing this in the curriculum, sexuality education might risk reproducing the same gender stereotypes, rather than addressing them.

Because of the above, it is questionable to what extent the implementation of CSE programmes can support the critical discussion of gender and power. By using the framework of Miedema (2011), this paper analyses the various rationalisations of teachers how and why to teach sensitive issues in the CSE classroom. The paper engages with tensions that arise with the emphasis of any programmes to improve health outcomes (e.g. increased condom use, decrease in STIs or maternal morbidity), which carry a risk that sexuality education may become little more than another 'developmentalist' instrument (Lewis, 2002; Chilisa, 2005) – a means for economic development rather than a liberating force for empowerment and enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights.

### 5.3 METHODS

Data in this paper derive from interviews and FGDs with students and their teachers in these settings where the sexuality education programme was implemented. In total, 66 participants are included in analysis.

Three upper-primary schools (grades seven and eight), two secondary schools (grades nine and 10) and one out of school youth centre were included. All education centres were located in Oromia region in Ethiopia, but in four different towns. At the time of the data collection (April 2014), the schools and out of school youth centre have been running the programme as a pilot for one to three years. Interpreters knowledgeable about the context and fluent in Afaan Oromo and Amharic translated during some of the FGDs and interviews, and in some cases, helped with the interpretation of findings.

Five FGDs served as the main source for understanding the experiences of students. Focus groups consisted of five to seven members, of which two were same-gender, and three were mixed-gender in composition. Exercises were designed in order to encourage

active discussion. Following the FGDs, individual interviews were held with 15 students 16 teachers, and three teachers who were also parents in all the schools.

Both FGDs and interviews were conducted in an informal and confidential manner, and anonymity and voluntary participation were assured. In order to contextualize the discussions and interviews, additional interviews, and conversations in which ethnographic notes were taken, were held with SRH professionals in national and regional offices of the local implementing NGO. So long as participants felt comfortable about it, FGDs and interviews were recorded and transcribed, with findings being complemented by ethnographic field notes.

Content analysis of the transcriptions and/or ethnographic notes from FGDs and interviews provided insight into how and to what extent students and teachers experienced the sexuality education programme as achieving its aim of assisting young people in their personal and sexual development. The views of participants were compared and contrasted, based on role position and gender, to gain insight into experiences with the programme, and possibly different interpretations of students' needs with respect to personal and sexual development.

## 5.4 FINDINGS

Teachers and young people's accounts with regard to young people's needs and questions about sexuality, and experiences of CSE initiatives in school, revealed gendered practices and practices of exclusion in three important ways. These gendered and exclusionary practices relate to selection of participants, gendered perspectives of the needs of young men and young women, and a lack of discussion about topics relevant to young people's interests, emotions, and relationships. Engagement with young people's voices makes a case for a wider recognition of the central role of gender, emotions, and relations in approaches to sexuality education.

### 5.4.1 SELECTION MECHANISMS

Unequal access to the CSE programme forms the first and most obvious form of gender bias. Many participants felt gender parity in the classroom should be a starting point for a more equitable form of sexuality education. Yet, the extra-curricular programme had no clear guidelines about who could participate and what type of student has priority. The lack of guidelines meant that some schools had developed their own guidelines, some schools indeed aimed to ensure gender parity. Other schools went by a 'first come, first serve' basis, or had developed more detailed criteria based selection of participants on the basis of young people's overall school performance, with a focus on English language skills, perceived behaviour as well as perceived availability of time. For instance, while some schools aimed to have a representation of students classified in 'poor', 'average' and 'good' performing

students in the CSE programme, others included only those students that were considered to perform well in school, as they were considered to be deserving of participation in extra-curricular programmes. Particularly students who performed well in English were selected given the programme was taught in English<sup>14</sup>. In practice, this meant that young women, students with low grades, or those with low socio-economic status were often excluded from the programme. The programme thereby, unintentionally, reproduced existing segregation in society.

