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Beyond the facts

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

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Publication date

2020

Document Version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Le Mat, M. L. J. (2020). *Beyond the facts: Addressing gender-based violence through comprehensive sexuality education in schools in Ethiopia*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding chapter, I will bring together the main empirical findings of this research, to discuss CSE's contribution to addressing gender-based violence in education. In so doing, I will reflect on the theoretical and methodological approaches used in this study and implications for future research, policy, and practice. I start this concluding chapter with a summary of the main findings, followed by a discussion that connects the findings and highlights the elements of the study that have been particularly insightful. Based upon these reflections, I present recommendations for policy and practice as well as future research, and end with a final selection of overall concluding remarks.

7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This thesis has sought to answer the question: How do young people, teachers, and stakeholders view CSE's contribution to addressing gender-based violence in schools in Ethiopia? The thesis took as a starting point that in order to gain insight into this question, it is necessary 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 on CSE within the economic and political context of education and international development. Furthermore, this thesis has explicitly focused on the views and experiences of young men, young women, and their teachers, as they directly engage with CSE at the level of the school.

The second chapter of this thesis analysed how young men and young women define, experience, and interpret sexual and gender-based violence in education and how they think it should be addressed. The chapter conceptualised a relational approach to gender-based violence, untangling the interplay of power, labour, emotional and symbolic relations. It revealed the large discrepancy in views between young men and young women: the former viewed sexual violence largely as detrimental to economic and developmental outcomes; the latter embedded gender-based violence in a context of emotional and symbolic relations, that were accompanied by fear, emotional distress, and triggered self-exclusion. Furthermore, school was a site where sexual health was promoted, yet sexual violence remained highly tolerated. While young men and young women found that CSE created more understanding between them through promoting 'friendly' cross-sex relationships, the analysis also highlighted that critical thinking efforts with regards to sexual violence and all its relational dimensions needed to be strengthened and institutionalised throughout the school.

Chapter three focused on the question how and why Ethiopia has adopted and reformulated CSE within national policy frameworks. The chapter highlighted the particular political and economic dynamics underpinning policy reformulation and revealed that CSE is largely a donor-driven policy in Ethiopia. CSE was advanced through harmonisation

(creating and promoting a unified Eastern and Southern African policy on CSE) and dissemination (promoting the policy through sharing positive outcomes and creating a CSE-network) mechanisms, typically initiated by UN-organisations and bilateral donors. However, some actors highlighted that the policy and such transfer mechanisms were at times viewed as an imposition. In particular, opponents of the policy were seen to advance a ‘cultural difference’ argument, emphasising cultural differences between the European designers of CSE policy and programmes, and the Ethiopian beneficiaries. Consequently, CSE was reformulated to fit developmental, health and economic, outcomes, reflecting Ethiopia’s national policy priorities, – at the expense of a policy responsive to gender relations. NGOs in this context had little space to exercise influential power in light of the 2009 proclamation and had to restrict their focus in CSE programming to promoting health outcomes only (de-emphasising aspects related to gender relations and rights). As such, the reformulated policy did not always reflect the interests of those it concerns, namely, young men and young women, particularly their interests pertaining to gender-based violence, as this was scarcely linked to CSE in policy adoption. That is, in policy text, CSE was strongly related to improving knowledge on SRH, whereas young people felt they received enough technical knowledge but needed more guidance on social, gender, and relational aspects of sexuality (see chapters 2 and 5).

The fourth chapter presented an analysis of CSE teachers’ enactments of the policy at the school level and identified factors that affected their enactments. The chapter revealed that CSE teachers were more than merely ‘facilitators’ of a programme, as they were conceptualised by programme designers. Instead, they acted as important mediators between school, community, and students’ families. CSE teachers identified that the comprehensive underpinnings of CSE often contradicted values or ideas in their communities about what sexuality education should entail. Yet, they attached importance to teaching CSE according to its guidelines and curriculum. As such, the CSE policy shaped teachers to be *voluntary advocates*, who had to maintain a careful balance between advocacy for and re-contextualization of CSE. In this light, teachers emphasised health and educational outcomes over other components within CSE. Therefore, addressing gender-based violence was secondary in the enactment of the CSE curriculum, and CSE teachers rarely raised addressing gender-based violence in education as a priority. The lack of attention to gender-based violence was partly due to the controversial nature of the topic, especially when concerning school settings. In addition, many teachers felt unprepared and unable to follow up on instances of gender-based violence, fearing resistance from school management and community if they interfered with what are commonly considered family matters. A focus on teacher enactment also revealed that due to the affiliation with NGOs and foreign aid, teachers enjoyed a higher social status within the community, but also, because of teachers’ presumed access to foreign funds, teachers experienced higher responsibility for attending to

students' (economic) needs – needs teachers and schools could not always fulfil. Teachers were not remunerated for teaching CSE and the school's scarcity of resources also affected CSE teachers' enactments, in that they were unable to teach CSE in a way that satisfied them. Hence, teachers' enactments of CSE are affected by socio-economic as well as cultural factors.

