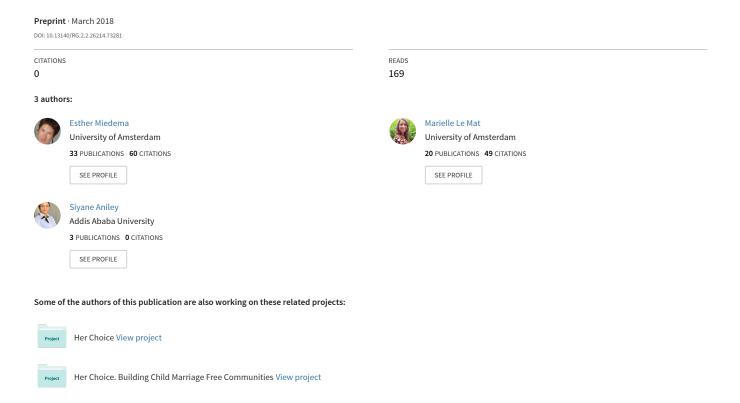# Moulding the sexuality education teacher An analysis of comprehensive sexuality education in Ethiopia

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Moulding the sexuality education teacher

An analysis of comprehensive sexuality education in Ethiopia

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With

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10/31/2017

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Acknowledgements

Contents

1. Background of the study

The Human Rights Council resolution of July 2015 urges "governments to promote and protect the human rights of all women and girls, including their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality" (Girls Not Brides, 2015). There exists widespread agreement that education, and particularly *Comprehensive* Sexuality Education (CSE) is critical to efforts to enhancing women and girls' control over, and voice in, decisions on matters that are important to them, including those pertaining to their sexual and reproductive health and rights SRHR) (Vanwesenbeeck et al, 2016). Considerable importance is attached to CSE in efforts to reduce the prevalence of child marriage, female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) and gender-based violence more broadly (see e.g. Braeken & Cardinal, 2008; UNFPA, 2013). Despite consensus regarding the importance of education and CSE[1] in reducing young people's vulnerabilities and improving their SRHR, important questions remain.

The impetus for this study was twofold. First, we noted the widespread use of the term "CSE" and the multiple interpretations of this term. The study thus sought to better understand the "C" in "CSE," that is, to examine what was specifically "comprehensive" about CSE. We argue that gaining greater conceptual clarity is critical to avoid CSE from becoming yet another hollow buzzword within the field of international development (Cornwall & Eade, 2011). Second, programmatic documents, policy briefs and academic publications tend to frame teachers as facilitators of CSE, emphasising teachers' roles in creating appropriate conditions for learner-centred education. For example, as Vanwesenbeeck et al (2016, p. 473) note, teachers "are supposed to facilitate the empowerment process rather than teach content." However, little is known as to how teachers take up this role or what their experiences are of "facilitating" sexuality education. In short, this study sought to build understanding regarding the role of teachers in the provision of CSE, and what "facilitation" might mean and look like in practice.

In line with these two central questions, the study took a two-pronged approach. First, a review was conducted of available literature on CSE. The review was carried out with a view to identifying areas of (dis)agreement in relation to definitions of CSE. As will be discussed in the sections to follow, existing literature suggested that *comprehensive* sexuality education was commonly conceptualised as a form of sexuality education that addressed issues pertaining to, among other things, gender (relations), and enhancing young people's rights, participation and agency. Second, and building on the themes identified during the literature review, we gathered primary data in primary and secondary schools in a provincial town in Oromia, Ethiopia. Interviews with school principals, community elders, CSE teachers, PTA members and parents, focus group discussions (FGDs) with young school-going people and non-participant observation of CSE lessons formed the central data collection methods. Data collection was primarily geared to developing greater understanding of teachers' perceptions and experiences of CSE and their roles therein. As will be

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[1] NB as attacks on CSE by more conservative parties show, this consensus is by no means universal, see e.g. Family Watch International (http://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/groundbreaking-new-documentary-exposes-lie-of-

made clear, the data suggests that teachers fulfilled a multitude of roles, with "facilitation" of teaching-learning processes being just one.

The remaining of the report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 summarises the main findings of the literature (for more extensive reports, see Hague, Miedema & Le Mat, 2017) identifying core components to CSE. The methodology of this literature and the consequent case study in Ethiopia is outlined in chapter 3. The main findings of the case study are discussed in chapter 4, paying attention to the roles of CSE teachers in a provincial town in Ethiopia, and how CSE is conceptualised in this community. The report ends with a discussion including linking the case study to the literature review in chapter 5 and a set of recommendations for research, policy, and practice in chapter 6.

2. What is comprehensive about Comprehensive Sexuality Education?

In recent years, the notion of CSE has increasingly gained traction within the international community. CSE is regarded as an important means to inform young people about their rights and sexual health, as well as improving public health outcomes and contributing to sustainable development. However, there is much that remains unknown about CSE and considerable variations exists in understanding what makes a programme or policy "comprehensive".

Across literature on the topic it is apparent that the onus of CSE is focused on equipping young people with age-appropriate information and education about sexuality and relationships, rights and agency, and access to high-quality services (IPFF, 2016; UNESCO, 2015). Authors working within the field of SRHR for young people also note that CSE must be inclusive of youth identities and non-stigmatising, ensuring the needs and rights of all young people (e.g. UNESCO, 2015; Pingel et al, 2013). Despite apparent consensus on these kinds of goals of CSE, in reviewing a range of literatures – including briefs, policy documents and programme reports – it was noted that, in addition to ambiguity around a specific definition of CSE, there is little critical analysis of the approach itself. Many reports discuss the efficacy of programme and policy implementation, but analysis of the theory underpinning CSE is limited across literature on the topic. In the sections 2.1 and 2.2, we will a) examine what appear to be commonly accepted core components to CSE and b) critically examine theoretical underpinnings of core components.

2.1 Defining CSE

As mentioned before, the concept of Comprehensive Sexuality Education is one that appears to have no one agreed upon definition. For example, UNFPA's Operational Guidance for CSE (2014, p. 6) views CSE as:

> "A rights-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education for young people, whether they are in school or out of school."