Being selected to take part in the CSE programme was regarded as an achievement, producing an advantageous position for CSE students within the school. Particularly gifted young people may at times gain access to international networks through the programme, which further reproduced privilege. At the same time, access to the CSE programme was limited for more disadvantaged students who would benefit as much from it. For instance, one young woman observed that it is often young women from lower-class backgrounds who have the most questions about sexuality given their mothers were less likely to speak to them about it. However, because these young women often were not considered to belong to the category of 'well-performing' students, they tended not to be considered for participation in the programme.

In line with these observations, students and teachers considered young women in particular to need support to attend the CSE programme. In one school, for instance, only three out of the 40 enrolled CSE-students were female. One of these three young women observed that young women in her school needed encouragement to take part in the programme. Additionally, she felt that at least one female teacher should be assigned to teach CSE:

*I think it's best for a girl if there's another woman as a teacher, for us, to be more free. (...) there are some students who feel nervous when they want to explain their idea for [male] teachers, but if there is another [female] teacher I think it's the best. (...) For example, when [girls get their menstruation] for the first time, maybe they feel nervous, but [when] there is a female teacher, maybe they can explain themselves to that teacher freely, because she's female, just like that girl. [Town3, School2, Student23, female]*

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<sup>14</sup> English is the medium of instruction in secondary schools in Ethiopia. In the case of this programme the use of English also reflects the transnational relations that are attached to it: the curriculum was developed by a Netherlands-based NGO and was designed to be used in several countries. However, linguistic norm-setting of donors may exclude or ignore local or contextual meanings expressed in other languages and enforce having to conform to the 'international' norm of using English to privilege Western knowledge on sexual health (see also Chilisa, 2005).

Importantly, most CSE teachers were not selected (or: assigned) for the position based on interest, but rather on subject background, language skills and time availability. Some teachers mentioned that indeed they were not initially motivated to teach the programme, which might have affected classroom interactions.

## 5.4.2 GENDERED PRACTICES AND INTERPRETATIONS

In addition to the challenges in accessing CSE, gender biases in the information communicated within the CSE classroom caused further forms of exclusion. Because of gendered interpretations of what young women's and young men's needs were, the CSE programme did not always appropriately respond to young people's needs. Furthermore, the gender biased information communicated through the lessons reaffirmed a gender order through messages and interactions in the classroom.

### 5.4.2.1 GENDERED INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NEEDS OF YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN

First of all, the language used in relation to young men and young women is a powerful illustration of how young people's perceived needs were fundamentally gendered. In several schools that were part of the study, teachers and students alike considered young women learning the necessary skills 'to protect themselves' ought to be a main focus of their sexuality education. Young women, participants appeared to assume, needed to be given the tools and information to protect themselves from sexual advances in view of the dangers of STIs and HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, and the importance of preserving their virginity. Teachers, for instance, warned young women against the dangers of falling pregnant or losing their virginity before they were married. During an FGD with young people, participants confirmed that lessons around pregnancy and virginity were mostly geared towards advising young women how to protect themselves from shameful consequences of premarital sexual intercourse, rather than discussing intimate and sexual relationships in a broader sense: *'when we talk about virginity, most of the time, even in the programme, it's more focused on girls (...) [not everything] is clear for us.'* [Town1, School1, Student, male, FGD].

Furthermore, it was considered important for young women to learn how to protect themselves from violence from men and boys: *'[Teachers] give an advice related to love, so how she can defend herself from boys, how she can defend the boys using justice system, and also they [refer her to a] club called guidance and counselling for girls'* [Town2, School1, Student11, female]. In another FGD, young women brought up the lack of space to discuss 'premarital sex', fearing judgement and being regarded as indecent. As a consequence, CSE messages directed at young women were geared towards protection, limiting young women's space to explore issues of, for instance, desire as active sexual being (Allen, 2007). Consequently, teachers and



students argued that if young women can manage to protect themselves from these dangers, and focus on their education, they will be able to participate in the labour market and be of importance to their family, community, and country. Thus, young women's sexuality tended to be reduced to something that should be protected, and if protected well, instrumentalised to serve economic interests.