Chapter five then focused on how, according to teachers and students, gender and power relations affected the ways in which CSE might address gender-based violence in education. The paper identified three mechanisms that negatively affected promoting positive gender relations, and ultimately addressing gender-based violence in the CSE classroom, which were: 1) selection to participate in the programme (young women, particularly those from poorer households, had fewer possibilities for participation due to their family responsibilities; school policies did not always ensure a gender balance); 2) gendered interpretations of young people's needs and gendered practices in the school (for instance, despite instruction in CSE on gender equality, young women experienced discrimination in school, and sometimes also within CSE); 3) restrictive discussions on topics that young men and young women thought would be relevant to them, such as love, relationships and sexual intercourse. As a consequence, important information was withheld from young people, and some aspects of the programme (abstinence) were overemphasised at the expense of others (e.g. safe sex, respectful relationships). Because of this, only superficial aspects of gender relations and gender-based violence were addressed in CSE. Hence, in order for CSE to better contribute to addressing gender-based violence and creating positive gender relations, engagement with gender and power relations within CSE policy adoption and teacher training should be of central concern. Engagement with gender and power relations should include discussions that connect to relationships in schools, families, culture and society.

The final empirical chapter analysed how 'culture', a recurring theme throughout all findings, was conceptualised and discussed within the CSE classroom. As became evident from the chapters on policy adoption and reformulation, and teacher enactment of CSE, 'cultural difference' is often referred to as an argument for resisting, modifying, or advocating for CSE. In light of that finding, the chapter zoomed in on the question: According to teachers and students, how does culture affect the ways in which CSE might contribute to addressing gender-based violence in education? Contrary to theoretical understandings of culture as fluid and multi-dimensional, teachers and students conceived of culture along two axes: modern/traditional and good/bad. Participants viewed both modernity and tradition to have elements of 'good' and 'bad' culture, and typically considered that CSE addressed gender-based violence by pragmatically instructing young people to reject 'bad' traditions (e.g., early marriage) and replace them with 'good' modern cultures (e.g., openly speaking about reproductive health). Such instruction included

debunking ‘myths’ with ‘facts’. Within these categorical understandings of culture, notions of patriarchy or ideals of female decency underpinning unequal gender relations were rarely discussed and posed limitations to young women’s emancipation and to addressing gender-based violence. Moreover, static representations of culture seemed to discuss gender inequalities as (traditional) culture, and as such, CSE risked instilling imperialist notions that ‘bad’ traditions can be addressed with development (promoted by the Global North). In addition, instructing students to replace ‘bad’ traditions with ‘good’ modern culture also did not encourage critical thinking skills or personal reflection on how one might produce or reproduce a certain culture. Culture is thus not merely a ‘factor’ that can hamper or strengthen the delivery of CSE, but rather a changing reality that needs to be integrated and addressed in teaching on sexuality and gender relations. Therefore, in recognizing the fluid nature of culture and its influence on gender relations and notions of sexuality education, it is important for CSE, in policy and in practice, to find ways to deal with and encourage dialogue on different sets of value systems that affect notions around gender and sexuality.

Thus, coming back to the question how CSE might contribute to addressing gender-based violence, this thesis has revealed that CSE has created opportunities to talk about gender relations in new ways in education, yet at the same time, risks perpetuating gender inequalities and violent gender orders in practice. On the positive side, young people reported being more self-confident and able to speak up for themselves, and engaging more in mixed-gender activities without assuming sexualised interactions or facing violent encounters based on their gender. These positive results are quite remarkable given the narrow scope for CSE within national education policies in Ethiopia (see section 7.2). Furthermore, in a society where reportedly only 20% of women and 38% of men have comprehensive knowledge of HIV transmission and prevention (Demographic Health Survey [DHS], 2017), the information presented in CSE is without doubt an important benefit of the programme. Young men and young women particularly voiced the view that CSE teachers who were able to connect to students’ views and experiences and treated all students equally were central to improving gender relations in their schools. Yet, global guidelines, the national policy environment, and institutional support at schools appeared to be insufficient to support CSE teachers in including relational elements of sexuality and gender in their CSE lessons. Teaching on gender-based violence seemed to be in the main geared towards pragmatic instruction without attention to the social hierarchies that sustain and silence gender-based violence. Notably, gender-based violence was typically presented as something outside of oneself and particularly something that happens outside of the school, among the ‘uneducated’ and ‘undeveloped’ segments of the society (see chapter 6). In this way, CSE in practice seemed to present development and modernity as solutions to gender-based violence; simplifying gender relations and their embedded socio-economic complexities to a matter of being ‘aware’. Within schools, CSE in its current form thus risks