The UNFPA brief notes that this definition of CSE has evolved from international standards and is seen to be compatible with most widely held views among partner organisations on crucial aspects of human rights-based and gender-focused sexuality education. The agency notes that CSE should offer young people "thorough and scientifically accurate information" about, among other issues, "human rights, gender norms, and power in relationships" as well as "condoms and contraception, and how to access health and other support services."

Offering a different definition, UNESCO (2015, p. 12) defines CSE as:
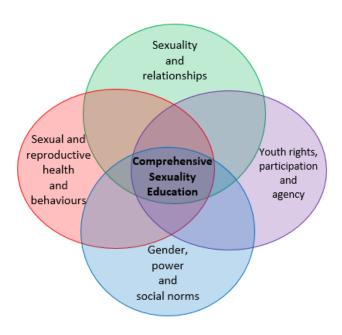
> "[An] age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sexuality and relationships by providing scientifically accurate, realistic, non-judgmental information."

Each definition differs in the aspects of CSE they highlight – one emphasises rights and gender while the other makes reference to sexuality and relationships and cultural relevance. While both

agencies stress the need for "scientifically correct information", variation in definitions of CSE highlight the different understanding different actors have with regard to this form of sexuality education. That said, the literature suggests there is considerable agreement as to the central components of CSE – particularly in recognising CSE's onus on rights and agency. The components are detailed in the following section.

2.2 Which components underpin Comprehensive Sexuality education?

Available literature suggests that CSE is structured around four sets of core issues: a) sexual and reproductive health and behaviours, b) sexuality and relationships, c) youth rights, participation and agency, and d) gender, power and social norms (see also Hague, Miedema & Le Mat, 2017). The Figure below illustrates the core components or pillars of Comprehensive Sexuality Education and their interlinked nature.

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Figure 1. Core components of Comprehensive Sexuality Education

2.2.1 Sexual and reproductive health and behaviours

Almost all authors and agencies agree that CSE must provide information about sexual health and addressing health-related issues such as HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C. UNFPA (2014, p. 5), for example, defines CSE as "enabling young women and men to protect their health, dignity and wellbeing", while Goldfarb and Constantine (2011) contend that CSE "employs a health promotion and human development approach" (p. 3). In keeping with WHO definitions, within CSE, the concept of "health" is defined not only in biological terms, but also in emotional, psychological and social ones.

2.2.2 Sexuality and relationships

A core aspect of CSE relates to supporting young people in understanding their sexualities and focusing on building relationships, the latter in particular in keeping with broader efforts in CSE to attend to social context. CSE is said to include content on a range of topics, such as abstinence, developing relationships, identity, intimacy and pleasure (SIECUS, 2004).

While there appears to be general consensus on the (intended) effects of other aspects of CSE, there is opposition to a shift from education which focuses on sexual health to "sexuality education," which combines provision of information about sexual health, relationships and sexual behaviours. For example, Family Watch International's policy brief on – or rather, against – CSE, argues that this shift has been made with the goal of teaching children "radical sexual ideologies" which are "disguised as human rights education or life skills programmes" (2016, p. 5).

2.2.3 Youth rights, participation and agency

CSE has youth rights and agency at its core, relying on participation of youth in order to strengthen gender equality, agency around sexuality and alter social norms. There is common agreement that CSE is an "empowerment-based" approach to develop the knowledge, attitudes and life-skills of students to help them secure their SRHR (Haberland, 2016; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). Effective CSE reportedly can contribute to enhancing self-esteem and decision-making amongst young people (Gordon, 2007). In addition, choice is presented as a main goal of CSE, and is linked with the concept of agency as the ultimate objective of effective Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Regardless of specific focus or content, CSE places a focus on choice - that all young people are entitled to make their own choices (see e.g. IPPF, 2014; UN Youth, 2011).

2.3.4 Gender, power relations and social norms

Most CSE literature, policy briefs and programme reports at least reference intended impact of CSE initiatives on gender relations and, specifically, redressing social norms that negatively impact women and girls. Many explicitly cite "empowerment" of women and girls as a goal of CSE programming. For instance, the *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education* (ITGSE, Vol. 1) – which carries the logos of UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the WHO – observes that gender norms and inequality "affect the experience of sexuality […] and sexual and reproductive health" (p. 20). Thus, "[i]n order to be effective at reducing sexual risk behaviour," the guidance document continues, "curricula need to examine critically and address these gender inequalities and stereotypes"(UNESCO, 2009, p. 20). However, Haberland (2015) notes that CSE programmes have trailed in integrating gender or power perspectives due to a lack of clarity about what it means to adopt a "gender or power perspective" (p. 32) and how to integrate clarity and detail for both the educator and the learner.

2.3.5 Concluding remarks

The literature suggests that the themes discussed above, that is, sexual and reproductive health and practices, sexuality and relationships, rights, participation and agency, and gender and power relations, constitute the central themes and components of CSE. While discussed separately in the section above, across literature it is clear that each of the components are intrinsically linked within

CSE and none should be compromised or neglected. Literature on CSE generally agrees that the necessary breadth and depth of CSE programmes means that implementers cannot pick and choose which topics they cover (UNFPA, 2015). Yet, despite this consensus on which core aspects make up CSE, across the literature varying levels of attention are afforded to each component. As will become clear in the discussion of the data gathered in schools in Ethiopia, the four sets of core components discussed above are interpreted in yet different ways, suggesting that in practice there is yet more variation in how CSE is interpreted and delivered.

3. Methodology

The methodology of this research was twofold. The first part consisted and built further on the literature review conducted on understanding the core components and definitions attributed to CSE (as summarised above in section 2.2). The second part was a case study on the role of CSE teachers in facilitating CSE, and their views as to what central elements of CSE are in Ethiopia. The below sub-sections outline the methods for both steps into more detail.