In relation to young men, fewer concerns were raised as to how they ought to protect themselves except with regard to STIs and HIV/AIDS. During an FGD with young men, they repeatedly referred to needing to learn 'how to control themselves'. Young women and teachers similarly referred to 'control' as a critical skill that young men needed to master, illustrating the expectation that young men are naturally predisposed to have strong sexual urges:

*If he has a problem for example if he loves someone and if the girls do not permit to be with him, he may use different forces. So [teachers] can advise him not to do that, to control himself, and to control his feelings. [Town2, School1, Student11, female].*

Teachers advised young men to at least control themselves until they have finished their high school education, as being sexually active was considered to distract students from successfully taking their exams. Teachers, and young men alike, reasoned that, if young men have finished their education, they will have the basic means to participate in the labour market and be able to take care of their future family. However, the assumption that young men are 'naturally' sexually aggressive arguably might limit them in their personal, relational, and sexual development. Because young men were expected to be knowledgeable about sexuality, their questions, concerns, and ideas concerning sexuality received little attention (as is shown in other contexts as well, see for instance Muhanguzi and Ninsiima, 2011). The dichotomous understanding of young women's and young men's needs reproduced stereotypical assumptions about their sexuality and did not question gendered assumptions or address power dynamics.

Contrary to the above assumptions of young women in need to 'protect themselves' and young men to 'control themselves', their actual interests did not seem to revolve around practical advice on how to best do this. Rather, young men and young women were interested in information about sexual intercourse and romantic relationships. However, their means of expressing this interest differed. One teacher observed that young women became quieter when the topic of sexual intercourse was addressed, whereas young men became more enthusiastic:

*...the females are not this much eager to ask, because they are afraid. Boys are asking more. They get some information on sexual acts, in the sexuality part, it talks about oral sex, masturbation...*

[boys ask:] “what does it mean? Is there such like of act?” Just they are too much eager to know.  
[Town2, School1, Teacher5, male]

In interviews, young men indeed expressed an interest in having ‘full information’ about sex and sexuality, which goes beyond information about acts and practice, but also related to emotional and relational matters of how to know when is the right time and how to be able to make their girlfriends happy. However, some teachers again problematised this type of behaviour of young men, complaining that they did not sit still and talked too much during the lessons. Young women on the other hand, were viewed to be mostly well-behaved and did not disturb the class to the same extent. However, this asserts an assumption of innocence that is further reinforced by silence around the topic; young women rather avoided explicit reference to sexuality to avoid being considered rude or judged (see also Lucas, 2001; Mulumebet, 2006; in Kebede, Hilden and Middelthon, 2014). As young women in an FGD pointed out, they feared learning and speaking about ‘premarital sex’, because ‘they are judging. When we talk about sexual intercourse [people would say] “oh she's not good girl”. They're judging you’ [Town4, School1, Student, female, FGD]. It is in these interactions that young men’s sexuality becomes further problematised and young women’s expected lack of interest in sexual intercourse (they were assumed to be more interested in topics such as virginity, pregnancy, and body change) was reinforced. These interactions affirm stereotypes, silences, and a gender order in which there is little space for young women’s sexuality and desire.

#### 5.4.2.2 GENDERED PRACTICES IN SCHOOL: EXCLUSION AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In addition to the gendered identification of what assumed needs of young men versus those of young women were, the toleration of gender-based violence in schools formed another way of gender-based exclusion. Ironically, while students learned about what gender equality means in CSE, their actual experiences in school were far from the ideal picture that was communicated. Gender-based violence could be expressed in the form of power relations, a division of labour in the school (e.g. young women have to clean the compound), the perpetuation and tolerance of sexual violence, and symbolic violence in terms of, for instance, misogynistic language used in school (see also Connell, 2002; Le Mat, 2016). It is important to note that sexual violence may also be perpetuated by teachers; previous research has discussed the severe implications and contradictory messages that affect students, especially young women, as a result of sexual violence in schools that also promote CSE (Le Mat, 2016).

However, it is not only in the perpetuation of sexual and gender-based violence, that contradictory practices such as those described above play out. Regarding the lessons that

are designed to critically address notions of gender and power, one young woman described how different values were reflected in reality:

*There is a problem even at the teachers. Because they teach us even about HIV (...) they see like, all of HIV-infection comes from girls. They think like that. And when we learn, even they break our morals, and we feel angry because of that. Because they tell us that all of the problems come from girls. [Town3, School2, Student22, female]*

This comment reveals how teachers reinforced gender discrimination through their teaching, which paradoxically took place in CSE. Clearly, it was emotionally disturbing to the girl, likely affecting her attachment to the subject, teacher, and possibly schooling in a broader sense.