reproducing hierarchies between the Global North and Global South through ‘developmentalist’ language (see also Lewis, 2002; Roodsaz, 2018; Tikly, 2004). Furthermore, by employing discursive rationales of being ‘pragmatic’ and focusing on factual information, CSE might miss the opportunity to add to feminist agendas of emancipation and social transformation, which would require a deeper engagement with structural relations (Connell, 2002; Ampofo et al., 2004). Nevertheless, the policy has made important steps by bringing to the agenda the importance of SRHR for young people worldwide, and over the past two decades, has made significant progress in increasing its attention to gender and power relations, which could ultimately improve CSE’s contribution to addressing gender-based violence (see also Haberland, 2015; UNESCO, 2018a). This study has revealed that such attention to gender and power relations in CSE should concentrate more on emotional and symbolic relations than it currently does in Ethiopia. Importantly, gender relations might differ between contexts. Hence, ways need to be sought to contextualize the global CSE policy to the national political and socio-economic context, as well as to the context of the school, while considering and institutionalising participation of young women and men and their teachers in doing so.

7.2 DISCUSSION

In this discussion, I connect the main findings of this study, and highlight the elements that have been particularly insightful. Without doubt, gender-based violence is a prevalent and urgent problem in schools in Ethiopia (Bekele, 2012; Mulugeta, 2016; Parkes et al., 2017). The qualitative and interpretative approach taken in this thesis has offered important complementary insights into the nature, scope, and possible ways of addressing gender-based violence in education in Ethiopia. This qualitative approach has specifically advanced our understandings of the interpretations of gender-based violence by young men and young women themselves, and makes the methodological and empirical case that in order to assess how a policy might adequately address gender-based violence, one must include the (possibly multiple) perspectives of those whom it concerns, in this case young men and young women. The interdisciplinary nature of the study has also proven fruitful for improving frameworks used to scrutinise the multiple factors that affect gender-based violence in education. That is, gender-based violence in education is not a problem of the education sector alone and cannot be fully comprehended without drawing on gender theories or addressed without understanding its socio-political dynamics.

As this study has traced CSE’s contribution to addressing gender-based violence both at the national policy level as well as at the level of schools, the factors that have re-shaped the policy have become evident. The analysis drew on data gathered in nine educational institutions; one in the urban capital city and the others in semi-urban and rural towns. It is important to note that analysis of the data from one school cannot necessarily be generalised

to apply to other schools – a characteristic of most qualitative research. While some may consider this a limitation of the research, the methodological approach in fact strengthened the finding that one policy might be enacted differently across all school settings (see e.g. chapter 4). Nevertheless, a number of factors that informed the enactment of the policy were similar across school sites, and included: the diverging interpretations of CSE and rationales for promoting the policy; the political and socio-economic context in which the policy is adopted and enacted; the ambiguous positions teachers have in advocating for and re-contextualizing the policy; and silences around controversial topics such as gender-based violence. As a result, the policy has been confined in Ethiopia to promoting health and development outcomes. To illustrate, at the national level policy debates around whether or not to adopt the policy were structured around concerns with donors imposing the policy and issues of cultural difference (see chapter 3). Consequently, CSE aims and scope have been narrowed down to being an instrument to improve health, economic, and development outcomes based on promoting factual knowledge about SRH – at the expense of addressing the symbolic and emotional dimensions of gender-based violence. The narrowing down of the aims of CSE to being instrumental to development outcomes was also reflected in schools, where teachers, in particular, have ambiguous positions in enacting the policy, which limited CSE teachers to address gender-based violence. Furthermore, when educational institutions are highly sexualised and violent spaces themselves, CSE teachers' abilities to address gender-based violence remain very marginal when limited to the space of a non-formal educational initiative alone.