3.1 Literature review

The aim of the literature review was to understand what the core components and definitions attributed to CSE are, and how this affects the way in which CSE programmes and policies are developed and implemented across a range of levels. The first step of the methodology was to establish search terms which would be used to locate and review relevant literature. Key search terms linked to the literature objective included key phrases such as gender, sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, in combination with relationships, pleasure, participation, agency and rights. Search terms were used across a range of electronic databases and academic journals, locating relevant articles, policy documents and programme briefs and reports. Further sources were found by researching highlighted authors in the field of CSE and other variations of sexuality education. The methodology process supported the identification of gaps in literature and the formation of recommendations (see Hague, Miedema & Le Mat, 2017).

The literature review provided input in developing the case study in Ethiopia, building on the identified core components of CSE as well as responding to some of the identified gaps in literature. The findings of the case study on how CSE is conceptualised in Ethiopia were connected and systematically compared to the identified core components on the basis of the literature review.

3.2 Case study in Ethiopia

The case study aimed to shed further light on what are thought to constitute central elements of CSE according to those involved in the delivery and uptake of a CSE initiative in the context of Ethiopia. The research question driving the case study was: *What are the aims and core components of CSE according to students, teachers, and community members, and how do they view the roles of teachers in promoting SRH in a provincial town in Oromia, Ethiopia?*

To answer this research question, the research team -- consisting of two researchers of the University of Amsterdam, and one researcher affiliated to Addis Ababa University -- conducted interviews, FGDs, and non-participant observation in four schools in and around one provincial town in Ethiopia in May 2017. Research participants included teachers, students and community members who had been directly or indirectly involved in the "World Starts With Me" (WSWM) programme, a computer-based CSE programme that aims to increase young people's knowledge, develop their attitudes, enhance their skills and increase their self-esteem in order to empower them to make responsible choices concerning relationships, sexuality and sexual and reproductive health (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016).

Interviews were held with CSE teachers, school directors, PTA members, and parents. Interviews were semi-structured and conducted in Afaan Oromo or Amharic, depending on the preference of the participant, and when researchers from the University Amsterdam conducted interviews, translated on the spot to/from English by the researcher from Addis Ababa University. The same applies to FGDs, where participants debated more actively by the use of interactive exercises. FGDs were held with WSWM students, WSWM teachers, community leaders, and local government representatives. FGDs with young people were held with girls and boys separately. Non-participatory classroom observations of WSWM lessons were conducted at least once in all four schools that were part of this study.

In total, 56 participants took part of this study in Oromia region, Ethiopia. The participants consist of 12 teachers, 5 PTA members, 6 parents, 4 directors, 21 young people (3 FGDs) 4 community leaders, 4 local government representatives (see Table 1 below). Following completion of the analysis, the findings were shared and discussed with research participants during a validation workshop in Addis Ababa in December 2017. The workshop was facilitated by DEC and the Ethiopian researcher.

Table 1. Overview of participants

	School1	School2	School3	School4	Other	N=56 (19 female, 37 male)
FGD boys				15 male (2 FGDS)		15 male
FGD girls				6 female (1 FGD)		6 female
CSE teachers[2]	2	4	2	4		12 (4 female, 8 male)
Interview Director[3]	1	1	1	1		4 (1 female, 3 male)
Interview PTSA	2 male	1 male		1 male 1 female		5 (1 female, 4 male)
Interview parent(s)	1 female 1 male	1female 1 male	2 female			6 (4 female, 2 male)
FGD community leaders					4 male	4 male
FGD local government representatives					3 female 1 male	4 (3 female, 1 male)

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[2] Gender of CSE teachers has been removed in overview to ensure confidentiality
[3] Gender of directors has been removed in overview to ensure confidentiality

4. Findings

The following sections detail key findings that emerged from the data gathered in schools in one town in Oromia region, Ethiopia that were implementing the WSWM lessons at the time of data collection. In the presentation of the data, we use the terms WSWM, CSE sexuality education or SRH education, depending on the terms used by participants. The latter three terms refer to sexuality education in a broader sense and WSWM to the extra-curricular initiative implemented in the four schools.

Where relevant, findings will be related to existing literature. The first central theme concerns participant perceptions of the role of schools and specifically, that of CSE teachers within the broader community, as discussed in section 4.1. This section is sub-divided into two sub-sections, 4.1.1 engaging with participants' expectations of, and investment in, education, 4.1.2 presenting data on participant views concerning "good" CSE educators and the challenges faced by CSE educators. The second broad theme that will be discussed in section 4.2 concerns participants definitions of CSE. Given the emphasis on issues of gender and power in international definitions of CSE, section 4.3 will pay particular attention to the ways in which educators sought to address gender (inequalities).

4.1 Role of (CSE) teachers & schools

4.1.1 Attachment to and investment in education

Education and good behaviour

First, what came forward clearly from the data is the ***pivotal role of schools in the community***. Participants (actors in school, but also outside such as parents and community leaders) made a clear distinction between educated and uneducated people[4]. Uneducated parents, according to participants, may not consider sexuality education appropriate for young people, or may not be aware of the importance of sexuality education:

> "It might be shocking for community in general, not for me as an educated person, [but] from the community perspective (…) [sexuality education] will be unacceptable by parents" (D7, parent)

> "Different opinions exist with parents, who can be categorised into educated families and uneducated families. [Educated] parents teach their children about SRH education and they do have a positive attitude about a sexual reproductive health (SRH) teacher. Uneducated families however do not talk about SRH issues with their children and they may have a negative attitude towards the SRH educators" (D9, parent)

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[4] There seemed to be no commonly agreed demarcation for when somebody is considered to be "educated". Generally, the category "educated people" seemed to refer to those who can read and write, and mostly who completed primary education and above.

These comments reveal the importance attached to education, shaping parents and communities into more understanding people who communicate openly and accept the importance of sexuality education. In this regard, such education was not only considered to be a means of educating young people about sexual and reproductive health, but also indirectly to influence the surrounding community about this (see section 4.2).

Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of education in developing knowledgeable and well-informed people, and (thereby) **shaping young people into good citizens**. Research participants, particularly parents and community leaders, saw education as a way to reduce *balege* (rude, ill-mannered) behaviour in students. Education, and sexuality education in particular, was seen as a way of contributing to the shaping of this "good student". As one parent put it:

> "*Balege* girl is the one who has interest to get married. The clever one is the one who wants to continue her schooling without any distraction of the need for marriage." (D32, parent)

As such, sexuality education was thus not only seen as potentially contributing to a knowledgeable and healthy community, but also as essential in shaping students to be good citizens.