#### 5.4.3 EXCLUDING SEX FROM SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Finally, exclusion of classroom discussion of the topic of sex itself and the (cultural) meanings attached to it, illustrated the lack of attention for young people's concerns with regard to (their) sexuality. Many young people expressed an interest in knowing more about 'premarital sex' or a positive view on sex and desire and emphasised how related relational and emotional aspects such as friendships and romance were important to them. However, many teachers seemed to neglect or reduce these topics to something that is confined to marriage, and not relevant to young unmarried school-going people.

In facilitating CSE, teaching about taboos and sensitive issues is inevitable. However, for various reasons teachers taking part in the study reportedly struggled to engage with what were seen as highly controversial topics (see also Ingham and Mayhew, 2006; Iyer and Aggleton, 2013; Oshi et al., 2005). Some teachers indicated they felt so uncomfortable to speak openly about pre-marital sex or homosexuality, that they skipped lessons on these sensitive topics all together. Other teachers who did mention these topics in their lessons, seemed to refer to different rationalisations for teaching about these culturally not easily acceptable matters (Schaapveld, 2013; see also Miedema et al., 2011). When it concerned sexual intercourse, most teachers reasoned from a health-based and moralistic perspective in justifying what is taught, or not taught, about it. For instance, by emphasising the 'dangers' of sexual intercourse, the curriculum is used in such a way that it promotes abstinence or delay, rather than, for instance, safe sex. Similarly, teachers emphasised in interviews the importance of teaching that 'sex is not the same as sexuality'. In this lesson, students learned about different levels of intimacy, and listed items ranging between hugging, kissing, and touching to sexual intercourse. Many teachers took this as an opportunity to tell students that sexual intercourse is not necessary, adding that it is also not appropriate at this age, and that they can be intimate with their boyfriends or girlfriends in a different, less dangerous

way. Consequently, the emphasis on the dangers of sex was sometimes reflected in students' statements in interviews:

*Sex first is dangerous, second it is very important. It's dangerous because if we have sex it might give HIV/AIDS or diseases. Sex is important for having a child or for marriage. At the right time. If it is after a marriage, it is very important. But before a marriage it is different, and it is not important.* [Town3, School1, Student, male, FGD]

Teachers typically used phrases such as 'respect their sexuality' to indicate how and why young people should abstain; because sex is dangerous, and because education needs to be prioritised at their age. For teachers, the perception that sexual relations ought to be reserved for marriage justified teaching about a taboo topic such as this from a moralistic perspective, because they regarded it as their moral duty to give young people the 'right' information as a preparation for their future family lives (Miedema et al., 2011). Other teachers justified their lessons on highly sensitive topics based on a health-based point of view; these teachers considered it important to warn students for the dangers of sex, as infections with STIs might problematise their education. Teachers' interpretations of what adequate CSE entailed thus differed from that of the programme designers, who emphasised rights-based rationales. For example, one of the final lessons of the programme encourages students to set goals for the future and to make future plans. In practice, this was often interpreted and communicated as 'focus on your education, and not on sex, to have a bright future', or, in other words, used as an opportunity to again relay messages as to delaying sexual debut. Teachers regarded schooling as critical to prepare students for the labour market and securing their means to attain a bright future. CSE was thus often used to promote abstinence in an effort to decrease the risk that young people would become sexually active and be distracted from completing their education.

Teachers' rationales and justifications for their lessons on sensitive issues stood in stark contrast with the interests and needs of those students who felt it might be the right time for sex and had been in romantic relationships for a while and had pressing questions. For these students, important information was left out, and they did not receive answers to the questions they were concerned about. For instance, one student shared in an interview that details concerning contraceptives had been left out from the lessons, and referred to the teacher's information as 'controlled': *For example if you take different medicines for contraceptives, (...) our teachers tell us what is this, but the teachers information is just controlled you know. It may not go further.* [Town2, School1, Student11, female]. The programme thus did not always give young people the information they needed to make well-informed decisions about issues such as contraceptive methods. Moreover, young people were concerned with emotional and relational dimensions of sexual intercourse, which were discussed to a limited extent due to

the emphasis on dangers and abstinence. These conflicting foci between the aims of teachers and the questions of students created a disconnect between the programme and the students.