Connecting together the empirical findings of this study with the theoretical approach based on gender relations, it seems that CSE in its current form in Ethiopia is addressing only the 'tip of the iceberg'. That is to say, the fact-based information that CSE provides on SRH is emphasised to promote the policy, and only some attention is paid to encouraging gender equality. Within the policy context of Ethiopia, the attention to gender equality is viewed in light of equal labour relations, instrumental to economic growth and development outcomes. As such, other gender relations underlying gender-based violence, namely power, emotional, and symbolic relations (Connell, 2002; chapter 2), receive less attention. Indeed, these elements were largely ignored in national policy debates that focused on cultural differences and in which CSE was strongly resisted by influential actors. Consequently, CSE teachers reported that it was difficult for them to discuss controversial topics such as gender-based violence and expressed a need for more training and support. The updated global guidelines on CSE (UNESCO, 2018a), which have a strengthened focus on gender relations underpinning promotion of SRHR compared to the previous version, should thus further engage with the question how to support CSE teachers in various environments to address the multiple forms of gender-based violence. It is important to note here, that this study has highlighted the reformulation and re-contextualization of the global policy only in Ethiopia;

the same global policy might be enacted differently in other contexts. For instance, in schools in Peru and Guatemala, CSE seemed to be more strongly geared towards addressing gender-based violence (see Panchaud et al., 2018), contrary to countries in Africa, including Kenya, Ghana (Panchaud et al., 2018), Senegal (Crossouard et al., 2017), and Ethiopia. Arguably, these differences can only be explained by understanding the socio-political and historical dynamics of policy adoption and enactment.

7.2.1 LEARNING FROM THE ETHIOPIAN EXPERIENCE

Drawing on the case of Ethiopia has particularly helped to advance our understanding of the politics and economics of policy transfer in the case of a highly donor-dependent, yet often uncompromising national policy setting. The donor-driven nature of CSE in Ethiopia has added to the controversy of the agenda in the country out of a concern regarding resisting Western imposition; this possibly explains why Ethiopia was a late adopter of the policy. The case of Ethiopia has also shown that when gender-based violence in education is mainly conceptualised at national level as a barrier to using education as a vehicle of economic growth, initiatives to address gender-based violence are at risk of being reduced to ‘developmentalist’ agendas that are more concerned about economic growth than equality and social justice (see section 7.2.2 and Lewis, 2002; also observed by Østebø and Haukanes, 2016). Indeed, policy concerns in relation to gender equality seem to be mainly an add-on to other more prominent (economic) policy objectives – a finding that in other contexts, such as in Uganda, has been linked to donor-driven policy making (see, e.g., Datzberger and Le Mat, 2018).

The case of Ethiopia has also provided rich insights into how an originally rights-based policy was re-contextualized in a setting where NGOs, who are among the main implementers of the policy, were, until recently, restricted from working with rights-based agendas. What has been particularly interesting was that despite formal restrictions against NGOs’ work on agendas related to rights, they managed to join discussion about the adoption and formulation of CSE through networking strategies with international organisations and bilateral donors (see chapter 3). While international organisations have more of a mandate in Ethiopia to promote the policy for national adoption than NGOs, NGOs established ways to voice a similar discursive policy logic from below (i.e., within schools and communities) in favour of CSE. As such, NGOs have adopted the same language as international organisations and bilateral donors (see also Østebø and Haukanes, 2016) – a language similarly adopted by CSE teachers. As such, NGOs and to some extent CSE teachers are connected to the new global actors that shape education policies, and arguably, as actors that influence change in gender orders informed by transnational interactions (Connell, 2002). That is, through NGO policy and discourse, development aid and policy transfer, gender issues are regulated and possibly become more and more similar

across the globe; this consequently might inspire resistance, in light of concerns about Western imposition alongside wishes to exercise control over national agendas and identities. The role of national NGOs has thus become increasingly important and contentious in advancing global agendas related to gender equality and gender-based violence, while the scope and ways in which NGOs are able to enact their agendas are very particular to national (legislative) contexts. Hence, not only should the global CSE policy be contextualized to national political and socio-cultural settings, such contextualization should also consider the space and means of NGOs to do so, as main actors in shaping the national policy and programmes.

Including the realities at the school-level in the analysis revealed that CSE is re-contextualized in schools largely in view of socio-economic concerns and education agendas that are considered more pressing than CSE – factors affecting the enactment of CSE that until now have mostly gone unrecognized (see e.g. Huaynoca et al., 2014; Panchaud et al., 2018; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016, 2018). One important factor that informed re-contextualization was that the priority of the school management was to improve educational outcomes. A study in Kenya similarly highlighted that in competitive educational settings, school managements tend to be more interested in exam outcomes than in addressing the root causes of gender-based violence (Vanner, 2017). Indeed, the national policy on CSE and on gender-based violence more broadly is focused on eliminating gender-based violence as a barrier to education in Ethiopia, but does not address the emotional and symbolic elements of gender-based violence, which are detrimental to the well-being of young women and young men (chapters 2 and 5). This analysis has thus highlighted that while the aims of a global policy might resonate with the views, experiences, and identified priorities of young men and young women, and their teachers, the various national and school-level policy priorities are important factors that re-shape the initiative. Furthermore, as this study and other studies have shown and continue to highlight, gender-based violence is highly prevalent in schools, but is one of the most silenced and neglected educational problems today, which makes it even more difficult to address (through CSE or other policies).