Addressing social and economic issues in CSE
When asked about social and economic issues affecting young peoples' sexual and reproductive health in the area, participants likewise raised the issue of *balege* young people, in addition to other social and economic issues affecting young men and young women's sexual and reproductive health.

> "There are circumstances in which girls initiate another girl for premature sex and also there is a situation in which better boys become bad just by looking at bad behaviour of their friends, and in general boys push boys and girls push girls in most cases, but there are boys who pressurise girls in rare case. This spoils their education life and their good behaviour." (D8, male parent)

> "[When moving to town from the village to pursue secondary education] especially [boys] become low scorers in their studies; they don't do assignments and do not study for exams; they find their new relationships noble; so they find it the only life style" (D11, male PTA member)

> "The challenges that girls encounter are early marriage, menstrual dirt, abduction, FGM, rape, falling in love, being tricked boy boys bribe, and unwanted pregnancy. //(…) If a girl is falling in love, she gets distracted from her education. She starts to think about the boy she is in love with. As a result she might lose her grades." (D18, FGD with young women)

These comments reveal how **intimate relationships between young men and young women,** closely linked to possible *balege* behaviour, are commonly conceptualised as a distraction to their studies. Consequently, these relationships were viewed as a possible cause for negative sexual and

reproductive health outcomes, as well as school dropout, poor performance, and disobedience towards parents, teachers and elders. In addition, *economic issues* underpinning sexual and reproductive health issues related to not affording pads/condoms and other necessary health items, exploitation and/or transactional sex out of economic necessity, having to do house works/chores or informal work out of economic necessity (for the family or due to orphan status) and thereby missing school. *Social issues* mentioned were lack of awareness and open communication on sexual and reproductive health issues, abduction, runaways[5], needing emotional and psychological advice, substance abuse, early (unprotected) sex, female circumcision, early marriage, sexual violence, peer pressure, and social exclusion due to poverty and teenage motherhood.

In response to questions how schools *address social and economic challenges of young people*, participants (teachers, school principals, PTAs) mentioned schools and teachers supported students with food, fees and stationery. Yet participants simultaneously reiterated the challenges students faced and the lack of resources of the school to meet all students' needs. An initiative such as WSWM was thought to be able to address social issues related to sexual and reproductive health, while schools more broadly played a crucial role in addressing economic issues. At the same time, the programme was thought to be potentially socially stratifying because students from poorer households who needed to contribute to the family's household and income were not able to join the extra-curricular classes. There seemed to be agreement amongst participants that the programme should become more widely available to all students, in- and out-of-school, either through integrating it into the formal curriculum, or by scaling up the programme while making efforts to better facilitate inclusion of students from poor or rural households.

Saving lives

Against the backdrop described above, participants indicated that WSWM addressed social issues by benefiting sexual and reproductive health, good behaviour, and levels of *responsibility* of young men and young women, which by some participants was more strongly articulated as "saving lives".

> "I can say that boys take responsibility and their behaviour is being changed much because of [WSWM]. Even they started to influence their peers, and even I sometimes I ask 'what if Ministry of Education to include this education in regular curriculum?' I have been curious about the lag of this program because of instability last year and I was thinking that the young miss this education that saves their life, now I am so happy that it continues" (D19, female CSE teacher)

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[5] Runaways refer to cases where underage girls decide to "run away" from their family to their romantic partner to start living together at early age (under 18). This typically happens without the consent of the parents. As such, it creates intergenerational tension in the household and community as it is thought of to be disrespectful behaviour by the girl. Furthermore, participants raised she may face issues of early pregnancy and school dropout.

Particularly in relation to recent instability in the region, WSWM was thought to potentially "save lives" by fostering feelings of responsible behaviour in young people, extending to responsible sexual behaviour.

4.1.2 Good CSE teachers & challenges faced by CSE teachers

CSE teachers take up a central position in addressing social issues affecting sexual and reproductive health of young people. Throughout the interviews and FGDs, teachers were referred to and positioned themselves as counsellors, adviser, role models, networker, friend, confidante, mediator, father/mother who cares for their students. The main role of the CSE teacher seemed to be to advise students to be on the "right track", and to show good behaviour by focusing on their education, not being distracted by "premature" romantic relationships. Furthermore, teachers should be confident, not shy, understanding, and have a good rapport with their students, while balancing between identities of adviser, counsellor, friend, role model and CSE advocate in the community.

In discussing the roles of good CSE teachers with students, teachers, directors, PTAs, and parents, it was also revealed that CSE teachers at times faced resistance from community and students. Furthermore, while they took up pivotal roles in the community for promoting SRH and addressing social issues more broadly, their scope of influence is limited as a result of their portrayal as CSE facilitators only (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). This is further complicated by the fact that teachers often act as voluntary teachers with no remuneration for additional investments.

Shame and self-confidence

First and foremost, a recurring theme with regards to defining a "good" CSE teacher concerned shame and self-confidence. As much as self-confidence seemed to be a general goal of Comprehensive Sexuality Education for students, teachers also emphasised the need to be a confident educator when teaching about sexuality-related issues:

> "[CSE]-teachers should have training on SRH issues, (…) and confidence to talk about SRH issues. If the teachers themselves fear, are shy to talk about SRH issues, the students fear. So, to avoid that, the teacher should have confidence to talk about sexuality and RSH issues. This is what makes unique from other subject teachers." (D4, female teacher)

> "[If a new sexuality education teacher would join our class] we will tell [him/her] to be free to teach us everything being free from fear and shyness. (…) [We like] being closer to them and we tell them also to be closer to us, and the teacher should be polite enough to hear from students and respect their ideas." (D1, FGD with young men)

The importance of being a confident teacher is thus something that was directly related to benefitting students, by creating rapport, closeness, and encouraging young people to be open about sexuality related matters and listening to them.

Strikingly, one of the most prominent ways in which a good CSE teacher was conceptualised related to the notion that a good CSE teacher should be confident by being "free from culture", referring

mostly to being free from shame and fear to speak about sexual and reproductive health, and ability to explicitly name reproductive organs.