As a consequence, students reported they did not feel taken seriously. However, from many teachers' points of view, the best advice to give to young people is to delay sexual initiation, and they regarded it as their (moral) duty as educators to teach accordingly. This sense of responsibility teachers felt thus further complicated informing young unmarried people about sexual relationships. Explanations for this can be found in health-, moral-, or rights-based discourses (see also Miedema et al., 2011), that are used as rationalisations for modification of the (intended) curriculum and make it appropriate according to teachers' own interpretations. Yet, discussion of sexual relationships and expressing desire are essential in addressing gender and power in the sexuality education classroom. Not meeting students' needs and questions about sexuality misrecognized the needs of young people who, as a result, dropped out of the lessons, searched for answers in alternative (and often less reliable) sources, and, at times, left CSE with a sense of frustration and alienation due to the normative messages that were conveyed. Furthermore, these normative messages reinforced prevailing patriarchal norms in schools by generally neglecting questions of sexuality outside of heterosexual marital relationships and teaching that sex, especially for young women, is shameful.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper has identified three mechanisms through which gender, power, and sex influence exclusionary practices in this study sample. The first relates to selection of students and teachers: female students need more affirmative action and a safer classroom environment, and more female teachers should be attracted to facilitating CSE. Secondly, gendered assumptions about young men's and women's needs resulted into conveying partial information and reproduced stereotypes in the school. Thirdly, discussion of sexual relationships and desire were essential in discussing gender and power in the sexuality education classroom yet tended to be avoided by teachers who shifted emphasis to morality or health-informed advices to delay sexual debut. Gender and power seemed to be mentioned superficially and its meaning communicated as factual knowledge, rather than as a starting point to question the current gender order in school. With regard to CSE's potential to renegotiate or transform gender relations in societies, it would thus be important to move beyond just 'including gender and power' in the sexuality education curriculum, and instead to make this a central discussion that connects to relations in schools, families, culture and society (Connell, 2002; Harrison and Hillier, 1999).

The paper has also shown how the CSE programme is implemented differently when contextualized or modified by teachers' interpretations on what is important to teach to students, as well as by persisting structural gender and power relations. The discrepancy

between the design of the programme as comprehensive and rights-based education on the one hand, and the discourses used to negotiate actual content of messages communicated in the classroom, illustrate an adapted interpretation of what sexuality education should teach. A more relational, perhaps participatory approach including young people as well as teachers in the design and implementation of the programme could better bridge these various interpretations of what sexuality education should promote and entail. Furthermore, it would be important to gain further insight in what entails and defines a *comprehensive* form of sexuality education. This applies not only to the views of students, teachers, and NGOs in Ethiopia and transnationally, but it is important to theoretically better understand what concepts exactly are underpinning CSE. In this regard, the findings of this study point towards the importance of addressing gender and power structures at the school level, and arguably broader society.

Finally, the contradictions between young people's interest in knowing more about premarital romantic relationships, sexual intercourse, and related emotional attachments, versus the cultural inappropriateness of such messages, illustrate overall confusion around the introduction of CSE. In line with the above, it is thus not only important theoretically to better understand the underpinnings of CSE, but also how this may differ between contexts. Furthermore, methodologically it is important to pay more explicit attention to cultural meanings of issues such as marriage, virginity, or premarital relationships. Often times, sexuality education tends to take a 'developmentalist' approach, instrumentalising sexual health and gender equality to a means for economic growth (Cornwall, 2003; Lewis, 2002). The fact that this translation in the sexuality education classroom results into a more restrictive message than intended, points to a need to better understand, adapt to and recognize cultural interpretations of what education means (Chilisa, 2005) and what values ought to be promoted through education, particularly sexuality education.