7.2.2 BEYOND THE FACTS: LOGICS OF CULTURALISM AND DEVELOPMENTALISM

This research has considered CSE as not merely a neutral or fact-based initiative to improve global health outcomes but has situated the policy in the highly contested terrains of education and international development. This approach has revealed how issues of culturalism and developmentalism affect the ways in which CSE might contribute to addressing gender-based violence. That is, through logics of culturalism and developmentalism, gender-based violence often tended to be discussed and narrowed down to a harmful cultural tradition by teachers and policy makers, to be solved by development,

modernity, and education, including CSE (see chapter 6). In the following, I discuss the implications of these framings and why they are problematic. The culturalist critique does not mean, however, that culture plays no role in the ways in which CSE can contribute to addressing gender-based violence; in fact, this thesis has revealed the importance of clarifying conceptually what is meant by ‘culture’, and has argued that in order to address the root causes of gender-based violence, it is necessary to move away from ambiguous terms such as ‘culture’ to explain violence or to resist policies. Instead, it is necessary to discuss the gender relations and socio-political factors that underlie violence and resistance to policies that aim to address violence.

Culturalist and developmentalist framings of CSE are problematic because first of all they depoliticise CSE as a policy, and resistance against it. As the introductory chapter already highlighted, debates around CSE have often discussed the secular and progressive underpinnings of the policy, which are reasons for resistance by conservative or religious actors. Consequently, several authors have highlighted concerns that those who have reservations about the policy are labelled as the conservative and traditional ‘Other’ who ought to better fit global (secular) narratives (Lamb, 2013; Miedema, 2018; Rasmussen, 2012; Roodsaz, 2018). In a similar vein, this thesis has revealed that a ‘cultural difference’ argument was particularly employed to resist the policy. ‘Cultural difference’ seemed to mainly refer to concerns about the mentioning of homosexuality in CSE. Rejection of policies related to sexual diversity in African countries might emerge from a political agenda to reject Western imposition and exercise domestic control (Wieringa and Sívori, 2013; Weiss and Bosia, 2013). In fact, it is with a similar rationale that religious actors such as the Catholic church, which have a growing influence in African countries, employ resistance to ‘secular’ and ‘liberal’ gender ideologies as a means to situate themselves as an ‘authentic’ African voice that resists imposition of Western gender ideologies (Bracke and Paternotte, 2016). It is ironic that churches frame resistance to Western gender ideologies as ‘African authenticity’, considering the fact that they are often funded by European and American religious institutions and have been instrumental in colonialism and imperialism. Nevertheless, the influence of churches, and the transnational funding mechanisms involved in funding churches, should not be underestimated (Kaoma, 2013; Bracke and Paternotte, 2016).

The arguments for resisting the gender ideologies underpinning emancipation are voiced as a matter of ‘cultural difference’ or ‘religious identity’, and thus conceal political homophobia or other moral and political agendas. An additional consequence is that sexuality becomes a strategic focus of post-colonial and authoritarian regimes, where in particular, homosexuality is condemned as ‘un-African’ and female submissiveness is celebrated (Ndijo, 2013; Wieringa and Sívori, 2013). As such, it becomes evident that resistance to CSE policy is not merely a concern with cultural relevance or appropriateness, but also enables the social control of sexualities, detrimental to the emancipation of women

and LGBTQ+ people. Ironically, depoliticised arguments of ‘cultural difference’ are made possible by the global framing of CSE as a ‘progressive’ policy resisted by the traditional ‘Other’, which diverts attention away from political (and arguably, patriarchal) ideologies that inspire resistance to policies related to sexual and gender justice. However, when the well-being of young men and young women is positioned centrally, as was done in this research, it is worth noting that young women in particular, but also young men, were vocal about the importance they attached to talking about gender relations and equality. Hence, from this perspective, promoting gender equality is not an ‘imported’ or ‘Western’ gender ideology, but expresses an evident desire for respect and equality that is a major concern for young people in Ethiopia.