> "The good teacher should be free from cultural view, he should normally teach his students based on science, (…) it is to say a teacher of sexuality education should be free from shyness and so on." (D1, FGD with young men)

> "The student taught [in WSWM] and the student taught in the [regular] class is different; in the [regular] class they don't have confidence. Even some teachers are also afraid, especially about the reproductive organs. Actually they teach in Afaan Oromo, but they don't want to talk about the reproductive organs. (…) [So] they use synonyms, metaphors, they tell indirectly because of cultural defect. That is the main problem, but at [WSWM] it is very good." (D2, FGD male CSE teachers)

> "SRH educators (…) should be free from cultural influence, they should teach confidently every important point of SRH for students. (…) It requires special skill, because anybody can' t teach. (…) The influence of the society is very great, you know, so [sometimes] the teachers may not include such kind of issues. They feel shy to speak about this issue in front of the students. Lessons related to sexuality… you know our culture is very difficult. It is not as such easy to talk about with kids (…) the children can feel shocked and the teacher too. (D12, male PTA member)

By viewing the CSE teacher as a person who teaches based on science as opposed to **culture** (typically meaning traditional beliefs and practices), as articulated in the quotes above, the teacher is positioned as someone who navigates between two sides: the cultural ("deficit") side, to be corrected by the modern, developed ("scientific") messages in CSE that "saves lives". As such, openness and avoiding shame seems to become a developmental goal that, despite the discomfort it may result in within the classroom and wider community, is ultimately seen to benefit young people and their communities:

> "Even though some time we feel uncomfortable, since we know that it is for our advantage, it is for our behavioural change, so it is fine with us. Previously, we couldn't even discuss about body change issues but now we have improved that we don't feel ashamed." (D1, FGD with young men).

> "The basic social problem is that we don't talk freely and everything is secret; so, the students [do not have] any clues and, hence, they are not protected. They get into unwanted pregnancy and then are forced to leave school because they have to raise their kids; they get discriminated from the society. All these happen because of lack of open talk; so there needs to open discussions in the family, with the teachers and so on." (D13, male CSE teacher)

These notions of openness and protection connects to the conceptualisation of CSE as a means to involve parents and raise awareness in communities to stimulate communication on the home

front (see section 4.2). As the quote above revealed, this had a particular emphasis on girls needing to overcome shyness, speaking out about SRH challenges, and claiming their rights.

CSE: shaping the educator as activist and mediator

CSE teachers thus took up a position of breaking boundaries by openly speaking about sexuality during CSE lessons. As such, CSE teachers in some ways almost had to position themselves as activists and role models for young peoples' SRH in the community:

> "SRH by itself is very sensitive issue that needs special attention. (…) If the teacher behaves in a bad way and talks about reproductive health, nobody can accept him because students see his or her action. It needs a good character in the school and in their personal life out of the school and the teacher should be a role model for his students." (D7, male parent)

> "[The teacher] should be a role model, s/he should be what s/he teaches. If not, by tomorrow a student may pursue the bad behaviour [the teacher] has and [be] unable to be good citizen. (…) Especially community expects more from teachers. So the teachers should be careful and accepted among community by behaving in good way." (D20, male CSE teacher)

> "For me, characteristics of good sexuality education is commitment, self-reliant, motivated regardless of community's rumour or bad words, who can still teach based on the curriculum and methodologies that are in the manual." (D21, female CSE teacher)

Teachers thus expressed to have to balance between being a confident teacher promoting SRH to young people, while having been subject to judgement and rumour from community. The focus of CSE shaping "good girls and boys" (see section 4.3) thereby seemed pertinent to teachers as a rationale for teaching this provocative subject in schools.

In this context, teachers have taken up a societal role of advocating for change in the community by promoting open communication and better sexual and reproductive health opportunities for young people, next to academic roles of teachers in their standard curriculum subjects. Attached to this societal role was their position as appointed *mediators* in the school:

> "For example, if a girl is forced to get married without her consent, first we talk to the parents and if the parents have already decided this, we interfere even to the extent of talking to legal authorities." (D2, FGD with male CSE teachers)

> "Teachers have so many roles in that. Based on problems like absenteeism or drop out from the school, we ask parents why they are absent from the class, through a network with parents. As members of the community, also teachers play role in making people aware on what is good and what is wrong, and again if there are problems with students, we support them as much as we can, for example, like early marriage, abduction, etc. by communicating with polices on [issues] that students reported to us." (D20, male CSE teacher)

The closeness of WSWM teachers to their students, as well as their knowledge on SRH, was considered to be an important element in acting as mediator. Nevertheless, taking up this role was not always without resistance to CSE teaching and teachers from community and students. Teachers expressed that in dealing with this challenge, they emphasised how CSE shapes well-behaving and healthy young people. It was also felt important to emphasise that they are not encouraging sexual intercourse to young people, rather awareness on health and social issues related to SRH (e.g. STIs, HIV/AIDS, early marriage, and FGM/C).

From the above analysis, it was revealed that teachers take up many more roles than that of a facilitator of a CSE lesson. To be a good CSE teacher, meant that teachers need to adopt multiple roles of close friend, adviser, activist, role model, and community mediator. Consequently, teachers had to navigate numerous and at times conflicting expectations of local community, international guidelines, and students, a/o. The fact that they were appointed and taught CSE on voluntary basis, meant that their increased roles and responsibilities go largely unrewarded – further reinforcing the notion of teacher as a (voluntary) activist/mediator. This challenge, in addition to lack of resources such as enough computers to facilitate the lessons adequately, made their position particularly difficult.

4.2 Defining CSE

The WSWM programme is conceptualised as a CSE programme (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016; DEC et al., 2012). Despite the emphasis on the notion of "comprehensive" sexuality education, the term "comprehensive" did not appear to be commonly used among research participants. During initial interviews we asked about participants' views as to the meaning of "comprehensive", that is, when a sexuality education programme might be defined as "comprehensive". We often had to rephrase this question by using a term such as "holistic" or instead asking what, in participants' opinions, young people should learn about as part of a good quality sexuality/SRH education programme. A central theme that emerged from the data concerned the idea of CSE or good quality sexuality education – and the WSWM was seen to be an example of such education – being "life-related". As the director of a secondary school indicated:

> Researcher: "The [WSWM] is a comprehensive sexuality education [programme]. […] How do you understand "comprehensive," what makes [the programme] comprehensive?"

> Director: "The program is life-related and contains every aspect of sexuality for the students; that's why it is comprehensive." (D6, male director)

When subsequently asked what were important elements or aspects of WSWM, the director replied:

> "What I see as important elements is that the programme is knowledge based and life-related – [students] should know how […] to live with each other." (D6, male director)

The notion of "life-related" and learning to live together were more commonly recurring issues. During an FGD with six young women (D18), one of the girls indicated that what differentiated the

WSWM programme from, for example, a regular curricular lesson was that WSWM "teachers teach every detail [while] subject teachers teach us only the subject matter. It is not life related." In a similar vein, when asked about her interpretation of "comprehensive" sexuality education, a female WSWM teacher (D21, female CSE teacher) observed that "when we say holistic, it concerns all the society's issues and one of the components is SRH. Comprehensive is the general day-to-day life of the society in any aspect."

The definition of "life-related" was broad, with educators interpreting this notion in multiple senses. In important ways, "life-related" education might be interpreted as synonymous with "comprehensive". The following excerpt illustrates the seeming overlap between these terms, and as such how educators interpreted what it meant to be "comprehensive":

> "When we say [WSWM] is comprehensive, […] it involves every aspect of life: friendships, drugs, sexuality etc. and teaches the students everything they have to know and other people should even be involved in the programme. For example, if a father drinks alcohol and goes home, his kids want to know what he drinks; so, he has to openly show them what it is all about. Then after, the kids won't get curious about it." (D13, male CSE teacher)

Teaching about "every aspect of life" appeared to also contain critical normative dimensions. As one participant explained during an FGD with four male CSE teachers, for example:

> "This programme is related with what is in the society; a girl is not allowed to practice sexual intercourse before marriage because it has many problems. One is to dropout from school; and it puts on them social and psychological problems or whatever. That's why it should be after marriage. Generally, it is not allowed to do it before the sexual organs well developed." (D2, FGD, male CSE teachers)

Running through all participants' accounts was the notion that CSE or the WSWM programme helped young people to stay on the "right track" by instilling good values. As the excerpt highlights, particular emphasis was placed on preventing young women from engaging in sexual relations before marriage, a topic that will be discussed in more depth in section 4.3. Concerning the "right track" in a broader sense, a female CSE teacher explained (D29, female CSE teacher), the programme "helps [students] in identifying what is good from what is bad which is important in their future life." Academic achievement was generally regarded as important, as will also be discussed in the next section, with sexual relations posing a potential threat to that achievement and consequently, one's possibilities in life more broadly.

Similarly illustrative in this regard is the following except from an FGD with a group of young secondary school going men. During the discussion, the young men drew a distinction between "right" and "wrong" behaviour, and the centrality of the WSWM programme in correcting the latter:

Participant 1: "There are students [in our school] who are not on the right track and the [WSWM] teacher advises them."

Moderator: "What is the right track and what is not right track?"

Participant 1: "The one who does what is not expected from a student, who is an adulterer and who engages in sexual activity, and so on."

Moderator: "Is being involved in sexual activity a bad thing?"

Participant 1: "It is the sexual activity which is premature. […] For example, students are at school for learning, once they engage in sex during school age, they might get unwanted pregnancy." (D1, FGD with young men)

Instilling good values and keeping young people on the "straight and narrow" seemed, in other words, closely tied to ensuring they focused on their school work. CSE was thus defined in terms of the potential to aid students in successfully completing their formal education by preventing students from being distracted by their own sexual feelings and experiences. As one young man indicated: "The CSE facilitator […] discusses about practical life instead of theory, for example, how to cool down erected penis by counting numbers from 1-100" (D1, FGD Boys).

Linking to the earlier mentioned idea of CSE being "life-related", the breadth and depth of information provided during WSWM classes was also deemed – unsurprisingly perhaps – as defining CSE. Drawing a distinction between the extra-curricular WSWM and a regular biology lesson, a male CSE teacher explained that:

Participant 4: […] In biology, [the] content it is limited, but [in WSWM] it is unlimited and broad. [In WSWM we provide] more information about different topics but [in a] interrelated [manner]: emotional ups and down, pregnancy, STDs – all these are interrelated. [In WSWM] information is broad but in biology it is small. […] (D2, FGD, male CSE teachers)

Building on these observations, another participant noted that:

Participant 5: "[…] Biology may consist about general, health, human body; but [in WSWM class] one can [address] all sides...displaying one's life. [For example, we teach] so [that] the students have self- confidence...sometimes [this] facilitates open discussion between [students] and [their] parents. Biology doesn't [do this], it helps them to keep their physical health. And [WSWM] also guides [students] in what they can do and what they don't do, what they do at the right time, what they don't do... that's why it gives them full information about oneself. So, [there is a] great difference from biology or some other discipline." (D2, FGD, male CSE teachers)

The latter quote in particular highlights how ideas concerning CSE being "life-related", broad *and* providing appropriate moral guidance interlink in critical ways. That is, preparing for life or being

"life-related' required a depth that a regular subject such as biology did not or could not provide for. In addition, and as discussed in greater length in the section 4.1.2 on shame and self-confidence, to adequately prepare young people for life and crucially, preventing students from being distracted from their studies, CSE teachers had to be frank, open and detailed. As a young woman remarked:

> "[WSWM] is very open but science doesn't tell us details. […] We are not shy in [WSWM] class, we talk about our body, sexuality, HIV and condoms, but in science class we don't discuss it openly." (D18, FGD with young women)

In closing then, providing "broad" or full and frank information about sexuality and sexual relations and moral guidance in the "right" and "wrong" time for, for example, sexual relations, would allow students to achieve better academically and (as such) be better equipped to deal with life's challenges.