Secondly, as the empirical chapters have shown, framing focused on cultural differences is visible not only in the policy adoption process in Ethiopia but also in its enactment in schools: an overemphasis on modern and traditional cultures produced an additional binary based on dividing society into ‘educated’ and ‘developed’ versus ‘uneducated’ and ‘undeveloped’ segments. It is with such binary framings in mind, that young people were pragmatically instructed to replace ‘bad traditions’ with ‘good modernity’, so that they, as educated and developed young people, could make contributions to the development of their own society (see chapters 5 and 6). Through such framings, CSE in practice contributed to shaping particular notions of ‘good’ African/Ethiopian citizenship through the promotion of certain types of sexualities, while rejecting others, especially those labelled as ‘bad modernity’ (see also Masvawure, 2013; Ndiyo, 2013). Such pragmatic instruction in CSE classrooms also risks reinforcing the notion that gender equality agendas are ideals that come with (Western-inspired) modernity, and may not recognize variations and inequalities within societies or inspire students to develop personal connections to the topics addressed, such as culture and gender-based violence. Interestingly, when unpacking what participants meant by ‘culture’, most of its elements were related to gender and power relations. Gender and power relations should thus be discussed more centrally within CSE classrooms and teacher guidelines, to facilitate a more precise discussion of the root causes of gender-based violence and to avoid the risks of culturalism outlined above. Indeed, this thesis has highlighted the importance of CSE going ‘beyond the facts’ to strengthen elements such as critical thinking skills and reflexivity within CSE policy guidelines and in practice. Instead of ‘Othering’ oneself and one’s own culture, these elements might, in fact, inspire ways to act and organise for social transformation.

Finally, socio-cultural factors do affect the ways in which CSE is enacted in schools in Ethiopia (see chapter 4; Browes, 2015; Huayno et al., 2014; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016, 2018), albeit in more complex ways than culturalist or developmentalist frames of thought would suggest. This study has particularly highlighted the unique and courageous roles CSE teachers take up in translating and re-contextualizing CSE initiatives; CSE teachers navigate

very sensitive terrains of socio-cultural contexts and gender ideologies, within contexts of high social control. CSE teachers' innovative ways of re-contextualizing and making the CSE initiative appropriate to the school's socio-cultural setting thus deserve recognition, and could be a useful potential source of knowledge when trying to understand the multiple dynamics at the level of the school and community that affect what CSE looks like in practice. At the same time, this navigation remained a challenging and sometimes tiring task for teachers, especially considering that they were not remunerated for teaching CSE. Moreover, utilizing CSE for the promotion of positive gender relations was interpreted in varying (and sometimes counter-productive) ways by teachers. Hence, teachers' positions and abilities to do so should be strengthened through CSE initiatives as well as other means.

7.2.3 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: AN EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM

This thesis has conceptualised gender-based violence in education as an educational problem in the sense that the toleration and normalisation of gender-based violence in education is not only detrimental to the well-being of young women and young men in schools, but also poses challenges to teachers, school management, and the education sector. These challenges include the question how to adequately address gender-based violence not only in terms of instilling formal codes of ethics and referral systems, but also with regards to curricular responses including the 'hidden curriculum', and teachers' and students' possibilities of reporting and addressing it (see also Parkes, 2015; Bhana, 2012, 2015).

In order to improve such a sector-wide response to gender-based violence in education, it is essential to develop a clear contextualized educational understanding of the problem based on gender relations. As Unterhalter and North (2017) revealed, conceptual understandings travel and change between policy makers, and in the case of gender, often narrow down. For example, notions of gender equality are often measured using the much narrower indicators of gender parity in schooling, and notions of gender-based violence remain focused on interpersonal acts and relations, ignoring institutional dynamics that contribute to violence. Indeed, in Ethiopia, attention to gender-based violence remains on the system level (for instance, instilling codes of conduct or a gender focal person – see also Parkes et al., 2017), but neglects the crucial contributions education could make through relational and reflexive attention to gender-based violence.

Hence, this thesis has identified that the educational logic underpinning CSE needs to be further developed and specified, as CSE was typically promoted with a health-outcomes rationale in Ethiopia. Interestingly, CSE was particularly resisted by several education actors, including the MoE and school management. The fact that the MoE tended to resist the policy is not unique to Ethiopia – similar opposition from MoEs was reported in Ghana and Kenya (Panchaud et al., 2018). In this thesis, I suggest that the reason why CSE might be less appealing to education actors might be related to the emphasis on health outcomes in

the global promotion of the policy, whereas MoEs are more concerned with educational outcomes¹⁹. Educational outcomes are not (yet) part of the discursive policy logic in (inter)national policy discussions, although CSE teachers did see the benefits of CSE in improved educational outcomes of CSE students. At the same time, such outcomes-oriented logic risks overlooking the essential elements of critical thinking skills and reflexivity in teaching and learning about gender-based violence. In this respect, the theoretical lens of gender relations is a useful approach to identify the multifaceted gender relations that shape and (re)produce violence, within educational institutions as well. That is, instead of understanding gender equality in terms of gender ‘parity’ alone, a relational approach focuses instead on the social relations that construct, challenge, or reproduce gender orders. As such, the relational approach might invite discussion of societal structures underpinning gender-based violence and vulnerability to violence (see also Ampofo et al., 2004). This is useful in discussing gender-based violence in education, because it does not treat gender-based violence merely as a barrier to education or an unwanted or pathological ‘act’ with negative consequences, but allows the connection of such micro-level ‘acts’ to larger gender regimes and institutions. Education that addresses gender-based violence must thus connect to these larger institutional and relational elements of fear, violence, and silence. To achieve such education, conceptual understandings of the roles of education thus must also go beyond instrumental and developmentalist approaches to education (see, e.g., Lewis, 2002; Tikly, 2004; Unterhalter, 2015), but rather engage with the emancipating potential an education that inspires critical examination of social inequalities and organisation for social change.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above concluding reflections, in this section I present the recommendations for future research, policy, and practice. I start with suggestions for policy and practice, followed by a discussion of future research directions based on this study.

7.3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

CSE is only one component within a wider education sector (see also Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2018). This means that to address gender-based violence in education, not only CSE, but also the wider education sector must take steps that go beyond improving legislative frameworks, important as these are. For instance, national teacher training should be strengthened to develop the necessary skills in teachers to encourage critical thinking and

¹⁹ It is worth noting, however, that at the time of writing this concluding chapter, the MoE in Ethiopia has announced the aim to develop a CSE curriculum to be integrated into the formal education curriculum. The GoE has furthermore announced its intention to update the 2009 CSO proclamation to open up space for CSOs and NGOs to work on rights-based agendas.

reflexivity in young people about gender relations, gender-based violence and social change. It also means that educators must be trained in recognizing gender-based violence, and that there must be ways for young people to be able to report it, and for school management to take action against it. Such responses should be supported by appropriate policy logics and frameworks, as well as a favourable school climate.

In view of arguments based on cultural differences, the binaries enabled by global CSE policy that classify proponents of the policy as progressive, secular, and developed, and opponents as traditional, religious, and underdeveloped have proven unhelpful in developing a policy dialogue on how CSE might enable education that addresses issues such as gender-based violence. Indeed, policy dialogue should rather focus on how to employ those elements of CSE or similar policies that might address the multiple components of gender-based violence in education. Similarly, existing global policies should provide clearer contextual guidelines for teachers on how to engage with the sensitive terrains of gender relations in a variety of cultural and socio-economic settings.

Symbolic, power, and emotional relations are central elements of gender-based violence in education that must be addressed alongside its detrimental effects on health, educational outcomes, and economic relations. CSE, with its strong fact-based rationale, might miss important opportunities to engage with these relational dynamics, and risks neglecting an engagement with other elements central to addressing gender-based violence. To engage with these dynamics, features of other policies such as gender-transformative approaches, respectful relationships, and social studies approaches to sexuality and relationships education (see Ollis, 2014; Rogow and Haberland, 2005; Rutgers, 2018) might offer useful elements for CSE programme developers in addressing gender-based violence more carefully in CSE programmes.

Finally, this thesis has argued that to understand gender-based violence in education settings and the ways in which initiatives such as CSE might address it, it is essential to engage with the views of young women, young men, and their teachers. The study has also recommended not only to do this in research, but also to consider these perspectives in policy making and developing programmatic responses to gender-based violence. Furthermore, ways need to be sought to develop policies and programmatic responses that address problems that are typically silenced. Here, the relational approach might provide a conceptual tool to highlight the multiple dynamics of gender-based violence, including dynamics that often go unrecognized.

7.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

An important issue that this thesis has highlighted is the essential roles teachers might take up in addressing gender-based violence in education, but gender-based violence cannot be addressed by CSE teachers alone; while CSE teachers typically took up roles as advocates for

equal gender relations and at times successfully inspired young people to renegotiate gender regimes, other school teachers (and sometimes CSE teachers as well) were reported to send contradictory messages and entrench gender inequalities (see chapters 2 and 5). Hence, future research should explore how CSE training can encourage teachers' supportive and emancipating roles, and how, for instance, national teacher training might include attention to gender-based violence in education.

A second central study finding is that the relational and reflexive elements of teaching about gender relations and gender-based violence were largely lacking in the enactments and conceptualisations of CSE in Ethiopia. What this study explored to a lesser extent though, is how such relational and reflexive elements might feature in curriculum and pedagogy. However, findings of this study indicated that student-centred pedagogy is fruitful in encouraging self-confidence and that the gender-transformative underpinnings to the curriculum and pedagogy are important elements in (re-)negotiating gender relations. One recommendation for future research is thus to explore how CSE curriculum and pedagogy might be linked to engaging with young people's relational and reflexive understandings of gender-based violence in education. Arguably, this might not be a question for CSE alone, but could apply to a larger range of educational initiatives and education policies that aim to address gender-based violence.