4.3 CSE and the good girl and good boy

The moral guidance provided by WSWM teachers requires further unpacking to understand the specifically gendered nature thereof and the inter-generational dynamics that appeared to shape students' uptake of WSWM lessons and their sexual positioning. Three salient examples emanating from the data are discussed to illustrate the gendered and inter-generational dimensions and dynamics of the WSWM initiative. The first relates to teacher, principals and PTA members describing the importance of encouraging what was referred to as "pure friendship" between young men and women, both within WSWM sessions and on school grounds more broadly. As a parent member of the PTA clarified:

> "Children must learn the importance of interaction among the boys and girls, for example, […] we need to promote friendship, pure friendship among boys and girls because in many schools female sit alone, they do not integrate, they don't work together, […] they face trouble because they do not know how to make good friendship and they don't how to socialise with opposite sex." (D7, male PTA member)

The account provided by young women taking part in an FGD seems to confirm that, as a result of WSWM, changes have indeed been brought about in relationships between young men and women. One young woman explained that "in the formal class we don't prefer to sit with boys but in [WSWM] class we sit with boys and they are our friends" (D18, FGD with young women), another indicating that "the other thing I like about the [WSWM] is that we have good friendship with boys here, [more] than in the normal class". (D18, FGD with young women)

The WSWM thus appears to have a positive impact on relationships between young women and men, creating greater openness and trust between them and normalising relationships with the other gender. Efforts to "normalise" relationships between the genders and create "pure friendship" need to be seen in relation to programme goals to enhance a) gender equality – a goal that was frequently mentioned by teachers, principals and parents and b) efforts to promote abstinence before marriage. Concerning the first dimension, when asked about what made a

sexuality education initiative "comprehensive", a female teacher, for example, responded by saying that "comprehensive" meant addressing issues such as "gender equality, equal responsibility among female and male, in addition to SRH" (D19, female teacher). WSWM lessons such as "Pregnancy: 4 girls and 4 boys" similarly highlight how the programme seeks to attain a more equitable sharing of SRHR-related roles and responsibilities between women and men.

The focus on bringing about "equal responsibility between young women and men" is closely related to aims to reduce premarital sexual relations and unplanned teen pregnancies, both of which formed predominant themes within participant narratives. The following excerpts from an FGD with male CSE teachers are illustrative in this regard:

> "[CSE] is [about] giv[ing] our students the advantage, the disadvantage of sexuality. […] Without the knowledge of its advantages and disadvantages, females may come to make sexuality; and this gives awareness about what is behind sexuality." (D2, FGD male CSE teachers)

The disadvantages of sexual relations were often referred to during discussions with participants, defined largely in terms of unplanned pregnancies, school drop-out and the vicious circle of poverty. Possible "advantages" of sexuality were not elaborated upon other, bar cloaked references to "the right time". Salient too in the excerpt above is the explicit mention that young women would have sex if they did not know about the advantages and disadvantages of sexual relations (see also section 4.2).

Despite efforts to increase awareness among young men and women as to pregnancy being a concern for both genders, statements such as these highlight that, in practice, it continued to primarily affect young women, reducing their opportunities to be academically successful and prosper. In a context where condom use both before marriage and in marriage was strongly frowned upon, the "disadvantages" of sexual relations were thus far greater for young women than young men. In light of this situation, teachers, principals and parents were quick to stress that sexuality education was thus first and foremost a critical means to protect young women. The following excerpt from an interview with a parent is informative in this regard. Responding to a question as to how she interpreted the notion of "comprehensive", this mother indicated that:

> Mother: "For example, […] they know how HIV is transmitted; how to protect themselves from abduction or rape and even they know where to go if they get raped; so, everything they have to know is included in the curriculum. Thus, it is comprehensive."
>
> Researcher: "What about for the boys? Is it comprehensive for the boys?"
>
> Mother: "Yes. The boys may have challenges. [As a result of sexuality education] they may get rid of wrong acts. They don't do sexual abuse to the girls." (D10, female parent)

The mother's initial response seems to hone in on the various benefits of sexuality education for young women alone. When pressed a little further, she highlighted that young men stand to

benefit in that they stop sexually abusing young women. This victim-perpetrator narrative formed a central thread that ran through participant accounts, with young women standing to primarily lose in sexual relationships. Emphasis on stimulating "pure friendship" and "equal responsibility" between the genders thus needs to be seen as a means to protect young women, with "good" boys and men refraining from abusing their power over girls and women. Such a protectionist approach does little to "empower" young women or alter power dynamics between (young) women and men.

5. Discussion

Building on the literature review and the primary data gathered in the context of Ethiopia, this section hones in on a number of critical findings. As noted in the discussion of CSE-related literature, while initiatives differ in terms of the emphasis placed on topics and issues, there exists a fair degree of agreement as to the central (interrelated) components of a CSE initiative. That is, the literature suggests that "comprehensive" sexuality education entails addressing:

1) sexual and reproductive health and behaviours;
2) sexuality and relationships;
3) youth rights, participation and agency; and
4) gender, power and social norms.

While the WSWM initiative was found to comprehensively address the first core component, there appeared to be greater variation in the delivery of education on the remaining three components. Concerning the second central component – that is, sexuality and relationships – the data show that in practice this component cannot be analysed separately from the final component, that is, gender, power and social norms. The data highlight the difficulties of tackling complex issues such as gender (equality) and young people's sexuality in the context of a formal school setting and, crucially, one in which young women in particular are expected to abstain from sexual relations until marriage. The WSWM lessons seemed to focus largely on the "disadvantages" of young women engaging in sexual relations – notably the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy. Boys were taught to protect girls given their comparative vulnerability to the various possible negative consequences of sexual relations, which as the data suggests would largely take place unprotected given the shame involved in accessing condoms. Young men are hereby thus set up as protectors of "vulnerable" young women, their purity and potential academic success. As such the programme may – unwittingly – perpetuate and reinforce stereotypical conceptions of men (as strong) and women (as weak).