Third, the case of Ethiopia has provided interesting insights into the socio-economic and political aspects of the adoption and reformulation of and resistance against CSE, particularly in light of the fact that NGOs were limited in working on rights-based policies. With the current developments in the country, in which the CSE proclamation is being updated, and the MoE has expressed interest in developing a national CSE curriculum, future research should scrutinise how such a (possibly more favourable) changing political environment might affect the reformulation of CSE policy and the priorities it might address. This transition period might thus be an ideal time to explore how these changes in the political environment affect the adoption and reformulation of CSE at the national level, and consequently its re-contextualization in schools. Indeed, according to participants, the MoE typically resisted CSE out of a concern regarding 'Western imposition', particularly related to promoting values around LGBTQ+ rights. However, other participants also suggested that resistance to CSE is related to gender ideologies of (male) policy makers and powerful actors who are not interested in promoting gender equality. Future research might thus explore whether and how the transitions within the government affect how concepts that initially triggered resistance might be differently interpreted and taken up in policies. Similarly, comparative studies could provide useful insights into the factors that inform policy adoption and enactment differently in various contexts.

Future research should also pay attention to how, alongside political developments, religious institutions are part of the reformulation and re-contextualization of CSE in

Ethiopia – an issue that has not yet been explored. Indeed, the influence of religious institutions is particularly important in light of the growing influence of transnational church organisations in African countries that actively resist policies related to gender and sexual emancipation and claim to do this out of a concern to preserve ‘authentic’ Africanness (Kaoma, 2013; Bracke and Paternotte, 2016). Studies should also further explore the implications of such logics of ‘authentic’ Africanness with which CSE is resisted for the types of sexual citizenships that are promoted at the level of the school and within CSE classrooms (see e.g. Kaoma, 2013; Masvawure, 2013; Ndiyo, 2013).

Methodologically, this thesis has made the case that in order to fully grasp how CSE might address gender-based violence, it is essential to include the views of young men and young women as well as their teachers. This methodological approach has brought to light important comparative and interpretative analyses (see, e.g., chapter 2). The methodology required a highly reflexive approach by the researcher in terms of positionality implications, and consideration of the ethical implications of engaging with young people on sensitive topics (see introduction section 1.4; Bloor, et al., 2001; Heslop et al., 2017; Leach, 2006). In addition, participants’ interpretations of gender-based violence remained largely focused on violence against girls and women, and future research should make efforts to understand how notions of masculinity shape gender orders and violence in schools. Furthermore, asking participants about their views and interpretations might limit the findings to representing the views and interpretations of participants at that moment in time – a longer term and ethnographic approach might give more comprehensive insight into, for instance, the processes of policy reformulation and re-contextualization. Research should also continue to make theoretical and interdisciplinary efforts to improve understandings of how to talk and write about gender-based violence in educational settings, and the particularities of it in (post-colonial) sub-Saharan African contexts where much research and policy has been inspired by developmentalism. In addition, future research on gender-based violence should pay attention to developing institutional knowledge on appropriate methodological approaches, their limitations, and associated ethical considerations, and should contribute to developing institutional and collaborative means to increase social impact.

7.4 OVERALL CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis has been one step in the direction of understanding the complexities of gender-based violence in education and how policies might adequately address it. The study has revealed that in order to address the complexities of gender-based violence at the level of the school and the individual, the institutions and policies that direct and shape this action must be taken into account. Controversial policies such as CSE that relate to personal beliefs and value systems are particularly prone to reformulation and re-contextualization. Because of this, certain elements of the controversial policy that are considered to share more common

ground, such as the importance of improving health outcomes, are emphasised more in the global promotion of the policy than those pertaining to politicised issues such as promoting equality and diversity. CSE continues to be strongly resisted by opponents in Ethiopia out of a concern for maintaining an ‘Ethiopian’ national identity and rejecting ‘Western’ imposition of secular values – values particularly pertaining to the freedoms and emancipation of women and LGBTQ+ people. The notion of maintaining an ‘Ethiopian’ national identity might sound attractive to policy makers and beneficiaries in the country. However, this is certainly not the case when this notion is invoked when dismissing policies that could contribute to addressing gender-based violence in education, or gender inequalities more broadly. Young people, as well as some of their teachers and other stakeholders, have been vocal in this study that the lack of action against gender-based violence in all its forms, alienates, frustrates, and instils fear, which is detrimental to students’ well-being and social development. From this perspective, students’ well-being might thus be an important entry point through which policy debates could re-consider elements of CSE that might address gender-based violence. Such a response needs to go ‘beyond the facts’ in the sense that gender-based violence is far more than a barrier to educational outcomes or economic development; addressing gender-based violence entails challenging current gender orders so as to inspire young men and young women to become critical thinkers who can organise for social change and justice.