Concerning the third but also fourth component – that is, those pertaining to respectively, rights and agency, and gender and power – the literature review highlighted that CSE is conceptualised as a means to enhance young people's decision-making space, create more equitable gender relations and alter social norms. As stated earlier, "choice" is widely considered a central goal of CSE. As such, CSE is widely regarded as representing a shift in focus from individual risks and behaviour to social dimensions and contextual nature of sexual relations and practices. However, the emphasis within CSE – found throughout the literature -- on notions such as "choice", and building young people's self-esteem to make "informed," healthy decisions, means there is a risk that the context in which decisions are taken is neglected (see also Clark and Stitzlein, 2016; Elliot 2014).

With regard to WSWM, the data gathered in Ethiopia suggest a focus on instilling good behaviour and strengthening in young people a sense of responsibility to uphold existing norms, rather than an emphasis on social change and "choice". While the programme and teachers pay considerable attention to gender equality, in important ways this goal seemed primarily interpreted in terms of encouraging both young women and men to act in an informed and responsible manner – that is,

to paraphrase one of the participants, for young women knowing how to protect themselves from abduction and rape, and young men to refrain from sexually abusing women. It is critical to note that the programme does far more than this – as noted, contributing to a normalisation of friendship between young men and women, creating awareness that young men also have a role to play in pregnancy and SRH-related matters more broadly. However, and as noted before, the underlying gendered messages regarding appropriate behaviour of young men and women suggests that, in practice, young people are offered limited space and practical possibilities (e.g. condoms) to make their own decisions.

Another tension within the programme that is important to note relates to the emphasis on openness and the risk of being seen as *"balege"* (rude). A key benefit of WSWM, according to participants, related to dissemination of SRH-related message in the broader community by young people who had taken part in the initiative. While this broader dissemination may be considered a potential benefit, it also meant that young people were not only posited as bearing primary responsibility for their own health but as also bearing responsibility for the health of their community members. In addition to the additional burden this may be seen to pose on young people, the situation may also lead to young people needing to walk a very fine line between being regarded as *balege* when speaking openly about sexuality, yet made responsible for raising awareness among peers, parents and the wider community.

The points discussed above raise a series of crucial issues in relation to CSE teachers. As noted, the literature on CSE portrays the teacher as facilitator of empowerment processes of young people. The data gathered in Ethiopia indicate that the teacher was far more than this and that the notion of "facilitator" does not do justice to the multiple roles teachers fulfil. First, the emphasis placed on staying on the "right track" means that CSE teachers are responsible for guiding young people, teaching them about societal expectations of young women and men, and the "right" time and place for sexual relations. Second, and in a similar vein, teachers' efforts to create more balanced relationships and sense of responsibility between young women and men entailed more than mere moderation and instead often required active intervention in the WSWM classroom, in the school yard as well as in the community. In so doing, the teacher is positioned as someone who navigates between two fronts: the traditional and the modern. That is, WSWM teachers seemed to be regarded as a critical bridge between these two sites, whereby in critical ways the cultural ("deficit") was presented as a domain that was to be corrected by the modern, developed ("scientific") messages.

WSWM teachers thus need to navigate sensitive and complex terrain, and as such require ongoing support. The voluntary basis of their involvement runs the risk of limited recognition of the important and at times, very difficult role that they play, however. Financially, WSWM teachers receive no recognition, but crucially, acknowledgement of, and support for, their work was found to vary between schools, meaning that in some settings teachers may lack all forms of support required to fulfil the multiple roles required of a comprehensive sexuality teacher.

6. Recommendations to strengthen CSE research, policy and practice

In what follows, we list key recommendations to emerge from the present study:

- CSE teachers were typically appointed by their school directors based on their subject background (Biology, English, or IT), good performance and behaviour in the school, and/or affinity with gender equality issues. In critical ways, the subsequent time investment and efforts of teachers in navigating multiple roles as adviser, friend, counsellor, activist and mediator receive little acknowledgement and are not (financially) rewarded. However, CSE teachers play a central role in improving the SRH of young people and (indirectly) that of the broader community -- that is, during lessons, in supporting young people to address social and economic issues that affect young people and conducting outreach activities to parents and at times, other community members. Recognising the considerable time and effort invested as well as the issues faced by CSE teachers, we recommend greater attention is paid to setting up mechanisms to support CSE teachers to fulfil these multiple roles. Such support should include financial support, follow-up training opportunities and adequate (IT) resources.

- Participants highlighted that the WSWM initiative is accessible only to a limited number of students, in many cases only in-school students whose families are from a socio-economic background that they do not need help in the household during the time slots of the extra-curricular programme. Participants expressed the need for more inclusive and diverse participation in comprehensive sexuality education, by upscaling the programme or integrating it within the regular curriculum. We recommend exploring possibilities to expand the programme so as to reach a greater number of young people and to support lobby and advocacy activities concerning integration of more comprehensive sexuality education in the regular curriculum.

- "Openness" (as an opposite of shame) seemed a central notion in defining good qualities of CSE teachers, consequently positioning the CSE programme as a means to challenge, as some participants put it, "cultural defects" by engaging in open discussions based on modern scientific information. However, the linkages between culture and shame need to be better identified and defined, and future research and policy engagements should pay attention to further unpacking these concepts and their relation to the promotion of sexual health through education.

- CSE in Ethiopia encouraged "pure friendships" between young women and young men. Young people indeed reported to have better interactions with peers of the opposite sex. At the same time, messages of CSE seemed to focus on protecting young women from the "disadvantages" of sexuality (e.g. early pregnancy, unwanted sex), that were less articulated for young men. It is questionable to what extent such protective messages are in line with gender transformative goals, however. Opportunities need to be identified to integrate dialogue on gender and power relations into CSE lessons in more meaningful manners.

- A core component of CSE in Ethiopia seemed to instil good behaviour and individual responsibility in students. Students are expected to make informed, and consequently

healthy and appropriate decisions, and CSE is expected to prevent "*balege"* behaviour in young people. The responsibility levels of CSE students in our sample seemed to increase with the expectation that young people would promote SRH to their peers, parents and community members. More attention in CSE research, policy, and practice needs to be paid to the socio-economic context in which decisions are being made, and possible inter-generational effects of placing these kinds of responsibilities on young people.

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